

2026 – 2035

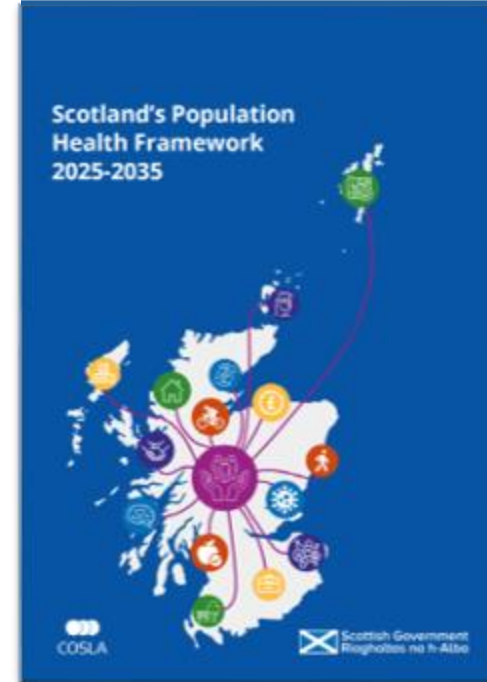
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[Weblink: Preventing Harm, Promoting Recovery: Scotland's Alcohol & Drugs Strategic Plan 2026 – 2035 - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotland-alcohol-and-drugs-strategic-plan-2026-2035/pages/2026-2035-alcohol-and-drugs-strategic-plan-2026-2035.aspx)

Preventing Harm, Promoting Recovery: Wider context



The Health and Social Care Service Renewal Framework provides a high-level guide for change, to ensure the sustainability, efficiency, quality, and accessibility of health and social care services in Scotland.



The Population Health Framework sets out Scottish Government's and COSLA's long-term collective approach to improving Scotland's health and reducing health inequalities for the next decade.

Preventing Harm, Promoting Recovery: Accompanying Documents



Partnership Delivery Framework

A framework to clarify the roles, responsibilities, lines of accountability, and best practices to ensure optimal partnership working on the formulation, planning, delivery, and reporting and evaluation of services for people affected by the use of alcohol and drugs.



National Specification for Alcohol and Drug Services

The National Specification for Alcohol and Drugs Services sets out the minimum service components that must be available within local systems for individuals and families affected by alcohol and drug use across Scotland.

Preventing Harm, Promoting Recovery: Key highlights

Key highlights from the Plan

- **Covers both alcohol and drugs:** Whilst we recognise the differences in regulatory frameworks for alcohol and drugs – and therefore the distinct opportunities for prevention – there are significant areas of overlap.
- **A human rights-based approach:** reaffirming our commitment to an underpinning human rights-based approach and embedding the Charter of Rights for People Affected by Substance Use
- **Renewed focus on prevention:** specific prevention measures to prevent people from developing problem alcohol and drug use and aligning with the Population Health Framework and cross government efforts to address the structural drivers of poor health.
- **Responding to new threats and changing trends:** optimising surveillance and expanding the learning from the MAT Standards to create standards for all drugs and alcohol treatment.
- **Taking a whole system approach:** recognising that substance use does not exist in isolation and there is a need for support across the full spectrum of settings that impact lives.
- **Supporting local accountability and delivery:** joint publication with COSLA and accompanied by a detailed partnership delivery framework.



Preventing Harm, Promoting Recovery: Overview

Outcomes

Priorities

Human Rights Based Approach:

People affected by alcohol and drugs have their human rights fulfilled.

a) Charter of Rights

b) People and families with LLE

c) Stigma

d) Non-discrimination & equality

Prevention & Early Intervention:

Fewer people develop problem alcohol and drug use.

a) Affordability, availability and attractiveness of alcohol

b) Healthy development of children and young people

c) Targeted support for at risk communities

d) Early intervention for at risk individuals

Harm Reduction:

Harm is reduced for people who use alcohol and drugs.

a) Connection and outreach

b) Scotland's surveillance & early warning system

c) Naloxone programme

d) Harms from drug injecting

e) Established and emerging ways to reduce drug harms

f) Alcohol specific harms

Treatment & Care:

People affected by alcohol and drugs receive high quality treatment and care services.

a) Overarching system for improved quality of services

b) Equal focus on alcohol and drugs treatment

c) Respond to changing trends

d) Barriers to residential services

e) Wider communities of care

Wider Circle of Support:

People affected by alcohol and drugs have wider needs supported by compassionate joined-up services.

a) Joined up and person-centred approach across all services

b) Co-occurring substance and mental health

c) Wider health system

d) Wider welfare services

e) Public health approach to justice

Delivering in Partnership:

Partners collaborate to support delivery and improvement, driven by evidence and shared accountability.

a) Local accountability for delivery

b) Supporting the voluntary sector

c) Skilled and resilient Workforce

d) National governance arrangements

e) Data, research and evidence

Human Rights Based Approach

Our overarching vision is for a Scotland where everyone can live with dignity through the realisation of internationally-recognised human rights. The Scottish Government therefore works to secure all human rights, for everyone in Scottish society - civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental.

In line with this, we will continue to ensure that our strategic approach to alcohol and drugs policy is firmly rooted in a human rights-based approach. Continuing to centre this approach will help to empower people to claim their rights and actively participate in decisions that shape their lives. It will foster a culture of dignity, respect and agency which is critical to tackling the stigma that remains a significant barrier to accessing support and services.

To translate this commitment into meaningful change, we must ensure that this approach is not only articulated at the national level but actively embedded in everyday practice.

Outcome: People affected by alcohol and drugs have their human rights fulfilled

Priorities:

- a) Embed Charter of Rights
- b) Empower people and families with LLE
- c) Tackle stigma
- d) Ensure non-discrimination and equality



Prevention and Early Intervention

Prevention is one of the most effective interventions that we can make to improve population health, reduce inequalities and ultimately ease pressure on acute services.

Many health harms - and particularly those caused by alcohol and drugs - fall disproportionately on more deprived communities. Significant work is underway across Government to address the structural drivers of poor health through tackling poverty and reducing inequality

The [Population Health Framework 2025](#) sets out how we, along with key partners, will tackle the environmental factors and fundamental causes of poor health in Scotland, through a long-term preventative approach. This Plan therefore focuses on additional, specific preventative measures targeted at preventing people from developing problem alcohol and drug use.

Outcome: Fewer people develop problem alcohol and drug use

Priorities:

- a) Tackle affordability, availability and attractiveness of alcohol
- b) Promote resilience in children and young people
- c) Target groups at highest risk
- d) Intervene early

Harm Reduction

Harm reduction focuses on minimising the negative consequences of alcohol and drug use – such as illness, injury and death – while promoting dignity, health and wellbeing. It plays an important role in making pathways to recovery available without being imposed, respecting individual choice. We remain firmly committed to evidence-based interventions that reduce the health and social harms associated with substance use.

Harm reduction support is often the first step towards entering treatment and recovery. Effective approaches include services, technology and data but, most importantly, interpersonal relationships.

Outcome: Harm is reduced for people who use alcohol and drugs

Priorities:

- a) Connection and outreach
- b) Optimise Scotland's surveillance and early warning system
- c) Enhance naloxone provision
- d) Reduce harms from drug injecting
- e) Support established and emerging ways to reduce drug harms
- f) Reduce alcohol specific harms

Treatment and Care

Ensuring access to high-quality treatment and care is essential for recovery.

Recovery is not always linear. There are many pathways on a person's recovery journey. So, treatment and care services must be flexible, trauma-informed, and responsive to individual goals. We are committed to evidence-based approaches and rights-based care for people and families affected by alcohol and drugs.

Outcome: People affected by alcohol and drugs receive high quality treatment, recovery and care services

Priorities:

- a) Establishing and delivering an overarching system for improved quality of services
- b) Parity of focus on alcohol and drugs treatment
- c) Respond to changing trends
- d) Reduce barriers to residential and crisis care
- e) Support wider communities of care



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Wider Circle of Support

Substance use does not exist in isolation, and neither should the response. It is crucial that we strengthen access to broader public services, and create thriving communities to ensure that people and families affected by substances are supported across the full spectrum of systems and settings that shape their lives.

From health, housing, justice, employment, social care and social work every part of the system has a role to play in promoting wellbeing and enabling prevention and recovery. By fostering collaboration across sectors, we can build a more connected and compassionate system - one that meets people where they are and helps them move forward with stability.

Outcome: People affected by alcohol and drugs have their wider needs supported by compassionate joined-up services

Priorities:

- a) Promote a joined up and person-centred approach across all services
- b) Ensure an accessible and responsive wider health system
- c) Support access to wider welfare services
- d) Support public health approach to justice
- e) Support wider communities of support

Delivering in Partnership

Successful delivery of the Plan requires strong partnership working and a whole system approach, with clear national direction and local flexibility. Local areas must be empowered to design interventions that reflect their specific needs and challenges, with robust governance and accountability mechanisms in place to ensure effective implementation.

Equally important - and dependent on strong collaboration - is a thriving voluntary sector, a skilled and resilience workforce and strong data, research and evidence practices. These elements enable compassionate care across all services and continuous improvement – ensuring that the Plan delivers meaningful outcomes for people, families and communities.

Outcome: Partners collaborate effectively to support delivery and continuous improvement, driven by evidence and shared accountability

Priorities:

- a) Strengthen local accountability for delivery
- b) Support the voluntary sector
- c) Support the workforce
- d) Streamlined national governance arrangements
- e) Improved data, research and evidence