

## NHS HIGHLAND RESPONSE TO:

### TOWARDS A MENTALLY FLOURISHING SCOTLAND: THE FUTURE OF MENTAL HEALTH IMPROVEMENT IN SCOTLAND 2008-2011

The following response to the Scottish Government discussion paper, 'Towards a Mentally Flourishing Scotland' is made by NHS Highland following joint local consultation/discussion events in March 2008.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the consultation document and generally agree with the vision, principles and direction of the document. We welcome the approach taken in terms of the need to focus on local action, and agree with the main themes for population based mental health improvement that recognise the wide range of factors that underpin optimal mental wellbeing. Further, we support the focus on addressing inequalities.

We subscribe to the need to identify target groups for action and agree with those suggested. However we would also like to see carers, particularly informal or unpaid carers, specifically targeted for action and would also support inclusion of individuals and communities experiencing rural isolation as a key target group. We agree that particular attention should be paid to the early years of life and to children and young people, but also that action should be focused on settings such as schools, workplaces and would add further education establishments to that list.

We support the broad themes for action around promotion, prevention and support.

**Promotion** – we broadly agree with the direction suggested for promoting and improving mental health and mental wellbeing. We support the need particularly to build the key skills, attributes and values into a variety of programmes and work streams and particularly for young people through for example the Health Promoting Schools initiative, a Curriculum for Excellence and Parenting initiatives. We agree that mental health and wellbeing literacy is a key component of this work and would stress the importance of developing key mental health promotion skills with a wide variety of professionals.

**Prevention** – we again agree with the direction described in terms of prevention and support the emphasis on the early identification and intervention for those at risk of developing mental health problems. We agree with the need to have a more holistic approach to prevention and believe this should again be built in to existing initiatives such as 'Getting It Right for Every Child', Anticipatory Care approaches and the Review of Nursing in the Community'. As with promotion, we support the need for skills development for key professional groups and a mechanism for sharing evidence and best practice information.

**Support** – The need to continue to address stigma and discrimination was a strong message that came out of local consultation events. We support the emphasis on this in the document and also on the need to improve mental health literacy as part of the work to reduce stigma and discrimination. We believe that developing knowledge and skills of key staff groups in the public and voluntary sector as well as with employers will be important in progressing this theme.

We broadly support the proposed actions to enable the main themes to be implemented, and believe that they could be delivered if appropriately resourced and with local leadership. We would emphasise the need to build action across existing programmes and initiatives as mentioned above, and would place particular emphasis on initiatives aimed at children and young people and employers/ people working in the field of employability. Getting it Right for Every Child, Healthy Working Lives, Fairer Scotland Fund, and Curriculum for Excellence are some of the mechanisms by which actions should be delivered. We believe that any action must be underpinned by information on the evidence base that is easily translated to local action and by development of key skills and capacity building for a range of professionals, employers and communities. We welcome a particular focus on self harm and support measures to develop recognition of those at risk, and skills for dealing with people who self harm. We believe that further work is required to embed mental health improvement and mental wellbeing into models of anticipatory care and would welcome a focus on this and development of further guidance based on the evidence base.

We support action to tackle stigma and tackle issues around employability, and would support a focus on ensuring that public sector organisations are exemplar in this regard. We believe that self care will be an important element of support to people experiencing mental health problems and would support further development of self care approaches and development of skills in this area.

We agree with the suggested national support activities, but would stress the need to balance national activity on evaluation, training, skills development and communication with the need to deliver on these issues locally, have local ownership and be able to deliver initiatives that take into account local circumstances.

We believe that progress on mental health improvement should be tracked and assessed through existing mechanisms, and particularly through the Single Outcome Agreements, which should include the national indicators developed by Health Scotland.