wellbeing

Staying Well

Protecting the health & wellbeing of our people

Our **Health and Wellbeing Strategy**
(2024-2027)

Michael Dickson

Chief Executive Officer

Tom Steele

Chair of the Board

Stevie Gilroy

Employee Director

Foreword

We are immensely proud of our people and the outstanding work that you do on a daily basis to support the needs and improve the healthcare outcomes of the population of Scotland.

We consistently hear how grateful our patients are for the care and compassion you show them and how skilfully your sense of humour can uplift them in their greatest hours of need.

We recognise the extreme pressure our people have been working under, especially in recent years, and continue to do so by putting others' needs first and acknowledge that this can take its toll. It is therefore vital that we nurture and protect the health and wellbeing of our people, so that you can continue to do your best and make a difference to peoples' lives.

We value our people and are committed to ensuring your health and wellbeing sits at the heart of everything that we do. 'Staying Well', builds on the strong foundation that was established with our first Health & Wellbeing Strategy (2021-24) with a greater emphasis on addressing mental health needs and developing healthy workplaces with proactive and preventative approaches.

We will continue to listen to your ideas and views on how we can continue to support our peoples' health & wellbeing and look forward to working together alongside colleagues, leaders, managers, students, volunteers and staff side in partnership as we take the next steps forward in this journey.
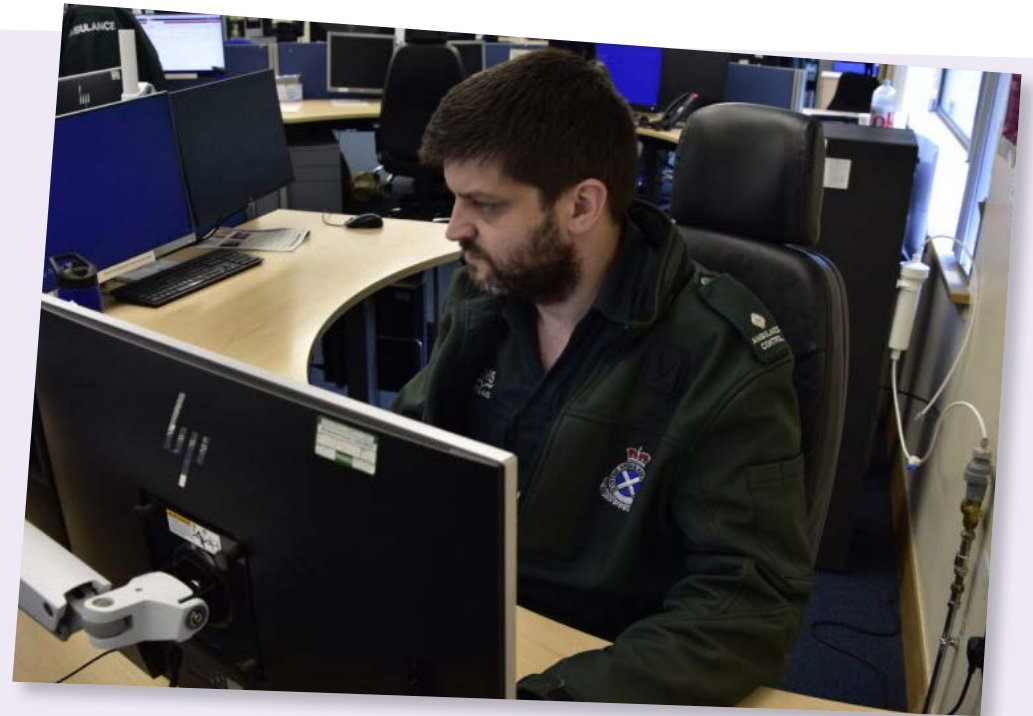
Contents

Introduction

Our 2030 Strategy, 'Saving more lives, reducing inequalities, improving health and wellbeing', describes our commitment to playing a vital role in improving the Health and Wellbeing of our staff and citizens.

Our ambition is always for the Scottish Ambulance Service to be a great place to work and this has been underpinned by our previous Health and Wellbeing Strategy, '*Being Well*' (2021-2024).

This next stage in our Health and Wellbeing journey further supports this ambition, as being a great place to work sits right at the heart of our 2030 Strategy. It builds on the outcomes that have been delivered over the previous three years by listening to the views of our people and by firmly taking organisational ownership of these, so that:

- Lessons that have been identified are evidence-based and developed,

- Outcomes are measurable and impactful,

- Resources are focused on areas that can achieve greatest effect.

It aims to reflect the feelings and opinions of the most important stakeholders within the Scottish Ambulance Service, our people, whose views have been captured during focus groups, workshops and workplace visits.

We continue to map staff experience by using the framework of 'Being Well' (Healthy Mind and Healthy Body) and a 'Great Place to Work' (Healthy Workplace). Also, recognising the impact that stress and anxiety places upon our workforce, we intend to place the mental wellbeing of our staff as a significant priority, seeking to implement a proactive and preventative approach to supporting them.

The Scottish Ambulance Service is immensely proud of its people. This strategy seeks to work collaboratively with our colleagues, management, partnership, and all stakeholders to create a place to work where everyone feels happy and healthy.

"Good mental health and wellbeing are essential for all of us to lead fulfilling lives, to realise our full potential, to participate productively in our communities, and to demonstrate resilience in the face of stress and adversity."

World Health Organisation,
Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2030

What Have We Achieved?

Some of our achievements that we have delivered to date include the following:

- Established a Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) Assessors Network with over 60 Assessors trained & ongoing CPD (Continuous Professional Development).

- Designed and developed our Accredited Foundation Leadership & Management Development Programme.

- Provided access to a suite of health and wellbeing support, that recognises that one size does not fit all.

- Introduced the Wellbeing Lead role within the Service.

- Developed our Wellbeing Network which all staff can access and contribute to.

- Delivered 'Lifelines' training: Staying Well, Understanding Resilience; Supporting Your Colleagues and Post Trauma Support.

- Introduced 'Healthy Culture' week and delivered our Quarterly 'Culture Club'.

- Developed a new Aspiring Leaders Programme.

- Provided access to Career Coaching.

- Worked collaboratively with The Ambulance Staff Charity (TASC) to introduce a crisis phoneline for staff.

- Worked collaboratively with Wellbeing Groups across Emergency Services and the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives (AACE) to share best practice.

- Delivered workplace visits, provided drop-in sessions and facilitated 'Spaces for Listening'.

There is more though that we aspire to achieve, including strengthening our commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, increasing our capability and learning around the subject of sexual safety in the workplace and being more proactive and preventative in our approach to mental health.

wellbeing

Our Health & Wellbeing Strategy
2021 – 2024

Being Well

Working together to support the health and wellbeing of our people

Our Strategy at a Glance

Our Vision
A workplace where the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of our staff is prioritised and supported.
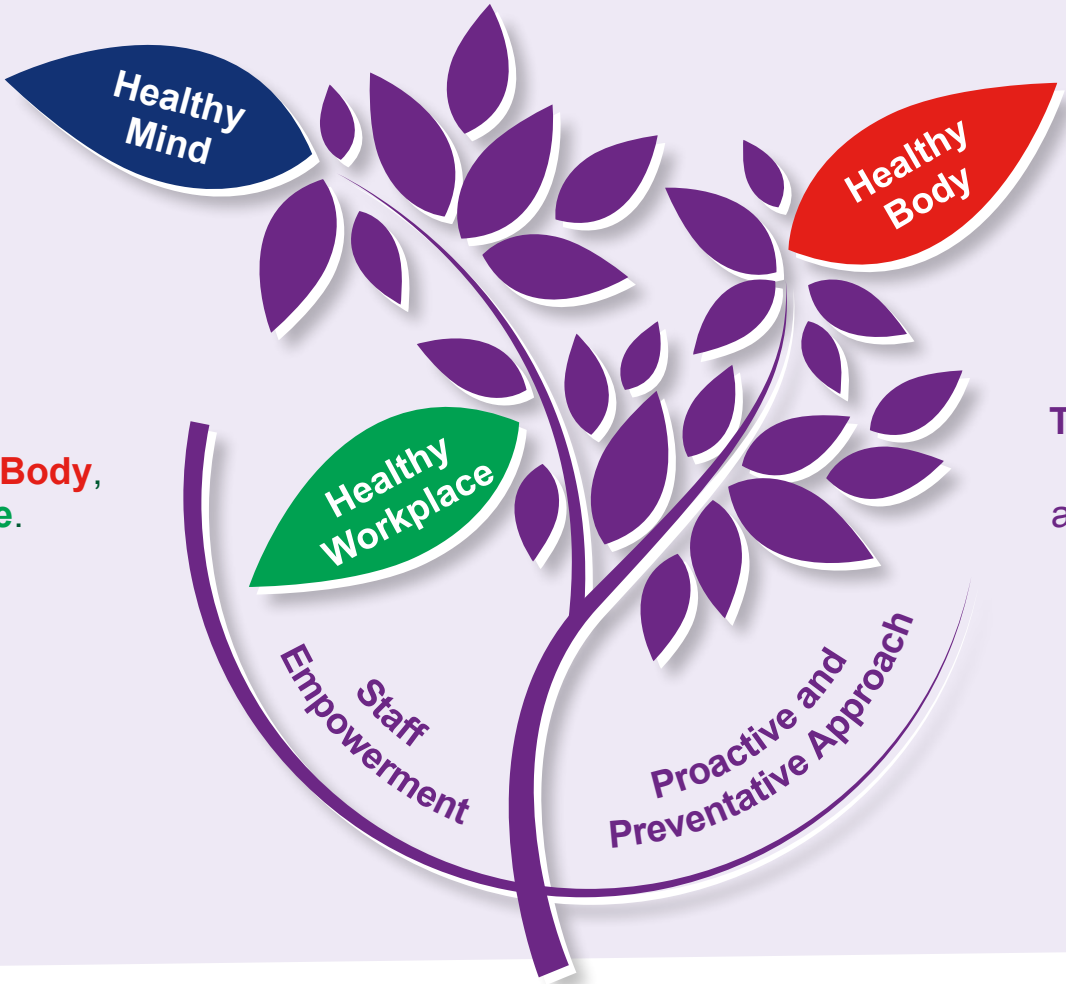
3 Key Themes
Healthy Mind, **Healthy Body**, **Healthy Workplace**.

This will be achieved by:
Empowerment of health and wellbeing initiatives at a grassroots level and by being proactive and preventative.

Healthy Mind

Healthy Body

Healthy Workplace

Staff Empowerment

Proactive and Preventative Approach

Figure 1 - Our Tree of Wellbeing

For maximum impact, and for wellbeing to flourish, we aim to champion the great work that is already taking place through local support networks.

These are key to creating workplaces where we are compassionate to each other, reduce the stigma of seeking help and ensure that a supporting conversation is always nearby.

Our strategy is inclusive of all, as we recognise that it is not just our frontline staff that experience pressures.

Our support staff, those from corporate functions and our next generation of students are also facing unique daily challenges.

Health and Wellbeing - easy to access – supportive of everyone.

"Frontline healthcare workers and first responders have been exposed to numerous stressors and ensuring the mental health of healthcare workers is a critical factor in sustaining COVID-19 preparedness, response and recovery."

United Nations 2020

What Matters to Our People?

The recovery from the pandemic has brought challenges that are still having a significant impact on our workforce and we are committed to placing the health and wellbeing of our people right at the centre of our organisational priorities.

In 2022 and 2023 we asked our people 'What Matters to You?'

Obvious themes emerged from this, particularly focussing on the impact that work experience has upon quality of home life.

When asked to focus on what would make a difference in the workplace, the requirement of support from our managers and leaders was regarded as being most significant.

The message is clear and is one which we make a commitment to owning collectively as an organisation: the demands of the job are high, and our plans must prioritise psychological safety and creating the conditions for people to feel that they are valued at all levels.

We need to work collaboratively with all areas of our workforce so that we can realise together 'what matters to you'.

Figure 2 - Word cloud from our 2023 'What Matters to You?' Survey

Figure 3 - Word cloud answering the question 'What would make a difference?'

Grassroots Comments

We are constantly seeking engagement and feedback from our staff.

Whilst this is, by no means, an exhaustive list of thoughts and feelings, we understand the sentiments that underpin each and every feeling and we have captured these within our 3 themes of **Healthy Mind**, **Healthy Body** and **Healthy Workplace**.

Comments from our online engagement sessions and face-to-face visits have included:

Staff work better when they are happy and feel supported.

We need to be able to challenge poor culture and stigma.

It is important for managers to value staff contributions and recognise good work.

I feel that improving the wellbeing of staff is key to morale and will lead to quality patient care.

I think when staff feel supported and valued it makes for a better working environment despite the current pressures of working on the road.

It is important to lead by example, keeping the service values in mind, be a good mentor and treat everyone with respect.

As colleagues we need to be available for chats, knowing where there is external and internal help for staff that are struggling.

Compassion is as important for staff, as it is to patients.

Without excellent staff welfare, we cannot provide excellent care to patients. Staff must be supported.

Keeping your team's health and wellbeing is a priority.

Figure 4 - The Mental Health Continuum

Thriving | **Surviving** | **Struggling** | **In Crisis**

> *"The effects of your habits multiply as you repeat them. They seem to make little difference on any given day and yet the impact they deliver over the months and years can be enormous."*

James Clear
Atomic Habits: Tiny Changes, Remarkable Results.

Grassroots to Green Shoots

Support of the strategy at grassroots level is an essential part of any successful policy. Positive change, though, does not require extreme effort or complicated programmes.

Small, daily habits when added together provide the conditions for health and wellbeing improvements within individuals, teams and organisations.

Green shoots that appear at a local level can grow and flourish to change the daily environment that we work within. Small, impactful habits are those that take place at a grass root level which, when repeated, have a much larger effect.

These might include:

- Understanding the importance of Health and Wellbeing and how it affects both you and your colleagues.

- Becoming familiar with the range of support services that are available,

- Recognising when you and team members might be experiencing poor Health and Wellbeing and encouraging them to seek support when necessary.

- Being aware of tools and resources such as the Mental Health Continuum

- Contributing to a culture of psychological safety within the team. Encouraging individuals to share their views and feelings without fear of reprisal.

- Demonstrating care, compassion, and kindness for colleagues, in the same way that we provide this to our patients and service users.

- As a manager, trying to break the habits of 'remote interaction' with colleagues, which became normalised during the pandemic. Where possible, face-to-face interaction increases feelings of being valued, impacting on Health and Wellbeing and operational performance.

- Getting to know your colleagues as people, not just teammates. Trying to understand and empathise with their challenges and listening to them as individuals.

- Being unafraid to come to work as the genuine 'you'.

Our 3 Health and Wellbeing Themes in more detail

"Much of the day-to-day responsibility for managing employees' health and wellbeing falls on line managers. This includes spotting early warning signs of stress, making supportive adjustments at work, and nurturing positive relationships."

CIPD Factsheet – Wellbeing at Work 2023

"Employees also have a responsibility for looking after their own health and wellbeing, and will only benefit from wellbeing initiatives if they participate in the initiatives on offer."

CIPD Factsheet – Wellbeing at Work 2023

"Mental ill health remains the most common cause of long-term absence from work, with nearly three-fifths (59%) of organisations including this among their top three causes."

CIPD Health and Wellbeing at Work Report 2020

Healthy Mind

Aim: Promote mental wellbeing and resilience to enable colleagues to effectively manage stress, cope with challenges, and thrive in their personal and professional lives.

WHAT we will achieve

→ Cultivate a climate that supports a proactive approach to mental health.

→ Provide awareness and education about mental wellbeing and empower individuals to take responsibility for their health.

→ Foster resilience to help colleagues cope with the effects of trauma and stress.

→ Create a supportive environment so that colleagues and teams feel comfortable discussing their pressures and where supportive conversations become normal practice.

→ Decrease stigma associated with mental health and reduce barriers to support our people.

→ Investigate increased access to pathways for rehabilitative mental health support.

→ Develop an evidence-based understanding of the causes of absence.

HOW we will achieve this

→ Expand our TRiM network by recruiting and training more assessors and developing the skills of our existing assessors.

→ Develop awareness, training and support mechanisms for suicide prevention.

→ Deliver a range of health promotion campaigns and activities to promote positive mental health and raise awareness levels by further developing our wellbeing network across the Service and conducting targeted visits by the Organisational Development and Wellbeing Team.

→ Conduct feasibility study into further mental health rehabilitation pathways in collaboration with Partnership, also considering 'Investing to Save' options.

→ Develop a Health and Wellbeing toolkit for managers.

→ Educate and provide strategies to disconnect from work.

→ Investigate support mechanisms to promote financial wellbeing.

Healthy Mind

MEASURES of progress

- Quarterly Health and Wellbeing pulse surveys.
- Number of TRiM assessors recruited and trained.
- Number of CPD hours completed for TRiM assessors.
- Number of TRiM assessments made/declined.
- Number of occupational health referrals.
- Number of engagements with mental health support resources via @SAS intranet pages.
- Number of absences and abstractions attributable to mental health.
- Hours of overtime resulting from wellbeing and sickness cover.
- Number of physical/verbal assaults on staff.
- Number of suicide prevention CPD sessions delivered.
- Number of engagements with TASC crisis support.
- Qualitative data relating to best practice captured via wellbeing networks and facilitators.
- Number of targeted visits by OD/Wellbeing Team. Capture themes raised by staff qualitatively and quantitively.
- Publish manager's toolkit on @SAS and record number of engagements.
- Feedback following training and development sessions, including transference of behaviour into the workplace.

> *"Support pathways are very important and there will undoubtedly be times when an employee needs to take time off because of a health condition. But we also need to see more organisations taking stronger preventative steps to promote good mental well-being and help employees to avoid work-related stress in particular."*
>
> CIPD Health and Wellbeing at Work Report 2020

Healthy Body

Aim: Promote physical health and wellbeing with an emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

WHAT we will achieve

→ Promote the health benefits of exercise and physical activity through both organisation-wide and locally targeted campaigns.

→ Capture and cross-fertilise best practice conducted by wellbeing networks, such as walking groups or yoga sessions.

→ Provide education on nutrition and healthy eating habits by collaborating with partner organisations.

→ Educate and inform on effective sleep habit strategies.

→ Provide information campaigns to allow our people to flourish by making lifestyle choices that are right for them.

→ Develop an organisational approach to fatigue risk management based on best practice.

→ Facilitate rehabilitative pathways in respect of physical injury.

→ Adopt a preventative approach to musculoskeletal conditions.

HOW we will achieve this

→ Ensure that our physical wellbeing messaging is genuine and sincere, recognising the importance of individual choice.

→ Work with partner organisations to deliver best-practice campaigns targeting physical health.

→ Benchmark physical health initiatives within Ambulance Trusts holding membership of AACE and implement initiatives that have proven to be effective.

→ Continue to grow the wellbeing networks using key stakeholders to act as enablers and share practice by interactively mapping this through the @SAS platform.

→ Develop staff led initiatives to support and promote health and wellbeing in the workplace commencing with:

- Development of a 'health passport' so that reasonable adjustments to the work environment are captured and supported.
- Introduction of a wellbeing check as a proactive approach to promote wellbeing and enhance existing processes such as appraisal and return to work meetings.

→ In partnership with other blue light colleagues, hold a physical activity challenge event to encourage cross service wellbeing and partnerships.

→ Work collaboratively with Occupational Health Services to provide information and support in respect of physical injury rehabilitation.

→ Identify and embed practical approaches to identify and manage staff fatigue and the risks associated with it.

→ Provide preventative information and training in respect of musculoskeletal conditions.

→ Continue to investigate strategies to alleviate the effects of shift overruns, ensuring that the work done at the rest break programme board becomes business as usual.

Healthy Body

MEASURES of progress

→ Quarterly Health and Wellbeing pulse surveys.

Participation rates and qualitative data in response to promotion campaigns.

Number of absences and abstractions attributable to physical health.

Levels of overtime resulting from wellbeing and sickness cover.

Growth of wellbeing networks and facilitators.

"We [cannot] afford to sideline the importance of people's physical health, especially with the additional risks posed by the more sedentary practice of homeworking."

CIPD Health and Wellbeing at Work Report 2020

Healthy Workplace

Aim: Create the climate for our people to enjoy coming to work.
Encompassing workplace culture and the physical work environment, our aim remains for the Scottish Ambulance Service to be 'a great place to work'.
Creating a workplace built upon psychological safety will be key to this.

WHAT we will achieve

→ Develop the five dimensions of 'a great place to work' in our workplaces (Credibility, Respect, Pride, Camaraderie and Fairness) as the benchmark for teams.

→ Continue our trajectory of cultural development aligned to the principles of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

→ Continue to develop our Leadership and Management cadres, investing in the skills that have impact at a grassroots level.

→ Embed the themes of psychological safety and being valued within individuals, teams and departments.

→ Foster mutual support both within teams and across team boundaries to grow a culture of increased collaboration.

→ Operationalise our values by embedding the underpinning behaviours as workplace norms.

→ Ensure that new colleagues feel welcome and are provided with the best start to flourish within the Scottish Ambulance Service.

→ Create a climate where early intervention becomes an increasingly important method of dealing with problems and difficulties.

→ Support individuals, teams and departments who wish to enhance their physical operating environment by utilising endowment funding streams, whilst respecting the boundaries of financial and clinical governance.

→ Strive for a culture of continuous improvement by regularly seeking feedback and developing towards a just culture.

→ Promote a culture of Health and Safety.

→ Strive for a culture of fewer meetings and where our people have the courage to try to do things differently without fear of repercussion.

→ Continue to develop working practices that support work life balance and promote health and wellbeing.

→ Deliver sessions centred on sexual safety and reducing misogyny in the workplace.

HOW we will achieve this

→ Deliver regular 'micro-learning' sessions and action learning sets focusing on the themes of ED&I (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) and the five dimensions of a great place to work.

→ Promote and support the aims and ambitions of our five staff networks so that they become embedded in our culture.

→ Develop a Leadership Academy to host and deliver leadership and management programmes, resources, activities and events and provides ongoing support and development for our aspiring and current leadership cohorts.

→ Develop a framework of positive cultural behaviours for line managers.

→ Further embed respectful communication using concepts such as 'Civility Saves Lives' and 'Calling It Out With Compassion'.

→ Launch and evaluate our new corporate induction programme.

→ Provide education and training on effective team working and communicating across boundaries.

→ Work in collaboration with Finance Directorate to ease pathways to endowment fund and similar initiatives.

→ Develop a culture dashboard to provide data-informed, targeted organisational development and wellbeing interventions.

→ Further raise awareness on the importance of appraisals to a culture of feeling valued.

Healthy Workplace

MEASURES of progress

→ Quarterly Health and Wellbeing pulse surveys.

→ Results of the iMatter staff survey mapped against the 5 dimensions of 'a great place to work' and compared to previous baselined data.

→ Number of attendees at staff network events and meetings.

→ Number of recorded ED&I grievances.

→ Number of staff undertaking leadership development programmes and level of completion/disengagement.

→ Measurement of the increase in knowledge and transference of behaviour into the workplace following attendance on leadership development programmes.

→ Number of new staff undertaking corporate induction programme.

→ Number of staff undertaking 'Civility Saves Lives' Training.

→ Number of successful endowment fund applications to improve the workplace environment.

→ Number of staff undertaking 'micro-learning sessions' on ED&I.

→ Membership growth of staff networks.

→ Number of targeted OD/Wellbeing visits.

→ Number of appraisals completed.

→ Number of workplace accidents and near misses.

"Now, more than ever, we need leaders who are not afraid to show compassion, who consciously role-model healthy working practices and foster an environment where people feel safe to speak about health issues and seek help."

CIPD Health and Wellbeing at Work Report 2020

The Roots of our Strategy: Staff empowerment and taking a proactive and preventative approach

Aim: Cultivate a culture where our people feel empowered and supported to take ownership of health and wellbeing issues both individually and collectively.

By taking a proactive and preventative approach our aim is to encourage staff, managers and leaders to anticipate and mitigate issues before they become problems.

WHAT we will achieve

→ Increase levels of awareness of Health and Wellbeing support pathways across the organisation.

→ Empower colleagues to prioritise their own health and wellbeing.

→ Encourage individuals to reach out and seek support, where needed.

→ Grow our wellbeing networks and further increase their profile to create local communities of support.

→ Encourage our leaders to promote health-oriented leadership to facilitate change at a local level from the 'middle' out.

HOW we will achieve it

→ Work with partner organisations to deliver best-practice campaigns to educate and inform.

→ Ensure that resources are accessible and signposted effectively so that appropriate support pathways can be found easily.

→ Support and reinforce the activities of our local wellbeing facilitators and networks.

→ Develop a virtual health and wellbeing suggestions box for ideas to be captured at a grassroots level.

→ Provide access to staff-led 'health passports' so that reasonable adjustments to the work environment are captured and supported.

→ Raise awareness levels through intelligence-led and targeted visits by the Organisational Development and Wellbeing Team.

MEASURES of progress

→ Quarterly Health and Wellbeing pulse surveys.

→ Number of ideas submitted and adopted through wellbeing suggestions box.

→ Level of workforce engagement with iMatter staff survey.

→ Number of local wellbeing networks and facilitators.

→ Number of absences and abstractions by reason.

→ Number of engagements with supporting resources via @SAS.

Governance

Governance of the strategy is provided in accordance with Figure 5.

Meetings for governance take place every three months. Accountability is linked to staff governance requirements to ensure that all staff are provided with a continuously improving and safe working environment, promoting health and wellbeing of staff, patients and the wider community.
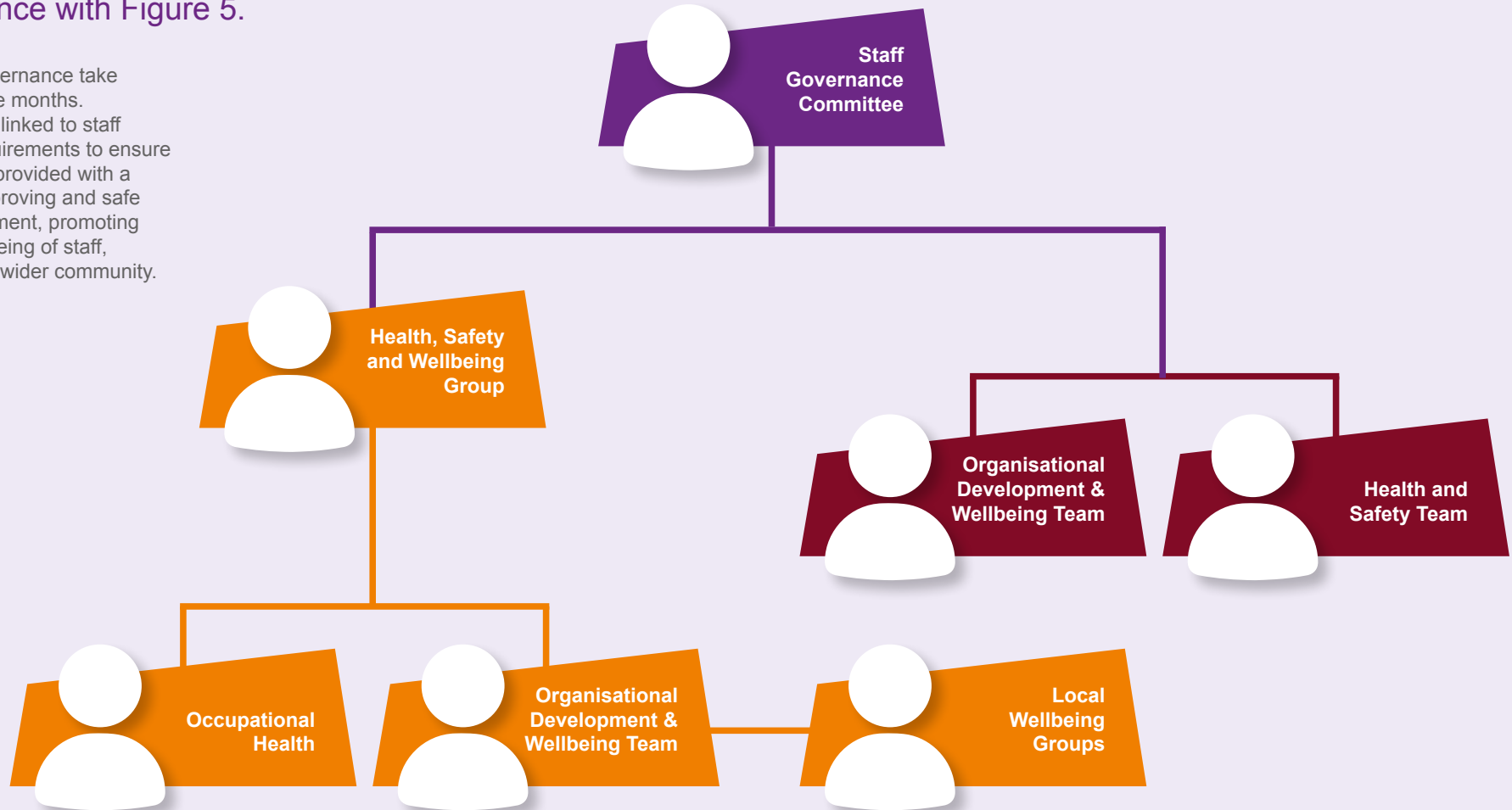

Figure 5 - Governance structure

References

CIPD Factsheet Wellbeing at Work (2023)

CIPD Health and Wellbeing at Work Report 2020
eehealth-and-well-being-2020-report_tcm18-73967.pdf (cipd.org)

CIPD Health and Wellbeing at Work Report 2022
Health and wellbeing at work 2022: Survey report (cipd.org)

Great Place to Work: Definition of a Great Workplace
Trust Model | Great Place To Work®

James Clear – Atomic Habits: Tiny Changes, Remarkable Results.

NHS Scotland Staff Governance
Home — NHS Scotland Staff Governance

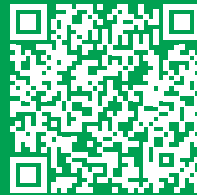United Nations
Policy Brief: COVID-19 and the Need for Action on Mental Health (13 May 2020)

What Matters to You?
What matters to you?

World Health Organisation; Mental Health
Mental health (who.int)

Please scan this
QR code to access
Wellbeing resources
on @SAS

Scottish
Ambulance
Service

Working in Partnership with Universities

wellbeing