



Climate Strategy

Strengthening Community
Wellbeing in a Changing Climate

2026-30

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Introduction

Climate change is now a Climate Emergency and is affecting communities across Scotland, with growing impacts on daily life, local infrastructure and access to support. These changes are not only environmental; they also affect wellbeing and resilience, particularly where extreme weather and disruption make it harder for people to reach services and maintain the support networks they rely on.

The mental health impacts of climate change are significant and growing. Climate-related events are associated with increased risk of anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress, while wider awareness of the climate crisis is contributing to rising levels of distress. Emerging evidence suggests that around two-thirds of people in Scotland are concerned about climate change, with many reporting a direct impact on their mental wellbeing. As these pressures increase, they will continue to influence how people experience mental health challenges and how they seek support.

Community is at the heart of our response. As a community-based organisation, we will work in partnership with staff, volunteers, and the communities we support to embed sustainability across our services and operations. Our approach focuses on strengthening wellbeing, increasing resilience, and ensuring people feel informed, supported and able to take meaningful action.

This strategy sets out how Change Mental Health will embed climate action across our organisation, strengthen the resilience of the communities we support, and contribute to Scotland's transition to a just, low-carbon future. It aligns with Scotland's ambitions to reduce emissions and build climate resilience, while recognising the vital role that mental health and community wellbeing play in supporting that transition.



Our Commitment

Change Mental Health recognises climate change as both an environmental challenge and issue for mental health, wellbeing, and community resilience. We will take proportionate, evidence-led action to reduce the environmental impact of our own operations, strengthen the resilience of our services, and support communities experiencing the mental health impacts of a changing climate.

Aim 1: Community Action

We believe that community is the most powerful driver of climate action. By bringing together staff, service users, partners and community groups, we can take collective action that supports mental health and wellbeing.

Partnership working is central to this approach. The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2024 recognises the importance of community-led climate action in delivering a just transition, and Scotland's network of regional Climate Action Hubs demonstrates the value of local collaboration in building participation, relevance and long-term impact.

Aim 2: Climate Confidence

Being climate confident means understanding how our actions contribute to climate change and having the knowledge, support and tools to respond. This shared understanding will help us strengthen organisational culture, support delivery of this strategy and embed sustainable practice more consistently across our work.

Aim 3: Carbon Reduction

We are committed to reducing the direct and indirect emissions we produce across our sites, services and systems. By lowering energy demand, improving resource use and making more sustainable operational decisions, we will reduce our environmental impact and strengthen the long-term resilience of the organisation.

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Our Progress

Change Mental Health has already taken practical steps to embed sustainability across the organisation. These actions provide a strong foundation for the commitments set out in this strategy and for building a clearer evidence base over time.

Transition to Sustainable Energy

We have begun moving to more sustainable energy suppliers to help reduce carbon emissions and improve the environmental performance of our sites.

Integration of Green and Nature-Based Approaches

We make use of green spaces within our buildings and local communities to support wellbeing and connect our work more closely with the natural environment.

Climate-Conscious Communications

We use our website and social media to highlight environmental awareness days and the links between climate change, sustainability and mental health.

Climate Wellbeing Initiatives

We piloted Staying Grounded training for young people in rural Highland communities, helping people understand and respond to climate-related stress.

Support for Sustainable Travel

We have introduced benefits that support lower-carbon travel choices, including the Cycle to Work scheme and rail season-ticket loans.

Flexible Working to Reduce Emissions

We continue to support flexible working where appropriate, helping to reduce commuting-related emissions while supporting staff wellbeing.

Environmental Volunteering

As part of our Operations strategy day, we took part in a litter pick at Leith Links, combining team activity with practical environmental action.

case study

The Impact of Carbon Literacy on Climate Anxiety

Before completing Carbon Literacy training, I experienced climate anxiety regularly. I worried I wasn't doing enough and felt frustrated that others appeared disengaged. Not knowing where to start made the problem feel overwhelming, and I avoided climate information entirely — reinforcing a sense of helplessness.

During the first sessions of Carbon Literacy training, this anxiety initially increased as I confronted information I had been avoiding. However, as the course progressed, learning about climate measures already underway across Scotland and the UK helped place the issue in context. I began to understand where individual and organisational action fits within the bigger picture, which made the challenge feel more manageable and meaningful.

A key turning point was realising that I was already contributing to carbon reduction through choices like walking to work and eating less meat, and that focusing on high impact actions mattered far more than perfecting low impact ones. This reduced unnecessary worry and strengthened my sense of agency.

About a month after the training, I noticed a significant reduction in climate anxiety and a more hopeful outlook. This shift inspired me to take further action, including developing a climate anxiety training pilot for young farmers in the Highlands, continuing positive personal behaviours, and engaging in climate-related events and community projects.

This experience demonstrates that Carbon Literacy supports not only climate action but also mental wellbeing. It empowers staff, reduces anxiety, and enables us to contribute meaningfully to our organisational climate strategy and the communities we serve.

Jaz Lacey-Campbell

Workplace and Operations Lead at Change Mental Health

Community Action

Community Action is central to this strategy because climate change is experienced locally, and its effects on wellbeing, resilience and access to support are shaped by place, relationships and community. For Change Mental Health, community-based action offers the strongest route to meaningful impact by building partnerships, widening access to supportive environments and ensuring that people most affected by climate-related pressures are included in the response.

Partnerships that support climate and community action: They help ensure our climate work is relevant, locally informed and rooted in the needs of the communities we support. We will strengthen partnerships to support climate action and mental wellbeing in communities, use local insight to shape relevant and inclusive approaches, and enable participation in meaningful climate action across our teams and services.

Expand the use of green spaces across services and sites: Green spaces can support wellbeing and provide practical opportunities to connect community-based mental health support with the natural environment. As we develop our services we will integrate this link within our whole-body approach to mental health, supporting people to be active as part of their mental health journey.

Focus on climate issues affecting at-risk communities and promote inclusive climate action: Climate change does not affect all communities equally, so our approach must prioritise inclusion and support for those facing the greatest challenges. We will prioritise work in communities more affected by climate-related challenges, including those facing barriers to access. This will help ensure support is relevant, accessible and inclusive.

By 2030, we will have:

- Established strong, sustained partnerships in every locality, with active participation in Scotland's Climate Action Hubs and collaboration with community and third sector organisations
- Embedded regular outdoor and nature-based activity as a core part of service delivery, supporting improved wellbeing and strengthening connection to place
- Co-designed and delivered ongoing community-led initiatives, shaped in partnership with staff, people who use our services, and local organisations
- Developed and embedded targeted, place-responsive programmes that meet the needs of communities most affected by climate-related challenges, including young people and rural communities
- Ensured that all community-based climate activity is accessible and inclusive, with services and resources designed to meet diverse needs, including digital access and disability requirements.

Climate Confidence

Climate confidence is a core aim of this strategy because meaningful action depends on people feeling informed, supported and able to respond. For Change Mental Health, this means building knowledge across the organisation and using our expertise to strengthen wider understanding of the relationship between climate and mental health.

Build climate confidence across our organisation: One of the biggest barriers people face is not knowing where to start. Building climate confidence across staff, volunteers and trustees will help embed sustainability into everyday practice and support real change. Having the right information, training and resources creates an approach based on shared learning and collaboration, where everyone feels able to take part and contribute, even in small ways.

Expand climate anxiety training and support: As climate-related anxiety and distress grow, it is increasingly important that people feel able to understand and respond to what they are experiencing. Without the right support, climate anxiety can feel overwhelming or isolating, making it harder for people to engage with the issue or feel hopeful about the future. Providing access to clear, practical information and support helps build understanding, resilience, and confidence.

Demonstrate leadership in climate and mental health: There is a growing need for clear, reliable information on how climate change affects mental health, but it is not always easy to find or consistently understood. Taking a more active role in this area helps ensure that people have access to information they can trust and use in a practical way. By building on what we already know, we can support better understanding across services, partners and communities.

By 2030, we will have:

- Established a confident and capable workforce, supported by a network of Climate Champions across services
- Embedded opportunities for staff, volunteers and trustees to develop knowledge in climate, sustainability and climate anxiety
- Developed a clear and accessible external knowledge base on climate, sustainability and mental health through our digital and public channels
- Created a central Sustainability Hub for staff, providing practical guidance, tools and resources, supported by shared learning with partners
- Fully integrated climate anxiety training within our wider training offer, with content tailored to different groups, including young people and rural communities
- Built a robust and growing evidence base demonstrating the impact of green space, community action and climate-informed support on mental wellbeing
- Achieved and maintained recognition as an accredited Carbon Literacy Organisation

Carbon Reduction

Carbon Reduction is a core aim of this strategy because our buildings, utilities and day-to-day operations all contribute to our environmental impact. By improving our emissions baseline, reducing gas and electricity use, and using resources more efficiently, we can lower emissions while strengthening the long-term resilience and sustainability of the organisation.

Improve baseline knowledge across our emissions and operations: A clear baseline will strengthen our understanding of organisational impact and support more informed decision-making. This will help focus effort where it has the greatest impact and improves how we monitor and prioritise action over time. We will develop a consistent overview of our emissions and operations, improve visibility of performance across sites and systems, and embed ongoing monitoring and reporting to help guide priorities over time.

Reduce gas and electricity use across our estates: Gas and electricity form a significant part of our emissions profile, making energy use across the estate a key focus for reducing our environmental impact. We will take a strategic approach to this by ensuring sustainability is embedded within how we understand, manage, and plan our buildings and operations, supporting a long-term shift towards lower carbon impact.

Use resources efficiently across our organisation: Using resources carefully is part of reducing our overall environmental impact. This means cutting down on waste, making better use of what we already have, and thinking about sustainability in everyday decisions across the organisation. By doing this consistently, we can lower our indirect emissions and build more sustainable ways of working over time.

By 2030, we will have:

- Established a clear and credible understanding of our organisational emissions, with consistent reporting and demonstrable progress in reducing our carbon footprint
- Embedded carbon awareness into how we manage and develop our estate, ensuring that energy use, efficiency, and environmental impact shape how spaces are used and improved
- Integrated sustainability into organisational decision-making, with procurement and resource use aligned to recognised environmental standards
- Adopted a responsible and efficient approach to digital systems and technologies, ensuring they support both operational effectiveness and environmental sustainability
- Embedded a lifecycle approach to assets across the organisation, where reuse, recycling and responsible disposal are standard practice
- Achieved and maintained recognised environmental accreditation, demonstrating our commitment to continuous improvement and accountability.

Reporting Framework: Annual Climate & Community Impact Report

We will publish an annual Climate & Community Impact Report alongside our organisational reporting cycle to track progress against our three strategic aims. The report will set out both the scale of activity and the outcomes achieved, and will inform future planning and resource decisions.

This framework will continue to evolve as our evidence base develops, supporting a clearer understanding of impact and informing future priorities.

Community Action

- Partnerships with local, third sector and environmental organisations, and the reach of collaborative activity
- Volunteering and participation from staff, service users and communities
- Delivery and impact of Staying Grounded training
- Access to and use of green spaces, including wellbeing outcomes

Climate Confidence

- Staff engagement with sustainability training and resources
- Climate Working Group activity and organisational involvement
- Uptake and impact of carbon literacy and sustainability learning

Carbon Reduction

- Year-on-year Scope 1 and 2 emissions
- Energy use and efficiency improvements
- Waste reduction, recycling rates, and IT reuse

Quarterly Climate Working Group Updates

A cross-organisational Climate Working Group, led by Climate Champions, will meet quarterly to review delivery and monitor progress. This approach ensures regular oversight, accountability and a consistent view of progress across the organisation.

This will include:

- Progress against actions under each aim
- Community engagement, partnerships and volunteering
- Service-level activity and emerging impact
- Carbon reduction performance (Scope 1 and 2, energy use, digital sustainability)
- Key risks, challenges and opportunities

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This Strategy provides a clear and practical framework for how we will strengthen our contribution to climate action.

By focusing on Community Action, Climate Confidence and Carbon Reduction, it sets out a coordinated approach that reflects our values, our responsibilities and the role we play within the communities we support.

In the first year, we will establish the foundations for delivery by completing our environmental baseline, defining how progress will be measured and reported, and creating the governance structures needed to turn ambition into action. This will include developing a network of Climate Champions among staff and volunteers to support delivery across the organisation.

We will then embed change across our services, operations and decision-making. As knowledge and confidence grow, Community Action will shape locally relevant delivery, Climate Confidence will equip staff, volunteers and communities to respond, and Carbon Reduction will inform everyday operational choices. Together, these aims will support wellbeing and make sustainability part of everyday practice.

Finally, we will use our learning, partnerships and evidence to lead and influence. We will share practical insight on the relationship between climate and mental health, support communities to respond to climate-related challenges, and use our annual reporting to demonstrate what works and inform wider practice. In doing so, we will contribute to a more resilient and sustainable future.

Together, these commitments will enable meaningful local climate action, reduce our environmental impact, and empower staff and communities to contribute to a more sustainable and resilient future.

Climate change affects both the world around us and how people feel. By acting together and demonstrating positive change, we can reduce anxiety, build resilience and lower our environmental impact. In doing so, we can support communities to navigate a changing climate with confidence and hope.