



mental welfare
commission for scotland

Engagement & participation strategy

2023-26

Our mission and purpose

Our Mission

To be a leading and independent voice in promoting a society where people with mental illness, learning disabilities, dementia and related conditions are treated fairly, have their rights respected, and have appropriate support to live the life of their choice.

Our Purpose

We protect and promote the human rights of people with mental illness, learning disabilities, dementia and related conditions.

Our Priorities

To achieve our mission and purpose over the next three years we have identified four strategic priorities.

- To challenge and to promote change
- Focus on the most vulnerable
- Increase our impact (in the work that we do)
- Improve our efficiency and effectiveness

Our Activity

- Influencing and empowering
- Visiting individuals
- Monitoring the law
- Investigations and casework
- Information and advice

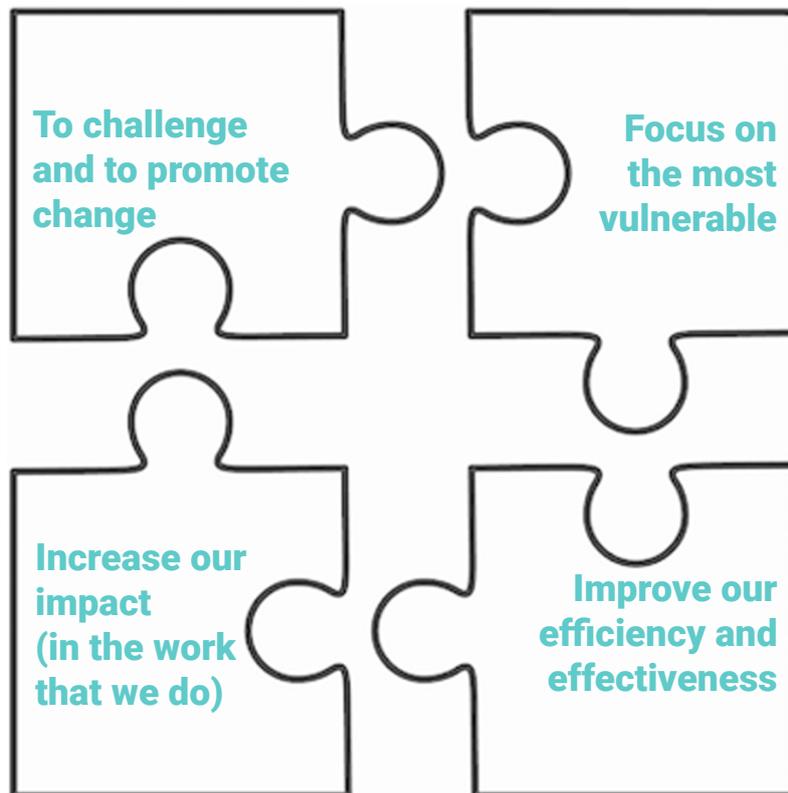
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Introduction

Welcome to the Mental Welfare Commission’s strategy for engagement and participation 2023-26, which has been informed by our stakeholders, including people who use services, carers, professionals, and organisations with the aim of supporting the achievement of our strategic priorities as set out in our Strategic plan 2023-26.



Our strategy will highlight the role engagement and participation will have in supporting and informing delivery of the Commission’s priorities over the next three years through our key activities:

- Influencing and empowering
- Visiting individuals
- Monitoring the acts
- Investigations
- Information and advice
- Engagement and participation

The information we receive through engagement with people from across Scotland informs the work of the Commission; we are also mindful that engagement should be of benefit to both the people and organisations we engage with too.

Good engagement should support people to talk openly and freely without feeling judged.

People should feel they are being listened to, respected and also confident that their contribution is valued.



Our strategic plan is informed through engaging with and gathering the views of people with lived experience, families, carers, professionals and a range of key stakeholders, including the Commission's advisory committee.

A strategic plan is important as it defines our vision for the future and makes explicit our goals and objectives to further strengthen our engagement and participation work at the Commission.

This new plan has been developed to support the achievement of our strategic priorities and will highlight the work that we intend to undertake over the next three years based on what we have been told.

What approach will we take?

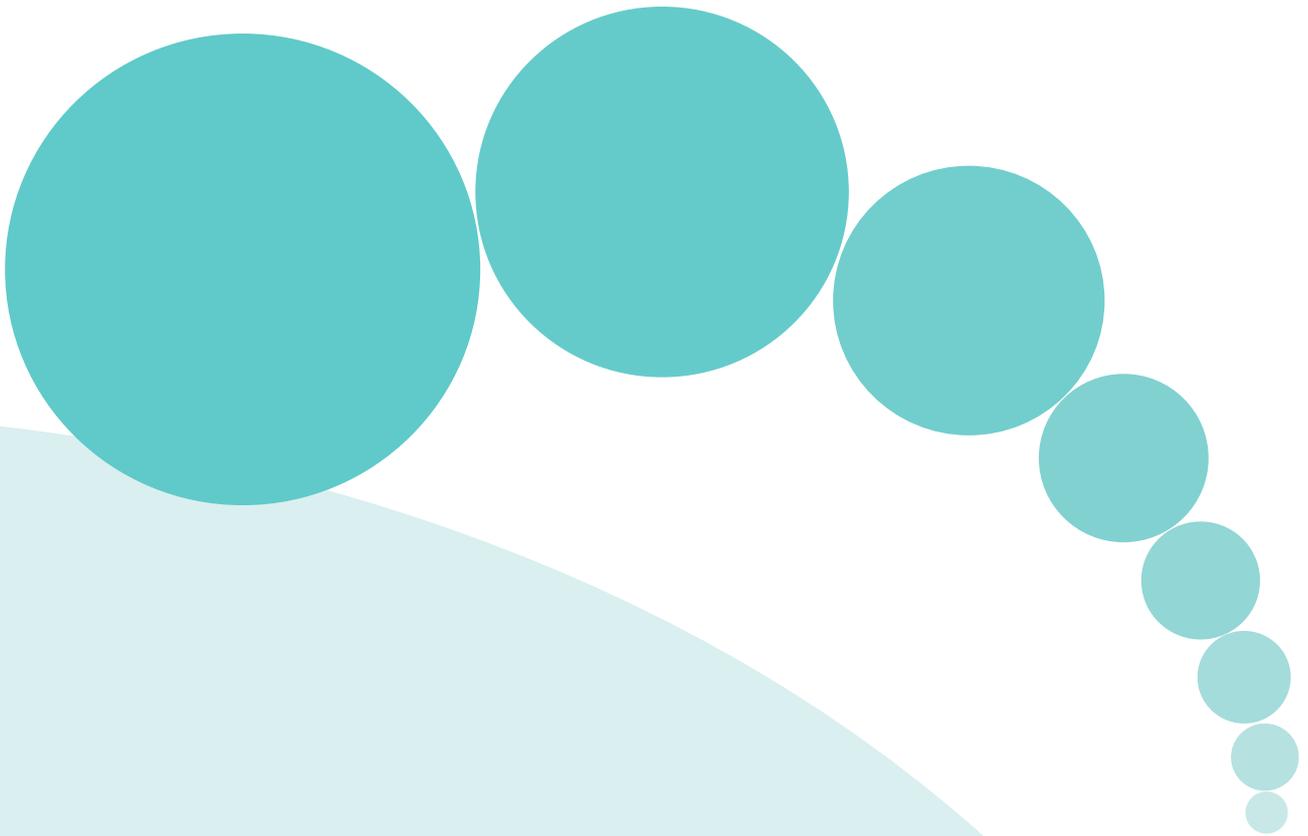
"You said, we did"

People who use services, carers, families, professionals, health, social work, advocacy services, social care, allied health professionals, independent and third sector organisations are central to what we do at the Commission.

As a statutory independent rights-based organisation we are committed, amongst other things, to ensuring that people are aware of their rights, to promoting and protecting people's rights and to supporting opportunities for people to be active participants, fully involved in the care and treatment decisions that affect them.

We want to ensure that people's opinions are involved in all aspects of our work too and are committed to improving the ways individuals, families and carers are involved in the decision making that affects them.

By consulting and engaging with people across Scotland, we can make sure people's voices remain at the heart of what we do, and their insights and experiences continue to inform and shape the work we do.



Our
engagement
and
participation
principles

Our approach to engagement and participation is underpinned by the principles devised from what people told us about how they wish to be involved, respected, included and listened to through-out their engagement with the Commission.

“The start to engagement should be people’s human rights”



Respect

We heard from people about the importance of being treated with respect and without prejudice, to be approached in a friendly manner, foster trust and belief and evidence that we are interested in what they have to say.

Our commitment

We will treat people as unique individuals, with a friendly approach, respecting their opinions and ensuring we listen and recognise the views of all people involved in our work.

Diversity, equality, and accessibility

People told us about what was most important, this included areas such as; valuing individuality, support to feel involved, not to feel judged and to be treated as an equal.

Our commitment

We acknowledge reports of tokenism and will be alert to this and avoid fostering this in any work that we do. We will consider a range of modes of engagement and participation which takes account of the diversity of experience and stigma faced by people diagnosed with mental illness, dementia, autism, learning disability and associated conditions.

Inclusivity

We heard that people would like to see the Commission widen our scope across Scotland, seek diverse views and experiences, engage more in the local community and increase lived experience representation within the Mental Welfare Commission.

Our commitment

We will proactively encourage and support participation from equality groups and less heard groups. We will take every opportunity to increase the voice of experience in all aspects of the work that we do.

Including and involving

We were told about the importance of receiving information that is understandable, receiving feedback on outcomes which have been shared with us and the importance of regular updates on the work we have addressed.

Our commitment

We will meet people and groups to build trust and work together. We will use the information gathered to inform our work. We will feedback recommendations and outcomes that result from what people tell us.

Rights-based approach

We heard that people want to feel involved, be treated as an equal, be supported to experience meaningful engagement, feel informed and empowered to participate in decision making, to ensure the Commission works in a rights-based way.

Our commitment

We will work diligently to ensure that the human rights of the people we engage with are upheld as far as possible. We will review and improve our approach to guidance, advice and information formats to ensure people have access to the right information for them to support and empower them, as far as possible.



Standards

Our principles are supported by the (Scottish Community Development) National Standards for Community Engagement standards, recognised as the national lead body for community development in Scotland.

“The start to engagement should be people’s human rights.”



We will follow the seven national standards for community engagement through our engagement and participation activities as follows:

- **Inclusion** – We will work with the people who are affected by the focus of our engagement.
- **Support** – We will engage with people and groups to identify barriers.
- **Planning** – We will make sure there is a clear purpose for our engagement.
- **Working together** – We will work effectively together to achieve the aims of engagement.
- **Methods** – We will identify and use methods of engagement that are suitable such as face to face or online.
- **Communication** – We will communicate clearly and regularly with the people with whom we engage.
- **Impact** – We will use what has been learned from our engagement to impact on the work we do.



What you
told us

To challenge and promote change

What you told us:

- Challenge stigma and discrimination which act as barriers to people realising their rights.

Our commitment to you:

- Through our engagement plan, we will take appropriate action to promote and protect people's rights, follow up and inform people of the outcome.
- We will act on what we find when meeting with people with lived experience, carers and their families and feedback outcomes. We will look at different ways of engaging to widen our networks to challenge and promote and change.

Increase our impact (in the work that we do)

What you told us:

- It is important for us to focus more on reaching into the hearts of communities, visit rural and island communities as well as urban and meet with people face to face.
- Raise awareness of the Commission to schools and further education settings to support our reach to young people and those working in education.
- Expand our information to reach a wider range of settings including acute hospitals and community-based services supporting people with mental health, learning disability, dementia, autism and related conditions.
- Increase visibility and awareness of rights-based information across Scotland.

Our commitment to you:

- We will continue to inform people who use services, their families and carers about their rights, so that they feel empowered to live the lives they choose. We will listen and act upon the issues we hear from people through our work, assimilating invaluable lived experience to influence our direction and priorities.

Focus on the most vulnerable

What you told us:

- Extend our reach to the less heard groups through increased engagement with third sector partners and increase visibility in across communities.
- You suggested we should increase engagement with people who have experience of addiction issues.
- Expand our reach to children and young people and invite them to help us improve engagement and raise awareness of their rights.
- “These are the voices we need to be hearing because these are the voices we need to inspire for the future.”

Our commitment to you:

- We will continue to focus on areas where we can make the biggest impact while reaching out to diverse communities and people most at risk of marginalisation and their rights not being upheld.

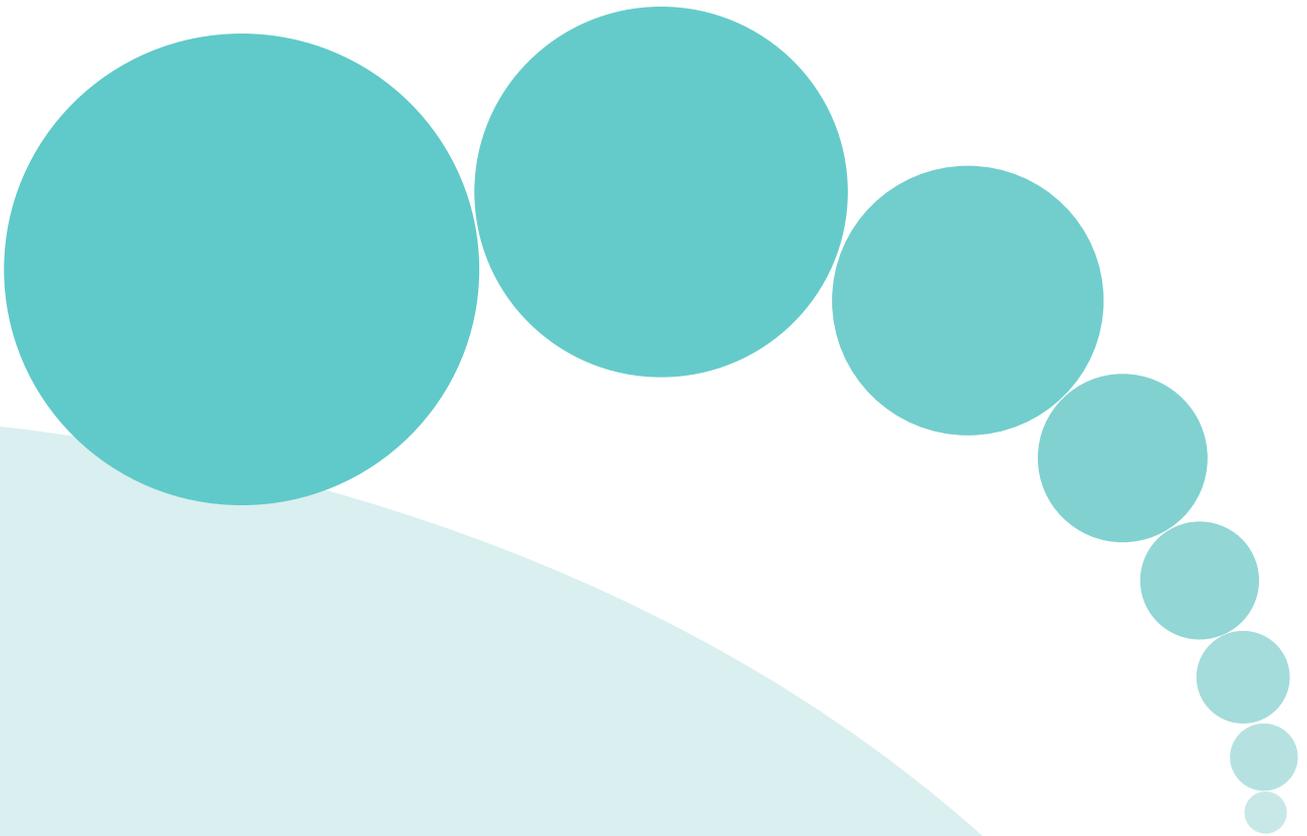
Improve our efficiency and effectiveness

What you told us:

- You would like to see more people with lived experience being involved in the work of the Commission also being able to influence all aspects of work and have representation on groups or forums that the Commission is involved in.
- Improve accessibility to our information and use social media and newsletters.
- Improve awareness of the Commission’s work, particularly with people, families and carers through more clearly setting out what we do.
- Improve internal processes to strengthen information flow from engagement activities to inform the work of the Commission.

Our commitment to you:

- We will prioritise understanding of lived experience threaded throughout our work programme and internally across the Commission.
- We will improve access to the information we produce.



What we
will do

Over the next three years we will work to deliver the commission’s engagement and participation commitments based on what people have told us and what we learn through our work.



Influencing and empowering

- Develop a plan to increase engagement with children and young people in particular.
- Produce a carer specific report based on collation of themed visit feedback 2016-22.
- Maximise the learning we accrue through the personal experience and expertise of our engagement and participation officers and of the people they engage with, to influence the work of the Commission.
- We will work with partners to challenge stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness, dementia, learning disability, autism and related conditions.
- We will consult with children and young people to inform our Children’s Rights report during 2023-24.
- We will use what we hear from people to inform the work we do, i.e., visit programme, investigations, groups, and one to one meetings.
- We will establish engagement and participation reports on what people tell us, follow up on recommendations and provide feedback on outcomes.
- We will publish an annual engagement and participation activity report to inform all of our stakeholders of what people said and what we did.
- The Commission will have a clear integrated engagement and participation work plan which extends beyond the work of engagement and participation officers and which measures impact and influence.

Visiting individuals

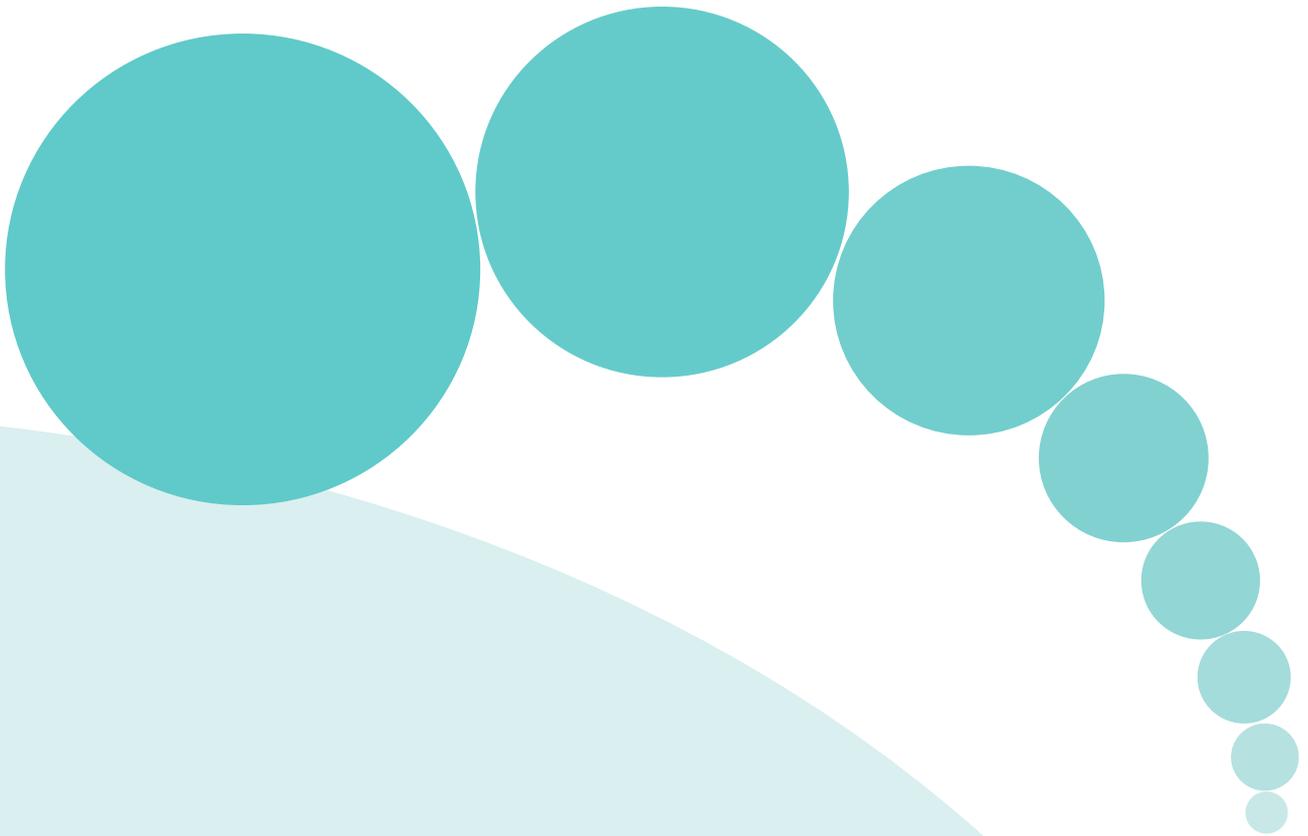
- (In addition to the core visit programme)
- We will develop a rolling programme of engagement and participation visits and will proactively follow up on the issues people raise with us.
- We will continue to engage with existing local groups and individual across Scotland in addition to scoping new groups, targeting less heard communities.
- We will target rural and island geographical areas as part of the engagement and participation workplan to promote rights through providing information and hearing about the individual experiences of people accessing services.
- We will establish contacts with schools and universities to visit for awareness raising around rights and supports.
- We will visit at least six public events per year to raise awareness of the Commission, targeting less heard/less visible groups.

Investigations

- We will contribute to all investigations from a lived experience perspective as and when appropriate.

Information and advice

- We already inform people across Scotland about their rights under mental health legislation including the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003, Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000 and the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007. However, we know we can improve in both the accessibility and the reach of our information. We will:
 - Undertake initial scoping to address reported gaps in accessible information, including children and young people specific accessible information.
 - We will improve internal engagement and participation reporting and feedback processes within the Commission.
 - We will continue to strengthen our governance arrangements to ensure the influence of our Advisory Committee across our work.
 - We will feedback to people on recommendations and outcomes from our reports.
 - We will produce a regular newsletter with updates on our work.
 - We will continue to review our publications and work towards ensuring that information available is accessible and produced in easily understandable documents and formats.
 - We will expand our contact with third sector organisations to offer information and advice to community groups/individuals and staff groups to raise awareness of the Commission and people's rights.
 - We will improve the accessibility of our information and expand our provision of information into acute health settings, community-based settings.
 - We will hold a national engagement forum in 2023-26 that will feed into our next strategic plan.



About us

Mental Welfare Commission Board

The Commission benefits from the expertise of people with lived and carer experience on its Board, which is a legal requirement under mental health legislation.

Mental Welfare Commission advisory committee

The advisory committee is a group of national organisations with a statutory function of advising the Commission on its current and future work, acting on the direction of the Commission's board and informing us of their current projects/activities. The committee is chaired by Commission board members with lived experience of mental health services and carer experience.

Mental Welfare Commission

The Commission has employed engagement and participation officers at the Commission since 2015, with a key requirement that our engagement officers have lived experience.

Mental Welfare Commission engagement and participation team

The team was expanded during 2022, and now has three officers dedicated to engagement and participation activities in addition to a dedicated coordinator to support the Commission's commitment to growth across our engagement and participation activities.



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