

NHS Western Isles Public Health Strategy

April 2026 – March 2027

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Public Health

Public health is about improving the health and wellbeing of communities and populations, preventing disease, and reducing health inequalities through coordinated action across society. It involves using evidence, policy, and practice to create environments where people can make healthier choices, and where services and communities support good health throughout life.

Public health work can be broadly divided into three domains:

1. Health Protection: Protecting communities from immediate threats to health.
2. Health Improvement: Supporting people to lead healthier lives and improving conditions that affect wellbeing. This includes targeted actions in areas of greatest need to reduce inequalities.
3. Healthcare Public Health: Ensuring health and social care services are effective, equitable, and responsive to population needs, including planning, evaluation, and evidence-based service improvement.

Public health interventions focus on populations rather than individuals, targeting the factors that influence health at scale, through policy, community programmes, and service design. By addressing the social determinants of health and promoting early intervention, public health aims to improve life expectancy, reduce preventable illness, and create healthier, more resilient communities across Scotland.

The Population Health Framework for Scotland was published by the Scottish Government in 2025 in partnership with COSLA. It is a ten-year strategy (2025–2035), to improve health and reduce health inequalities across Scotland. The framework represents a shift from treating illness towards prevention and whole-system action across government, communities, and sectors, recognising that health is shaped largely by social, economic, and environmental conditions.

Strategy

The strategy aligns with the Scottish Population Health Framework recognising that health is shaped by a wide range of factors, including social, economic, environmental, and cultural influences. It emphasises that most influences on health occur outside traditional health services and require joined-up action across government, communities, businesses, and the voluntary sector to create environments that support health and wellbeing for all.

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 2026 to March 2027, within the five pillars of the Population Health Framework for Scotland:

1. Prevention-Focused System
2. Social and Economic Factors
3. Places and Communities
4. Enabling Healthy Living
5. Equitable Access to Health and Care

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	Embed the principles of Making Every Contact Count to maximise every interaction with patients and the public as an opportunity to promote health.	Positive behaviour changes and support the prevention of illness across the population.
	Secure and promote community warm hubs in partnership with local organisations.	Reduced isolation and increased resilience for individuals during periods of cold weather or energy vulnerability.
	Work with primary care staff to embed initiatives to improve health literacy and equitable access to health information across the population.	Increased health knowledge leading to improved health outcomes.
Anchor Institution and Workplaces	Continue to develop NHS Western Isles as an anchor institution.	Increased community wealth, improved socioeconomic status, community spaces and partnership working and reduced environmental impact through the actions of NHS Western Isles.
	Provide public health advice to inform workplace wellbeing activities.	Healthier work environments, and improved staff wellbeing.

	Evaluate and expand the accreditation scheme for employers with mentally healthy workplaces.	Improved staff wellbeing through improved employer support and resources.
	Provide Scottish Mental Health First Aid Training to staff within public, private and third sector organisations in the Western Isles.	Increased early support and a mentally healthy workforce.
	To support organisations to create and maintain healthier, safer, and more supportive workplaces, improving employee wellbeing, reducing work-related illness and stress, and fostering a positive workplace culture.	Improved overall organisational health.
Sustainability	Facilitate the Staff Green Champions scheme within NHS Western Isles.	Established culture of environmental responsibility.
	Embed environmental sustainability and climate considerations across NHS Western Isles.	Reduced environmental impact, improved population health, and a more resilient and sustainable health system.
	Grow and promote the Staff Cycle scheme.	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	Strengthen the integration of public health principles within Local Outcome Improvement Plans.	Coordinated action to improve population health and reduce inequalities.
	Undertake medical priority assessments for prospective Hebridean Housing Partnership tenants.	Equitable housing provision for those with a medical priority for housing.
	Deliver an awareness campaign on the prevention of Lyme Disease.	Reduced incidence of Lyme Disease.
Communities	Assist individuals, communities, community groups, and partner organisations in identifying and accessing funding opportunities to strengthen community capacity and development.	Improved access to funding, leading to enhanced community wellbeing.
	Explore opportunities for growing projects in communities identified as being deprived.	Increased access to locally grown food in deprived communities.
	Recruit walk leaders from across the Western Isles.	More health walks delivered via an expanded network of walk leaders.

	Deliver Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training to build community capacity.	Enhanced early intervention and support networks to reduce suicide rates.
	Deliver Distress and Crisis training.	Increased capacity to recognise, respond to, and safely manage situations involving distress or crisis.
	Undertake a children's health and care needs assessment.	Clearly identified local needs for children's health and care services.
Protection	Deliver a 24-hour health protection service, 365 days per year.	Continuous monitoring, prevention, and response to public health threats.
	Contribute to the development of health protection guidance to strengthen resilience across individuals, communities, and systems.	Enhanced preparedness and response to health risks.
	Revise and update the Pandemic Preparedness Plan to reflect current evidence, guidance, and lessons learned.	Health system and community effectively prepared for future pandemics.
	Support colleagues through the Respiratory Managed Clinical Network to implement the Tuberculosis Action Plan.	Reduced tuberculosis transmission.

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

Domain	Priority Area	Intended Outcome
Health Behaviours	Undertake an alcohol and drugs needs assessment.	Identify local needs for alcohol and drugs.
	Raise awareness of gambling-related and digital harms by promoting safer behaviours and providing support and resources to affected individuals and communities.	Reduced prevalence and impact of gambling and digital harms.
	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.
	Undertake targeted work to promote and monitor adult immunisation uptake.	Increased vaccination coverage among adults.
	Support the transition of the travel immunisation service to new service delivery model.	A safe, accessible and high-quality service.

	Develop and deliver collaborative approaches 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 physical activity initiatives including group activity and community-based programmes.	Increased participation in physical activity, leading to improved health and wellbeing.
	Develop and support dementia-friendly communities initiatives.	Increased awareness of dementia, leading to reduced stigma and increased uptake of dementia support services.
Lifestyle	Provide support and oversight to the Managed Clinical Networks with initiatives to promote and embed prevention, operating as a population health organisation.	Improved patient outcomes and proactive health management across services.
	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 on access to good food and healthy weight.

	Promote financial inclusion initiatives.	Reduced financial inequalities.
	Deliver the HENRY programme to families at risk of childhood obesity.	Reduced childhood obesity.
	Deliver the Quit Your Way service to provide accessible, person-centred support to individuals who wish to stop smoking.	Reduction in smoking and smoking-related harms.
Communications	Develop an annual communications plan to coordinate public health messaging, campaigns and stakeholder engagement.	Consistent and clear public health messages are aligned to local needs.
	Develop engaging, accessible, and evidence-based health information and resources to convey key health messages to target population groups.	Increased public awareness of key health messages and accessibility of health information.
	Ensure the voices and needs of children are represented in planning and decision-making, policy and service development.	Improved child health and wellbeing.
	Promote the mental health website for the Western Isles.	Improved access to trusted information, support services, and resources that help promote positive mental wellbeing.

	Promote the Healthy Hebridean Kids website.	Healthy behaviours and improved health outcomes for children and families.
	Promote the relaunched Alcohol and Drug Partnership website.	Individuals, families, and professionals can easily access up-to-date information, support services, and resources to help prevent and reduce alcohol and drug-related harm.

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

Domain	Priority Area	Intended Outcome
Immunisation	Evaluate the peer vaccinator programme undertaken in 2025-2026.	Plan for developing the 2026-2027 peer vaccinator programme.
	Facilitate the peer vaccinator programme within NHS Western Isles.	Increased vaccination uptake.
	Provide coordination and oversight to the immunisation programmes and the ad hoc immunisation process.	Increased immunisation uptake and improved population immunity.
Integrated Systems	Establish a children and young people's population health steering group.	Improved health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people.
	Provide coordination and oversight to the six screening programmes delivered in the Western Isles.	Improved patient outcomes, and efficient use of resources.
	Mobilise the breast screening programme planned for the Western Isles in 2026.	Maximal uptake of breast screening across the Western Isles.
	Development of Screening Standards Reporting.	Accurate monitoring and improved programme quality.

	Lead the sexual health network, for collaborative working on sexual health.	Improved access to sexual health education, prevention, and care.
	Lead the development of a sexual health action plan.	A clear, strategic plan which details local priorities.
Early Intervention	Coordinate the attainment and monitoring of the Medication Assisted Treatment standards.	Reduction in drug related harms.
	Promote safer drinking behaviours, increasing awareness of alcohol risks, and local support and treatment services.	Reduction in alcohol related harms and deaths.
	Deliver Getting Our Priorities Right training sessions.	Improved outcomes for children and families affected by parental substance use.
	Deliver training on Alcohol Brief Interventions.	Reduction in hazardous and harmful alcohol use.
	Work in partnership to deliver frailty-focused initiatives and support.	Reduced impact of frailty on individuals and communities.
	Deliver school-based mental health training and support for parents.	Enhanced health and wellbeing of children and their families.
	Provide public health input to the multiagency Child Poverty Action Plan.	Reduced impact of poverty on children and families.

	Evaluate the smoking care pathways pilot and consider opportunities for expansion.	Pilot evaluation, with and exploration of expansion opportunities.
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Pillar 5. Prevention Focused System: Focusing on a whole system approach

Domain	Priority Area	Intended Outcome
Commissioning	Review and revise the service level agreements for children's services.	Revised service level agreements with key performance indicators, leading to high quality service provision.
System Working	Support a partnership approach to tackling self-harm.	Improved prevention strategies, and enhanced support for individuals at risk of self-harm.
	Strengthen the work of the Children and Young People's Planning Partnership (CYPPP).	Coordinated planning, improved service delivery, and better outcomes for children and young people across the Western Isles.
	Coordinate the annual Alcohol and Drug Partnership workforce training programme.	Increased delivery of evidence-based training on alcohol and drugs.
	Enhance the multi-agency approach to smoking cessation by training professionals to enable them to provide brief advice.	Reduced prevalence of smoking and smoking related harms.
	Undertake awareness raising on the benefits of smoke free homes.	Long term reduction in smoking-related harms.

Education and Learning	Deliver the Immunisation Champions programme in primary schools.	Increased awareness and uptake of immunisations, fostering positive attitudes towards immunisations.
	Evaluate the pilot project undertaken in schools on the prevention and cessation of vaping.	Pilot evaluation with an exploration of opportunities for further work.
	Deliver sexual health and relationships training in schools.	Improved awareness among children and young people of sexual health and relationship issues.