

NHS Western Isles Public Health Strategy

April 2025 – March 2026

Contents

Public Health	3
Western Isles	4
Population Health Framework.....	5
Public Health Strategy	6
Pillar 1. Social and Economic Factors: Factors that create health and reduce inequalities.....	7
Pillar 2. Places and Communities: Create healthy and sustainable places and communities	11
Pillar 3. Healthy Living: Promote health and wellbeing and reduce health harming activities.....	14
Pillar 4. Health and Social Care: Create a health and care system that delivers equity, prevention and early intervention	19
Pillar 5. Prevention Focused System: Focusing on a whole system approach	22

Public Health

Public health is defined as *“the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life, and promoting human health through organised efforts and informed choices of society, organisations — both public and private — communities, and individuals”*.

Work in public health contributes to reducing the causes of ill health and improving overall health and wellbeing through three main domains:

1. **Health Protection:** Protecting people's health from environmental or biological threats, such as infectious diseases, food poisoning, or environmental harms.
2. **Health Improvement:** Enhancing people's health and wellbeing, for example, by assisting individuals in quitting smoking or improving living conditions.
3. **Healthcare Public Health:** Ensuring that health services are effective, efficient, and equitable.

Public health interventions are focused on populations. They address the factors that influence the health of populations, which may be defined by their characteristics, location, or both.

Western Isles

The Western Isles are a chain of islands comprising the Outer Hebrides which are situated in the Atlantic Ocean about 40 miles off the coast of Northwest of Scotland. The chain of sixteen inhabited islands stretches 130 miles from the largest island of Lewis joined with Harris in the north to Barra and Vatersay in the south with the other large islands of North Uist, Benbecula, and South Uist in between.

The Western Isles has a largely dispersed rural population distributed across the islands in small crofting communities as well as in the main commercial and administrative town in Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis. It is one of the few areas in Scotland where traditional crofting and Gaelic language and culture remain part of everyday life though nowadays tourism, fish farming and public administration are the main economic and employment sectors in the islands.

Population Health Framework

A Population Health Framework for Scotland is being developed, structured around five key pillars of health and wellbeing. These pillars align with the King's Fund population health pillars and connect to the internationally recognised Marmot Review Conceptual Framework. The five pillars of health and wellbeing are:

1. **Social and Economic:** Factors including income, early childhood development, education, housing, and transportation.
2. **Places and Communities:** Areas where people live and their access to essential services.
3. **Healthy Living:** Encompassing health promotion, diet, physical activity, smoking, alcohol consumption, as well as purpose and social connections.
4. **Equitable Health and Care:** Focusing on early intervention and disease prevention.
5. **Prevention Focused System:** Focusing on a whole system approach.

Public Health Strategy

The strategy has been informed by the NHS Western Isles Health Needs Assessment, which serves as its evidence base. The Health Needs Assessment provides information on the current and future health and wellbeing needs of the population of the Western Isles. The strategy has been developed by the NHS Western Isles Public Health team. It lists the public health priorities for NHS Western Isles from April 2025 – March 2026, within the five pillars of the Population Health Framework for Scotland. A separate workplan detailing the operational aspects of the strategy will be developed, and reporting and oversight will be through the corporate governance processes in NHS Western Isles.

Pillar 1. Social and Economic Factors: Factors that create health and reduce inequalities

Domain	Priority Area	Intended Outcome
Health Inequalities	Influence planning by advocating and supporting health impact assessments and using health protocols to design sustainable neighbourhoods that support health and wellbeing.	Health impact assessment outputs implemented to ensure improved outcomes.
	Provide training sessions for front line staff within NHS Western Isles and partner organisations to raise health issues, promote behaviour change, and refer patients or clients for health improvement support as part of a social prescribing approach.	Empowerment of multi-disciplinary clinical and non-clinical staff to take significant actions that positively impact the health and wellbeing of patients and wider communities.
	Undertake targeted work with individuals and communities who present a higher risk of mortality through living in a cold home.	Reduced excess winter mortality.

Domain	Priority Area	Intended Outcome
	Support initiatives to improve health literacy and equitable access to health information across the population.	Increased health knowledge, leading to positive lifestyle changes and the empowerment of people to effectively manage long-term health conditions.
	Implement the Screening Inequalities Plan.	Improved uptake of screening services, particularly among population groups with poorer health outcomes.
Anchor Institution and Workplaces	Develop NHS Western Isles as an anchor institution, by delivering on the Anchors Strategy.	Increased community wealth, improved socioeconomic status, community spaces and partnership working, and reduced environmental impact through the actions of NHS Western Isles.
	Embed the principles of fair work.	Local workforce have an effective voice, and experience opportunity, security, fulfilment, and respect.

Domain	Priority Area	Intended Outcome
	Advocate for policies to support good work practices within local employers including NHS Western Isles, to promote staff health and wellbeing.	Increased adoption of good work practices.
	Develop an accreditation scheme for employers with mentally healthy workplaces.	Accreditation scheme developed and employers accredited.
	Provide Scottish Mental Health First Aid Training to staff within public, private and third sector organisations in the Western Isles.	Access to Scottish Mental Health First Aid in workplaces in the Western Isles.
	Support employers to adopt ergonomic workspaces and safe manual handling practices.	Reduced musculoskeletal injuries.
Sustainability	Undertake an evaluation of the NHS Western Isles active travel infrastructure.	Understanding of the barriers to active travel and feasibility of scheme expansion.
	Build a network of Staff Green Champions within NHS Western Isles.	Improved sustainability of NHS Western Isles.

Domain	Priority Area	Intended Outcome
	Deliver “Climate Emergency, Sustainability and the NHS” awareness raising sessions in partnership with Climate Hebrides.	Increased resilience through the identification of climate related risks, capacities, skills gaps, and emergency plans.
	Work in partnership to increase the promotion of sustainable transport options including walking and cycling.	Increased uptake of sustainable transport usage. Reduced emissions, and improved health.
	Produce an annual Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Report.	Report produced, detailing the work undertaken within NHS Western Isles to address climate change.
	Produce an annual Climate Change and Sustainability Report.	Report produced, detailing the work undertaken within NHS Western Isles on sustainability.

Pillar 2. Places and Communities: Create healthy and sustainable places and communities

Domain	Priority Area	Intended Outcome
Place	Ensure a public health focus is adopted in Local Outcome Improvement Plans and the Community Planning Partnership, through partnership working.	Agreed priorities for improving local outcomes and reducing inequalities, through targeted work in communities that experience significantly poorer outcomes.
	Increase awareness of the impact that places where people live, work and play have on their health and wellbeing.	Improved sense of place among communities.
	Undertake medical priority assessments for prospective Hebridean Housing Partnership tenants.	Equitable housing provision for those with a medical priority for housing.
	Design and deliver an awareness campaign on the prevention of Lyme Disease, focused on Lewis and Harris.	Reduced incidence of Lyme disease.

Domain	Priority Area	Intended Outcome
	Design and deliver an awareness campaign on the risks of water borne illness, with a focus on wild swimming.	Decreased incidence of gastrointestinal infection outbreaks.
Communities	Support communities to build social capital, strengthen community assets and develop good relations between diverse groups.	Increased community health and wellbeing, and reduced inequalities.
	Support individuals, communities, community groups and partner agencies to identify potential funding opportunities to support community capacity building.	Increase in bid submissions and funding allocations.
	Identify and establish growing projects in communities identified as being deprived.	Projects established and locally grown food available to deprived communities.
	Deliver cultural awareness training sessions.	Increased cultural awareness and inclusion.
	Provide upskilling opportunities for current walk leaders throughout the Western Isles.	Increased capacity, skills and confidence to deliver health walks.

Domain	Priority Area	Intended Outcome
	Recruit additional walk leaders to support Active Travel initiatives.	More health walks delivered.
	Delivery of Applied Suicide Intervention Skills training, to build community capacity.	Increased capacity to recognise and respond to suicidality in the community.
Protection	Deliver a 24-hour health protection service, 365 days per year.	Protection from infectious diseases and environmental hazards.
	Design and deliver a summer awareness raising campaign on preventing food borne illnesses.	Decrease in gastrointestinal infection outbreaks.
	Work with colleagues to implement the Tuberculosis Action Plan, considering latent tuberculosis and using local intelligence	Reduced tuberculosis transmission.
	Work with resilience partners to identify and prevent exposure to hazards caused by extreme weather.	Reduction in adverse impacts due to extreme weather.

Pillar 3. Healthy Living: Promote health and wellbeing and reduce health harming activities

Domain	Priority Area	Intended Outcome
Health Behaviours	Ensure people affected by substance use have opportunities to inform and strengthen the progress of the Alcohol and Drug Partnership.	Alcohol and drug services aligned to local needs.
	Deliver a comprehensive smoking and vaping cessation service, targeting vulnerable groups including mental health patients, pregnant women, inpatients, and those living in deprived communities.	Reduced prevalence of smoking and vaping, particularly among vulnerable groups.
	Work to support improved dental access.	Improved dental access, leading to improved oral health.
	Provide leadership to the Western Isles' Maternal and Infant Nutrition Group.	Improved nutritional content of children's diets.
	Coordinate the distribution of Healthy Start Vitamins.	Improved nutritional content of children's diets.
	Coordinate the distribution of condoms for young people, through community venues.	Reduction in sexually transmitted infections and teenage pregnancies.

Domain	Priority Area	Intended Outcome
	Produce an annual screening report.	Report detailing the uptake of screening, enabling the assessment of screening programme performance and targeted interventions.
	Produce an annual vaccination report.	Report detailing the uptake of vaccinations, enabling the assessment of vaccination programme performance and targeted interventions.
	Conduct vaccination awareness campaigns for child and adult vaccinations, including myth busting	Increased vaccination uptake among children and adults.
	Develop a collaborative approach to providing regular physical activity, mobility, and strength-based exercise in residential care settings.	Increased physical activity, mobility, and strength, leading to a decrease in falls, among those living in residential care settings.
	Develop evidence-based behaviour change interventions to promote physical activity among the inactive.	Increase in physical activity, leading to improved health and wellbeing.

Domain	Priority Area	Intended Outcome
	Work in partnership to highlight the impact of dementia on communities, and the dementia support services available.	Increased awareness of dementia, leading to reduced stigma and increased uptake of dementia support services.
Lifestyle	Support Managed Clinical Networks with initiatives to promote and embed prevention.	Improved management of long-term conditions at population level.
	Deliver the annual Step Count Challenge campaign.	Increased levels of physical activity, leading to improved health and wellbeing.
	Develop a Good Food Strategy.	Completed strategy with an emphasis in access to good food and healthy weight.
	Develop interventions to improve adult diets.	Decreased obesity in adults.
	Promote the prevention and appropriate management of long-term conditions such as cardiovascular disease and cancer.	Reduction in the impact of long-term conditions.
	Ensure the equitable of provision of the HENRY programme to families.	Increase in children eating healthy diet and exercising regularly, leading to a reduction in child obesity.

Domain	Priority Area	Intended Outcome
Communications	Update the public health information available on the NHS Western Isles intranet.	Improved access to public health information among NHS Western Isles staff.
	Update the public health information available on the NHS Western Isles website.	Increased awareness of the role and work of the public health team in the Western Isles.
	Launch dedicated mental health website for the Western Isles.	Improved awareness of mental health services, leading to better mental health outcomes.
	Promotion of Healthy Hebridean Kids website.	Improved child health outcomes.
	Redesign and relaunch Alcohol and Drug Partnership website.	Improved access to information of alcohol and drugs and improved awareness of alcohol and drug services, leading to better health outcomes.
	Develop a communications plan for annual public health campaigns.	Improved coordination of campaign activity and campaign engagement.

Domain	Priority Area	Intended Outcome
	Produce a Director of Public Health annual report.	Improved awareness of the public health work undertaken in NHS Western Isles

Pillar 4. Health and Social Care: Create a health and care system that delivers equity, prevention and early intervention

Domain	Priority Area	Intended Outcome
Vaccinations	Design and deliver initiatives to increase the uptake of flu and Covid-19 vaccinations in adults and healthcare workers.	Increased vaccination uptake, leading to a reduction in flu and Covid-19 outbreaks in health and care settings.
	Increase the number of peer vaccinators, to facilitate improved vaccination delivery to staff within NHS Western Isles	Increased vaccination uptake, leading to reduced staff sickness and flu and Covid-19 outbreaks in health settings.
	Develop an information pack for peer vaccinators.	Peer vaccinators appropriately trained and empowered to maximise the uptake of flu and Covid-19 vaccinations.
	Report flu and Covid-19 vaccination uptake amongst staff at department level within NHS Western Isles.	Increased vaccination uptake, leading to reduced staff sickness and flu and Covid-19 outbreaks in health settings.
Integrated Systems	Targeted promotion of screening programmes.	Sustained screening uptake.

Domain	Priority Area	Intended Outcome
	Scope an accessible venue in Lewis for the breast screening programme planned for 2026.	Improved uptake of breast screening in Lewis.
	Establish and develop links between public health and clinical networks.	Stronger public health and clinical partnerships.
	Establish and facilitate a sexual health network, for collaborative working on sexual health.	Sexual health network established and facilitated.
	Support the development of an oral health needs assessment, to inform preventative interventions and service development.	Oral health needs assessment completed.
Early Intervention	Provide governance and oversight to the delivery of the Medication Assisted Treatment standards.	Reduction in drug related harms.
	Work in partnership to identify, mitigate and prevent alcohol and drug related harms.	Reduction in alcohol related harms.
	Deliver training on Alcohol Brief Interventions.	Reduction in hazardous and harmful alcohol use.

Domain	Priority Area	Intended Outcome
	Provide information to young people on contraception, including long-acting reversible contraception.	Reduction in sexually transmitted diseases and teenage pregnancies.
	Further develop the PrEP pathway for HIV.	Equitable access to PrEP and reduced transmission of HIV.

Pillar 5. Prevention Focused System: Focusing on a whole system approach

Domain	Priority Area	Intended Outcome
Commissioning	Provide public health leadership and oversight to the development and commissioning of services for children and young people.	Ensure the needs of children and young people are understood and provided for.
	Develop the existing substance use treatment services for adults and young people, including residential rehabilitation services.	Improved integrated treatment and care to support recovery.
	Support the mobilisation of the revised diabetic eye screening service model for the Western Isles.	Equitable access to diabetic eye screening.
System Working	Develop partnerships focused on tackling self-harm through successfully evaluated approaches, targeting those who repeatedly self-harm	Decreased self-harming behaviours and emergency presentations related to self-harm.
	Work with criminal justice and prison partners to ensure individuals leaving prison engage with community services.	Improved health and crime reduction outcomes and continuity of care for those leaving prison.

Domain	Priority Area	Intended Outcome
	Provide training and awareness sessions to parents and carers to support their parenting journey.	Improved child health outcomes.
	Coordinate the annual Alcohol and Drug Partnership workforce training programme.	Increased delivery of evidence-based practice.
	Enhance the multi-agency approach to smoking cessation by training front-line staff to enable them to provide advice and support.	Reduced prevalence of smoking.
Education and Learning	Extend the Immunisation Champions programme to schools Lewis and Harris.	Increased uptake of immunisations in children and young people.
	Work with schools on the prevention and cessation of vaping.	Decreased vaping among young people.
	Support the implementation of Mentors in Violence Prevention in schools.	Reduced violence levels.

Domain	Priority Area	Intended Outcome
	Provide training and resources to school staff to enable them to deliver personal, social, health, sexual health, relationship and economic education.	Improved education of children and young people on personal, social, health, sexual health, relationship and economic topics.