



Our Health & Wellbeing Strategy
2021 – 2024

Being Well

Working together to
support the health and
wellbeing of our people



Pauline Howie
Chief Executive Officer

Foreword

Our Directors, Board members and staff representatives stand united in a shared pride of you and the work you are doing.

We see the care, compassion and commitment you demonstrate on a daily basis, we hear the many positive comments from grateful patients and we know that you are improving patient outcomes from the fantastic feedback and data we see regularly.

When we talk about our people, we mean everyone - from call handlers to fleet mechanics, to paramedics, care assistants, managers and volunteers. Whether you are in a clinical, leadership or support role we all work together to provide the best quality care each and every day. The services you provide make a real difference to the people of Scotland and they greatly value what you all do.

We recognise the emotionally and physically challenging nature of the roles our people perform. We also appreciate that there are often many other things going on in the lives of our people outside

of work that can add to these demands and pressures. We want to support our people to feel well, to be the best you can be at work and beyond and to grow and develop in your roles. This desire sits at the heart of our Health & Wellbeing strategy.

Creating, building and maintaining a strong sense of health and wellbeing within our people will ensure we continue to provide the best care to our patients and the implementation of the strategy will allow us to do that.

We have been challenged by the global pandemic in 2020, and looking out for one another and working together have made the difference. This is exactly what is required with our wellbeing strategy. It will bring benefits to everyone and to our patients. We all have a part to play if it is to be successful and we look forward to working in partnership with you over the next 3 years on our wellbeing journey.

Tom Steele
Chair of the Board



John Riggins
Employee Director

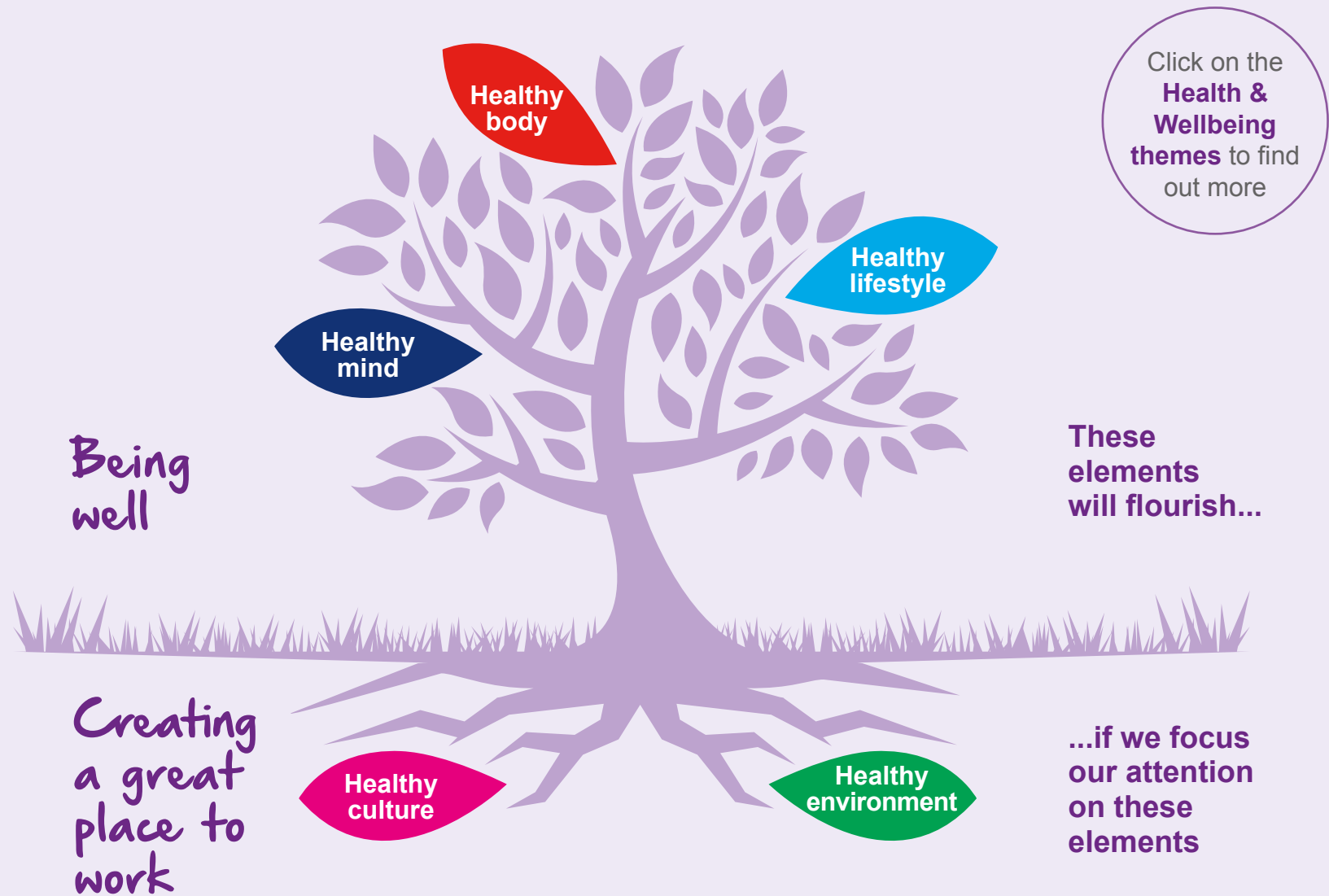



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Our Health & Wellbeing Strategy in summary





Mental / Emotional / Psychological
 → how we think & feel and how we cope with everyday life.




Social
 → the extent to which we feel a sense of belonging & included. How we communicate, our values, beliefs and how we operate as a team.



Financial
 → the ability to meet our basic needs & feel a sense of security.



Spiritual
 → the ability to experience meaning & purpose in life.



Physical
 → the functioning of our bodies including what we eat, how active we are & lifestyle choices that affect our physical health.



Growth & Development
 → expanding our knowledge & skills to develop our potential.



Culture
 → how we do things & treat one another, what it feels like to work in the organisation, how we live our values, behaviours & what is accepted or not.



Environment
 → physical environment, working practices, health & safety, uniforms & equipment and achieving a work / life balance.

Our Health & Wellbeing Vision

To enable our people to feel healthy, well, valued, supported and love working in the Scottish Ambulance Service

Wellbeing at work is about creating an environment that enables us to feel appreciated and valued, in which we can thrive and grow. It is about developing a culture in the workplace that is inclusive, where our interactions with one another reflect the values we hold and enable us to be the best we can be.

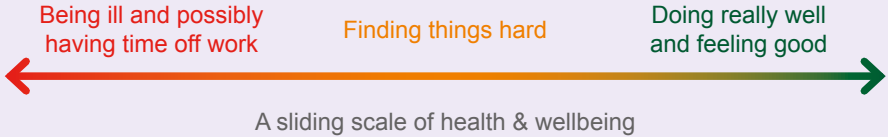
Wellbeing means different things to different people, which is no surprise given we have different motivations and ambitions at work and in life. We are therefore looking at wellbeing in this strategy in its broadest sense with many different, yet overlapping elements.

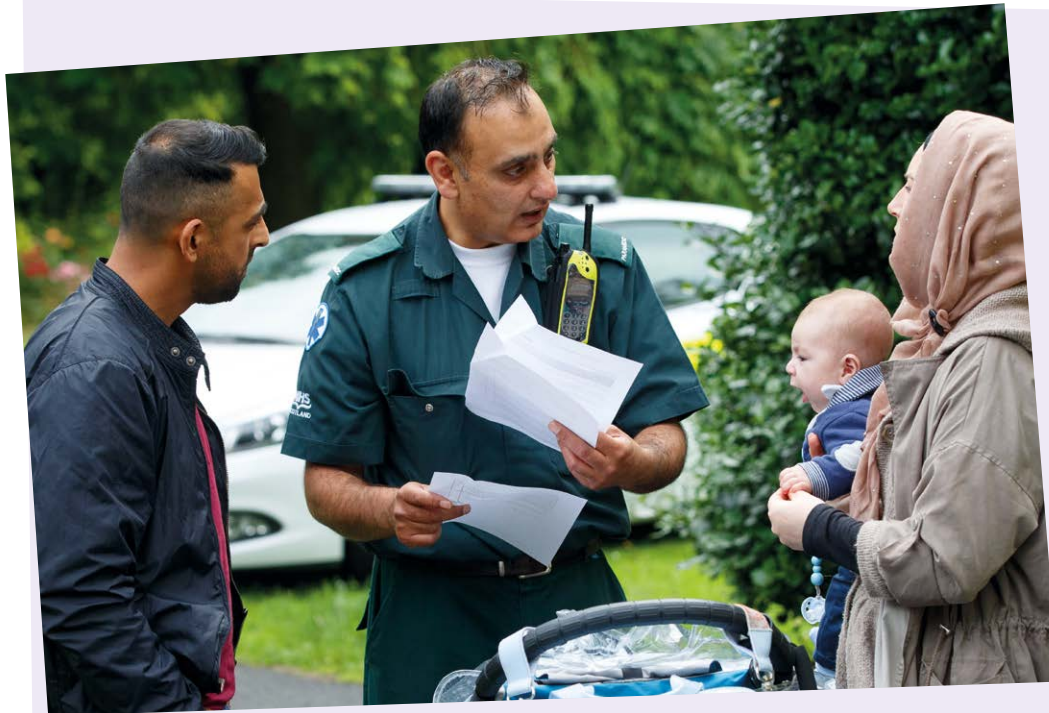
These different elements are at play on a daily basis and therefore how they are tackled by our organisation, our line managers, the teams we work in or by us individually will have a significant effect on our overall health & wellbeing.

Our wellbeing fluctuates not just throughout our working lives, but on a day to day basis. One way of thinking about this is in terms of a sliding scale as in the diagram below.

How resilient you are, how well you are supported and how any situation is managed in the organisation will not only determine how you move up or indeed down the scale, but how quickly. The actions we will take to deliver this strategy are focused on enabling our people to be in the 'doing really well' end of the scale and being able to thrive at work.

We have co-designed this strategy with our people building on existing good practice and incorporating global research on what works to bring out the best in our people that enables them to be able to think and act in a positive way about the work they do, the people they work with and our organisation they work within.





Why health & wellbeing is important

Day in, day out, our people demonstrate a willingness to put the interests of those they care for first.

They are frequently exposed to potentially distressing situations, accident scenes and threats to safety for themselves and others that places huge demands on both their physical and mental health and wellbeing. Unpredictable work, working hours, relationships with colleagues, a lack of support, control over work and other organisational factors can make these situations worse. These factors do not just affect clinical staff; they relate to and impact upon staff and volunteers in all roles within the Service.

work stress and poor mental health. More recently there has been much discussion and indeed concern regarding the longer term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health and wellbeing of those who work in health and social care.

The cumulative effect of the stresses of the job combined with organisational factors sustained over a prolonged period of time pose significant risk to the wellbeing of our people, the quality of care we provide to our patients and the overall performance of our organisation. International research has further indicated these pressures extend beyond the workforce and can have a significant impact on spouses, partners, children and family functioning. Reversing these risks and trends does not happen overnight, it requires constant focused attention over a long period of time and everyone needs to be involved.

The Kings College and Open University research paper¹ in July 2020 concluded that those working in emergency responder roles may be at greater risk of adverse health & wellbeing outcomes. The mental health charity MIND's 2015 survey revealed that 27% of emergency responders had contemplated taking their own lives due to

“Organisations that focus on building great workplaces also improve employees’ physical & mental health and lifespans as a result”

Jeffrey Pfeffer, Great Place to Work for All Summit 2018

¹ Assessing the mental health and wellbeing of the emergency responder community in the UK, Kings College, London and The Open University July 2020



Why health & wellbeing is important

Research tells us that there are several factors known to promote, support and improve health and wellbeing as well as increase staff engagement, job satisfaction and morale.

Some of these factors include: strong leadership with a visible commitment to staff health and wellbeing; supportive managers with good people management skills and the confidence and competence to support others' wellbeing; a culture of openness that enables people to speak up and have conversations about difficult

issues; talking to colleagues, strong support networks and effective teamwork; having a sense of control over your work, being listened to and involved in decisions; having good working conditions, a healthy work-life balance and opportunities for growth and development and being equipped with the awareness, knowledge, confidence and tools to look after your own health and wellbeing and of those around you.

This strategy aims to make a difference in these areas.

59% *of our people said they were concerned about their health at work*

Stress Survey conducted in the Scottish Ambulance Service 2019. 1286 people completed the survey out of 5,200 who were sent it (25% response rate)



What our people are telling us to prioritise

- ➔ Making the health & wellbeing of our people the top priority
- ➔ Listening to our people & addressing their concerns
- ➔ Our people feeling valued & supported
- ➔ Achieving a better work / life balance
- ➔ Reducing the stresses & pressures of relief working
- ➔ Having regular conversations with and feedback from managers
- ➔ Development & training for managers to help them support our peoples' health & wellbeing
- ➔ Developing peer support
- ➔ Mental health training for our people
- ➔ Having non-judgemental debriefs following specific incidents
- ➔ Helping our people to maintain fitness
- ➔ Having a dedicated resource to support our peoples' welfare and wellbeing

"Listen to the very small requests made by staff that could easily be accommodated"

"Show staff with mental health issues that they are still valued"

"Our staff are the most valuable and precious asset we have"

"We need to come together and work as proper teams"

"We are good at looking after our patients, but not so good at looking after each other"

"We need to take a proactive approach rather than reactive"

What are our people telling us?

As an employer, we have a duty of care to support, protect, nurture and develop our people so that they can thrive at work and perform to the best of their abilities.

We cannot understand and address the health and wellbeing needs of our people without their active involvement. Health and wellbeing affects everyone in the Service and we will not make the progress we desire unless we all work together and commit to making small changes that will make a difference.

We have sought, collated and gathered feedback and views across our organisation over the last couple of years from discussions at many of our Service groups and committees, emails and feedback forms, data collated from staff experience, wellbeing and stress surveys, the 'What matters to you' campaign and through informal discussions every day in the workplace.

We would like to thank all who contributed for openly sharing your thoughts and views with the positive intent of making things better for you and your colleagues. Your input is valued and collectively has shaped the future direction and content of our Health & Wellbeing strategy over the next three years.

Five key themes emerged from the data within two overall categories and these are the areas where we will focus our attention over the next three years:

Being Well

- Healthy Mind
- Healthy Body
- Healthy Lifestyle

Creating a great place to work

- Healthy Culture
- Healthy Environment

Our Health & Wellbeing Themes

Creating a great place to work

Our Aim: Our people feel valued, supported, listened to and treated with dignity & respect and would recommend the Scottish Ambulance Service as a great place to work.



Healthy Culture 2021 – 2024



WHAT we will achieve

- Actively seeking our peoples' views, opinions and feedback on what matters to them, acting on it and reporting back what has happened as a result
- Utilising and spreading the 'Civility saves lives' approach and key messages to promote and increase individual responsibility & accountability and further improve working relationships and environments
- Improving recognition of our people through wide use of GREATix and further development of individual and team awards'
- Improving relationships and understanding of each other's' roles through shadowing and paired learning programmes
- Increasing support for managers and their teams that enables them to have meaningful wellbeing and development conversations in the workplace
- Delivering the Foundation Leadership & Management Development Programme to all first level managers ensuring a strong focus on both people management skills & caring for the health & wellbeing of our people
- Introduction of leadership mentors to support and facilitate the development of leadership programme participants' skills in the workplace

HOW we will achieve it

- Continuing to develop our leaders and managers so they have the confidence and capability to effectively support the wellbeing of our people
- Building a caring and compassionate climate in which our people feel able to speak up and issues and concerns are addressed in a supportive manner
- Ensuring our behaviours reflect the values we hold
- Enabling managers to have regular meaningful conversations with and support the development of their people
- Working effectively with our Partnership representatives
- Continuing to explore innovative ways to communicate and engage with our people

How we will know it is successful

- Our people report they feel able to speak up about issues that affect them and that their views are taken on board
- We see a positive improvement in the results of surveys and feedback regarding how our people are valued, supported and developed
- Our managers feel knowledgeable and confident to support our peoples' health & wellbeing
- Employee relation issues are resolved quickly at a local level

Our Health & Wellbeing Themes



Healthy Environment 2021 – 2024



WHAT we will achieve

- Implementing the recommendations from the Demand and Capacity review to improve working practices and achieve a better work /life balance
- Implementing the Fatigue Management Framework and accompanying action plan in Partnership
- Implementation of Office 365 and increased use of digital technology to support flexible working practices
- Maximising the use of our estate & external facilities to promote wellness and create de-stress zones
- Seeking opportunities for sponsorship and fundraising that enables us to support new health and wellbeing initiatives and benefits for our people
- Enabling teams to undertake team development programmes and activity that supports effective collaboration across our organisation and with external partners
- Developing a family resource pack to raise awareness of what it is like working in an emergency service and how families can support and engage with the Service

HOW we will achieve it

- Taking proactive steps to reduce organisational stressors in the workplace
- Having policies and working practices that support health and wellbeing and a healthy work / life balance
- Creating a positive work environment that our people enjoy working in
- Having some fun in the workplace!
- Strengthening our teamwork and collaboration across teams and departments
- Smart use of digital technology to improve our working practices and environment

How we will know it is successful

- Our people feel a sense of purpose at work and feel valued for the contribution they make
- Our people would recommend the Scottish Ambulance Service as a great place to work
- There is a reduction in the number of our people absent due to work related stress
- Recruitment campaigns will achieve a strong pool of candidates that reinforce our reputation as an employer people want to work with

Our Health & Wellbeing Themes

Being Well

Our Aim: Our people feel a good sense of health & wellbeing at work & able to manage and balance the pressures & challenges within their working lives.



Healthy Mind 2021 – 2024



WHAT we will achieve

- Delivery of Mental Health First Aid Training
- Developing personal resilience practices and techniques to suit different needs such as mindfulness, breath work, yoga or wellbeing coaching
- Developing peer support skills across the Service through a range of training programmes provided by Lifelines
- Establishment of a Service wide peer support network
- Embedding a range of peer and trauma support interventions from informal approaches like RUOK? to specialist psychological support for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Embedding effective debriefing practices at incidents (hot debriefs) and following incidents (cold debriefs)
- Expansion of spiritual support and introduction of practices to enable reflection on the emotional aspects of work
- The provision of support and resources through Lifelines for our people, their families and retirees

HOW we will achieve it

- Designing and implementing formal and informal peer support approaches that enable our people to effectively support one another
- Reducing the stigma associated with mental health through education and mental health first aid training
- Working closely with partner organisation Lifelines for peer support training and development
- Proactively seeking best practice and guidance to further support and develop effective techniques to improve the resilience of our people

How we will know it is successful

- Our people take notice of one another, know when to offer support and ask each other RUOK? and are confident in their skills and abilities to handle the response
- A consistent approach to peer support is utilised across the Service
- Mental health is discussed openly and our people are confident to seek mental health help when they need it
- Our people are able to manage and balance the ever changing demands in work and life

Our Health & Wellbeing Themes



Healthy Body 2021 – 2024



WHAT we will achieve

- Developing activity that promotes physical wellbeing in the workplace such as on site therapies, walking meetings or exercises for office based workers
- Promotion and signposting of resources that support physical wellbeing campaigns throughout the year such as weight loss, managing eating disorders, smoking cessation, tackling alcohol or substance misuse or living with a long term condition
- Developing ways to encourage physical fitness at work such as the provision of fitness equipment (as appropriate within our current estate)
- Exploring opportunities to access external fitness programmes and facilities, especially in our bases with limited options and space
- Introduction of a competitive physical / sporting event with other Blue Light services
- Investing in contemporary equipment to minimise risk to our people in order to effectively carry out their roles

HOW we will achieve it

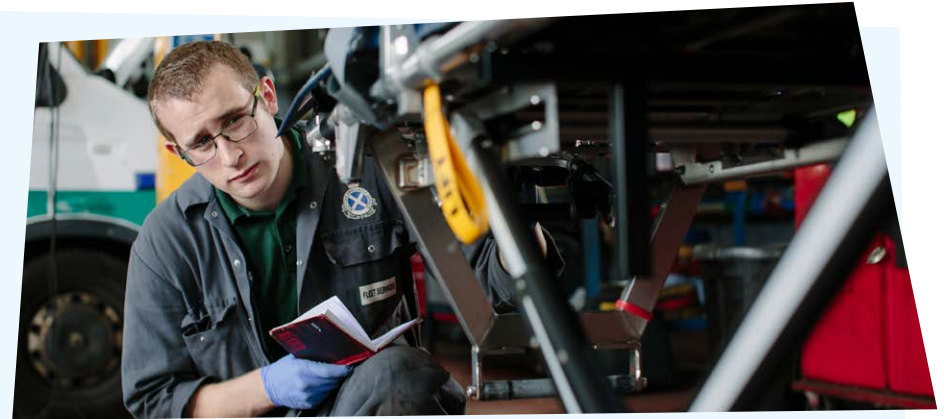
- Taking a proactive and preventative approach to our physical health and wellbeing
- Listening to our people to understand their physical wellbeing needs and developing service provision accordingly
- Ensuring our physical wellbeing resources and toolkits are accessible and promoted effectively
- Working collaboratively with our Blue Light Service partners

How we will know it is successful

- Our people will feel well informed regarding the help and resources that are available to support their physical fitness and wellbeing
- There will be a range of physical fitness interventions in the Service that suit the various needs of our people
- Our people will report an increased sense of physical wellbeing at work through surveys and benchmarking activity



Healthy Lifestyle 2021 – 2024



WHAT we will achieve

- Introducing wellbeing checks for our people and personal wellbeing plans
- Developing a wellbeing network in our organisation
- Phasing a series of proactive health promotion campaigns supported by Service wellbeing vehicles
- Delivering a wellbeing calendar of events
- Having a range of wellbeing services to suit the diverse requirements of our people from occupational health and counselling to psychological first aid and mindfulness
- Introducing resources and planning tools to positively support and manage financial wellbeing
- Introduction of wellbeing coaching and career coaching
- Developing a dedicated wellbeing team to support and co-ordinate wellbeing activity

HOW we will achieve it

- Ensuring health & wellbeing is central to everything we do
- Ensuring our people have easy access to a range of supportive services, resources and toolkits
- Seeking feedback on & involvement with our wellbeing provision to continually improve & ensure it addresses the needs of our people
- Introducing initiatives that focus more on a proactive and preventative approach to health and wellbeing

How we will know it is successful

- Our people will feel well informed as to how and where to seek and access help and support when they need it
- Wellbeing services, resources and toolkits will be well utilised
- We will see a positive improvement in the results of surveys, feedback and benchmarking exercises in regard to health and wellbeing
- Our knowledge base of the health and wellbeing of our people, the effectiveness of our interventions and what support is being accessed will improve through more reliable reporting and use of data
- Achieving healthy working lives gold status



Implementing the strategy

The pace of progress in implementing the strategy and achieving our aspirations will be determined by the commitment and support of our people, by putting Health & Wellbeing at the centre of all we do and by working together to transform this strategy into a meaningful lived experience for us all.

The more we all work together to make the changes happen, the better the health and wellbeing experience of all our people.

We can all incorporate wellbeing into our working day: whether supporting a colleague or providing them with wellbeing information or resources; participating in wellbeing activities, groups or networks; providing ideas or suggestions to improve wellbeing; making an effort to make team members working remotely feel included; asking someone who doesn't seem their usual self RUOK?; supporting and encouraging personal development or undertaking new learning to support the wellbeing of your team.

This is a three-year strategy and work will be phased over that period and beyond. We will not be able to achieve everything in the first year so we will prioritise what we need to focus on first. The work that we are undertaking is significant and is also dependent upon a number of other work streams and programmes progressing at the same time in the Service.

This strategy document provides our overall direction of travel but more detail of the priorities over the first year and what will be delivered is provided in an accompanying document to this strategy called the [Health & Wellbeing Roadmap 2021 - 2022](#).

“Improving the overall work environment by creating a great place to work for all is a far more effective way to keep employees healthy”

Jeffrey Pfeffer, Great Place to Work for All Summit 2018



References & Sources of Information

[Ambulance Victoria Mental Health & Wellbeing Action Plan 2019 - 2022](#)

[Association of Ambulance Chief Executives \(AACE\) Employee Mental Health Strategy Guidance \(2018\)](#)

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[New Economics Foundation \(2008\) Five Ways to Wellbeing](#)

[NHS Education for Scotland \(2020\) Psychosocial and mental health & wellbeing support](#)

[NHS Employers \(2018\) Health and Wellbeing Framework](#)

[Oscar Kilo \(2018\) The Blue Light Wellbeing Framework](#)

[The Kings Fund \(2017\) Improving NHS Culture](#)

[Kings College & Open University \(2020\) Assessing the mental health & wellbeing of the Emergency Responder community in the UK](#)

[Lifelines Scotland](#)



We are keen to keep the dialogue going about health & wellbeing in the Service.

[You can leave some feedback here](#)

or you can contribute to the discussion [here](#)



**Scottish
Ambulance
Service**
Taking Care to the Patient

