A Catalyst for Change

Strategic Priorities 2026–2031



Contents

4 Chair’s Foreword

5 CEO’s Foreword

6 Our Vision, Mission and Values

8 Executive Summary

14 Making Strategy Real: How we use ‘Catalyst for Change’

16 Strategic Priorities

17 Strategic Principles

22 Organisational Commitments



Chair's Foreword

Change Mental Health is an organisation of ambition and drive – and our new strategy 'A Catalyst for Change' demonstrates that.

This organisation, over the last five years, has been on an incredible journey: professionalising how it works, and improving its systems, processes, leadership and capabilities. This has been a profound period of change where our growth, scope, reputation and impact have massively increased.

Now, 'A Catalyst for Change' sets the direction for our next phase. One where we identify the significant impact we can have in innovating, pushing boundaries, and connecting the different aspects of mental health and mental illness together. This strategy firmly places Change Mental Health as a catalyst for improving not just the quality of the services we provide but also improving the mental health system of Scotland.

Throughout the strategy are golden threads that really embody what Change Mental Health has become: a laser focus on innovation, strong advocacy for early intervention and prevention, the championing of evidence-based services and support, alongside a strong belief and commitment to collaboration.

Big thanks to the Board, our Chief Executive, Nick, our Senior Leadership Team and everyone who contributed towards producing our new, ambitious strategy. Also, a special thanks to our staff team, who every single day go out of their way to make Change Mental Health a success by providing innovative services to an increasing number of people with their mental health and those impacted by mental illness.

– Alan Clarke, Chair of the Board
Change Mental Health



CEO's Foreword

I am incredibly proud to present to you our new strategy, 'A Catalyst for Change'. One that places Change Mental Health at the heart of our mental health system and at the forefront of providing the very best support to people across Scotland.

We have consulted with the people we support, our staff and a host of different stakeholders to arrive at a set of priorities, principles and commitments, all informed by our values, vision and mission. These will not just be words on a page but tools that are used every day in decision-making and are 'made real' in our day-to-day work.

Change Mental Health will continue to deliver transformative services and support, and will continue to advocate for a better system for people who are experiencing poor mental health and mental illness. We also now commit ourselves to innovation, pushing a quality agenda and supporting the whole system to be better.

At the centre of everything we are doing is the belief that things simply aren't good enough and the people of this country deserve better: better services, better attitudes, better support and a better system. We believe that this strategy will ensure that we are a champion for that better future.

Fundamentally, Change Mental Health believes that the world can and must be better for those who struggle with their mental health and those with mental illness. It will take the combined efforts of not just this organisation but of government, the NHS, local authorities, the private sector and the third sector to make it happen. Through 'A Catalyst for Change', we commit ourselves to leading the charge to ensure that there is a future where no one needs to face mental illness alone.

– Nick Ward, CEO
Change Mental Health

Our Vision

A future where no one needs to face mental illness alone.

Our Mission

We deliver the transformational support people need, when they need it and in ways that work for them.

We contribute to transforming society by changing attitudes, challenging stigma and influencing government to ensure a better quality of life for those affected by mental illness and their loved ones.

Our Values

Leadership

We innovate. We do the difficult things. We work in and build partnerships with others.

Dignity and Compassion

We recognise human beings as complex, unique and all deserving of love. We reach out to others and show kindness.

Courage and Commitment

We face challenges head on and we speak out when we see injustice.

Lived Experience

We are committed to person-centred approaches and meaningful participation.

Integrity

We are transparent, open and honest.

Our Strategic Priorities

1 Deliver transformative, exemplary and evidence-based support and services that set the standard for quality.



2 Focus our resources where we can make the greatest impact for people with mental illness and their loved ones.



3 Innovate, influence and inspire change across the mental health system, the third sector and society.



Our Strategic Principles

1. **Exemplary, Evidence-Led Support and Insight**

2. **Early Intervention and Prevention**

3. **Campaigning, Changing the System and Providing a Platform**

4. **Whole Person Approach**

5. **Meaningful Participation and Purpose**

Organisational Commitments

1. We deliver high-quality, trauma-informed support.
2. We build sustainable and flexible income.
3. We operate with strong governance and proportionate systems.
4. We commit to fair work and a supportive culture.
5. We act with integrity and transparency.
6. We believe in collaboration.
7. We recognise and champion diversity.
8. We are committed to working in Rural and Island communities.



Making Strategy Real

How we use ‘Catalyst for Change’

Our new strategy is different than any we have had before. It is not an exhaustive list of things we will do, but instead three overriding strategic priorities supported by five strategic focus areas.

They are designed to be used as a tool to decide when we should and should not do something, how we prioritise our activity and how we make sure we are having the greatest contribution we can.

Our vision, mission and values, along with our strategic priorities and principles, backed by our ways of working, are a framework for the next years of Change Mental Health’s development.

They are practical tools that we will build into, and use to inform, our annual and multi-annual strategic planning cycle. They will be made ‘real’ in the decisions we make, in our annual plans, our budgets, our strategies and in our governance.



‘A Catalyst for Change’ is

- A 5-year strategic framework (2026–2030/31).
- A statement of where we choose to focus energy and influence.
- A clear articulation of who we are and how we operate at our best.
- A values-led document with measurable ambition.
- The foundation for business plans, budgets and workforce strategies.

‘A Catalyst for Change’ is not

- A list of everything we do.
- A detailed operational manual.
- A funding strategy.
- A workforce policy.
- A compliance document.

Operational detail is in

- Our Annual Work Plans
- Our Annual Budgets
- Our Workforce and Fundraising Strategy
- Our Annual Appraisal Objectives
- Our Quality Assurance Framework

Strategic Planning Cycle

Every year, Change Mental Health conducts a strategic planning cycle where it uses its vision, mission, values, strategic priorities and focus areas to create the following:



Annual Work Plans, Annual Budgets, Workforce Strategy, Fundraising Strategy

Annually

Annual Work Plan

- This plan is approved by the board
- This should clearly set out activities that different parts of the organisations will be working on and how they meet strategic priorities and focus areas.

Annual Budget

- The budget is approved by the board
- This should clearly evidence how the resources of the charity are meeting its strategic priorities and focus areas, with any investment clearly demonstrating how it will move the charity towards achieving its aims.

Timing at the discretion of the board

Workforce Strategy

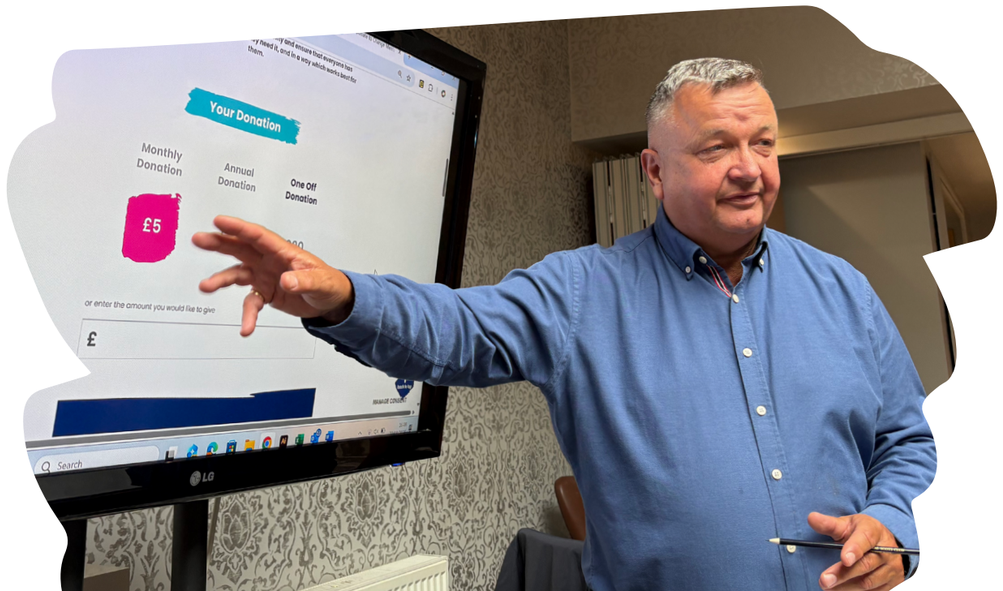
- This is approved by the board
- A plan of how we ensure we are one of the best places to work in Scotland
- A plan of how we attract, retain and develop our staff
- An assessment of our benefits, salary structures and additional responsibility payments.

Quality Assurance Framework

- This is our core ‘operational’ document and sets out the key activities that different parts of the organisation conducts
- It has examples of what best practice looks like and what we should be aspiring to as an organisation.

Fundraising Strategy

- This is approved by the board
- This sets how the organisation will raise the required funds to make our strategic priorities possible.



Our Strategic Priorities

These are our three overarching strategic priorities for Change Mental Health. We believe that these are the fundamental drivers that all of our activity must relate to.

1 Deliver transformative, exemplary and evidence-based support and services that set the standard for quality.

We remain committed to providing brilliant services for people to support them with their mental health. We will ensure that our services are the very best that they can be, based on evidence and provide excellent outcomes for those we support.

2 Focus our resources where we can make the greatest impact for people with mental illness and their loved ones.

We will focus our resources on the critical places that affect people's mental health: early intervention and prevention, in relation to their physical health, and supporting people to find and maintain their sense of purpose.

3 Innovate, influence and inspire change across the mental health system, the third sector and society.

Mental health and mental illness do not happen in isolation. They are often the logical response to significant social and systemic factors that affect people's lives. We will continue to work with others to address them and we will campaign and contribute to make the system fairer, more transparent and better at allocating resources to the right places.

Our Strategic Principles

1 Exemplary, Evidence-Led Support and Insight

We know that the quality of care and support people receive is incredibly important. We want to raise the bar on the quality of support and drive forward our services to be exemplars in the sector: data and evidence-led best practice can reduce relapse rates, improve recovery outcomes and increase public trust.

How this will influence our decisions

- We will ensure that all of our services have a robust evidence base and theories of change in place.
- We will seek opportunities to enhance and develop our talking therapies.
- We will not accept underperformance in our or other's services and will robustly improve where we are not delivering for the people we support.
- We will consistently train and develop our staff to equip them with the knowledge and skills that they need.
- We will seek to build strategic partnerships to enhance our knowledge and share our expertise with others.

What success looks like

We will be the leading charity in terms of the quality of the work we do and have a strong reputation for our services and leading improvements across the sector.



2

Early Intervention and Prevention

The earlier we intervene in someone's mental health journey, the better the outcomes. When we say 'early intervention', we mean both in terms of age and how quickly someone can get support once they identify they need it. Half of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14. Early intervention reduces the severity of symptoms, prevents escalation and is cost effective. Prevention focused services such as wellbeing, outreach and peer support reduce pressure on primary care and enhance people's quality of life.

How this will influence our decisions

- We will prioritise services that are preventative and responsive to newly emerging need.
- We will look to expand and develop our children and young people's services and training.
- We will ensure that we are a champion of early intervention and prevention in our policy, campaigning and influencing work.
- We will develop a pipeline of support: from prevention and early intervention, through postcrisis recovery and into long-term support and independence.

What success looks like

- We have a suite of services which match the pipeline of support that people might need.
- We are successfully influencing government and funders to funnel more support to early intervention and prevention services.
- We are helping to remodel the system to prioritise early intervention and prevention.



3

Campaigning, Changing the System and Providing a Platform

The mental health system in Scotland is unjust. Too many people can't get the support they need in a timely fashion, too much resource is sent to acute services and not enough to preventative support, and too often the voices of those with lived and living experience are ignored. We will campaign to shift public narratives, influence legislation and dismantle structural barriers.

How this will influence our decisions

- We will prioritise advocating for systemic change, immersing ourselves in different policy spheres to have influence.
- We will provide platforms and opportunities for people with lived experience to influence decision-makers and the system.
- We will advocate against stigma and for tangible changes, in the media, parliament and in society.

What success looks like

- Our voice is bold, credible and rooted in the people we serve.
- We are influencing the system successfully.
- We are providing a platform for those affected by mental illness.
- Those with lived experience feel empowered and represented through our work.





4

Whole Person Approach

We recognise that there are significant links between physical and mental health. There are dire health outcomes for those with mental illness – with many dying 15-20 years earlier than the genal population – often occurring through preventable physical health conditions. We know that physical exercise is a significant protective factor for people's mental health. We also know that effective mental health care must take a whole person approach and consider issues such as diet, sleep, substance use and medication. Any coherent approach to mental health must take account of these issues.

How this will influence our decisions

- We will prioritise developing new and innovative services that directly support people's physical as well as mental health.
- We will develop services and lead campaigns that drive down the health inequalities of people who experience poor mental health.
- We will enhance our knowledge of medication and support individuals with their side effects.
- We will participate in initiatives that address the drivers of poor mental health. such as poverty reduction, built environment homelessness and the effects of living in a more rural location.

What success looks like

- We have developed a greater expertise in the interplay between physical and mental health.
- We have new services that directly support those with mental illness and their physical health, and we have integrated physical activity more into our current services.
- We enhance our knowledge and impact through collaboration with other organisations in this space, bringing a unique mental health lense.



5

Meaningful Participation and Purpose

A sense of purpose and worth is essential for good mental health. Unemployment is both a cause and a consequence of poor mental health, and people with poor mental health are less likely to be in work. Meaningful employment and purpose can boost recovery, self-esteem and economic security. Supporting people to access or remain in work is vital for both personal and societal outcomes. We have many years of experience in this space and know that providing people with a sense of purpose is essential in their mental health recovery journey.

How this will influence our decisions

- We will develop and expand our employability programmes: supporting people to find their purpose.
- We will proactively work with businesses and organisations to be better employers of people with poor mental health and mental illness.
- We will explore how we can create meaningful participation opportunities for people who experience mental illness and their loved ones.

What success looks like

- We are delivering evidence-based employment support services, supporting people to find their purpose, access and stay in work.
- We are a champion for bringing together the private, public and third sector to improve the conditions for those who experience poor mental health.
- We are influencing workplace cultures, policies and ways of working to become more inclusive of mental health.



Organisational Commitments





These are part of our organisational DNA: how we work and how we will make sure we can deliver on our strategic priorities. These run through our strategic priorities, our focus areas and our strategic planning cycle.

1. We deliver high-quality, trauma-informed support

Quality is at the heart of what we do. This is a driver for all of our activity and ensuring that the support we have is high quality and trauma-informed is fundamental.

2. We build sustainable and flexible income

We recognise that to achieve the things we want to achieve, we need more flexibility in funding. We are committed to enhancing our fundraising and diversifying our income streams.

3. We operate with strong governance and proportionate systems

We will ensure that we have the systems, processes and tools required to run a modern, efficient and high impact organisation that allows us to achieve our ambitions.

4. We commit to fair work and a supportive culture

We seek to be the best employer in Scotland. We will seek to support and develop our staff by creating a high achievement, high support working culture. We are proud to be a real Living Wage employer.

5. We act with integrity and transparency

We seek to always do the right thing, to act with candour and openness. We seek to be an excellent partner.

6. We believe in collaboration

We believe in a partnership first approach, working with others to achieve goals. We are committed to being an excellent collaborator and look to support the whole of the third sector.

7. We recognise and champion diversity

Mental health and mental illness affect everyone but particularly marginalised communities, such as asylum seekers and LGBT+ people, who are disproportionately affected. We recognise this in the work that we do and seek to better support these communities.

8. We are committed to working in Rural and Island communities

We have a proud history of supporting people in rural and island communities who often face unique barriers. We are committed to continuing to innovate and provide these services.







change MENTAL HEALTH

A Catalyst for Change



changementalhealth

changementalhealth

changemh_

www.changemh.org