



Aberdeen City Population Mental Health Action Plan 2026-2027 Easy Read

Working together as a whole city to improve mental health and wellbeing

Contents

Introduction	Page 3
The Building Blocks of Mental Health and Wellbeing	Page 4
Action plan on a page	Page 5
Purpose and progression of the action plan	Page 6
Priority 1: Infants, parents and families	Page 7
Priority 2: Children and young people	Page 8
Priority 3: Working age adults	Page 9
Priority 4: Older adults	Page 10
Priority 5: Whole city approach	Page 11
Shared governance	Page 12
What happens next?	Page 13

Introduction

Mental health and wellbeing matters to everyone. It shapes how we feel, cope with everyday life, relate to others and participate in our communities. Good mental wellbeing supports learning, work, relationships, caring and enjoyment of life, while poor mental health can affect health, education, employment and life chances.

The Aberdeen City Population Mental Health Action Plan sets out how partners will work together to strengthen mental wellbeing and prevent mental health conditions across the whole city. It focuses on creating the conditions for good mental health, not only on responding when people are already experiencing difficulties.

The plan recognises that mental health is shaped by more than health services alone. Where we live, grow up, learn, work and age all influence mental health and wellbeing. Families, communities, schools, workplaces, housing, income, safety and social connection play a central role. Improving population mental health therefore requires a whole city approach.

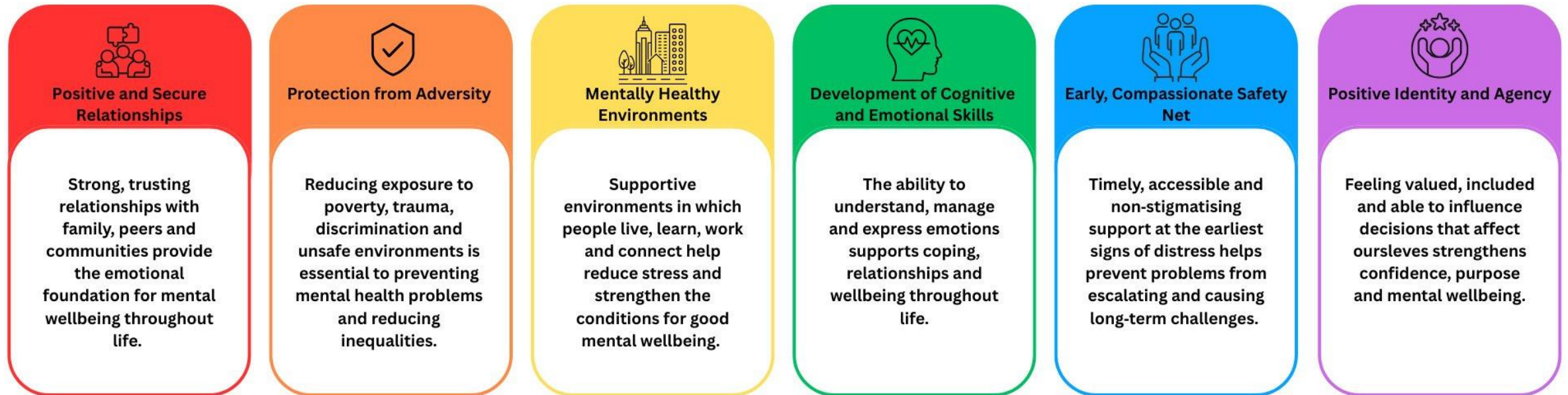
This action plan provides a shared framework for action, organised around key stages of life from infancy through to older age, alongside cross-cutting priorities that support city wide change. It brings together existing activity in Aberdeen and sets out the priority actions partners will take together to improve mental health and reduce inequalities.

The plan forms part of a longer term programme of work to improve population mental health in Aberdeen. While this action plan focuses on priorities and activity for 2026–2027, it sits within a wider multi-year programme. In its first year, this plan focuses on building strong foundations for mental wellbeing, putting the right building blocks in place so lasting change can grow over time. Learning from year one will inform and shape future actions.

The Building Blocks of Mental Health and Wellbeing

Improving population mental health requires action on the conditions that enable people and communities to flourish. The Building Blocks of Mental Health and Wellbeing describe these core foundations and are drawn from the [NIHR Conceptual Framework for Public Mental Health](#) and wider evidence.

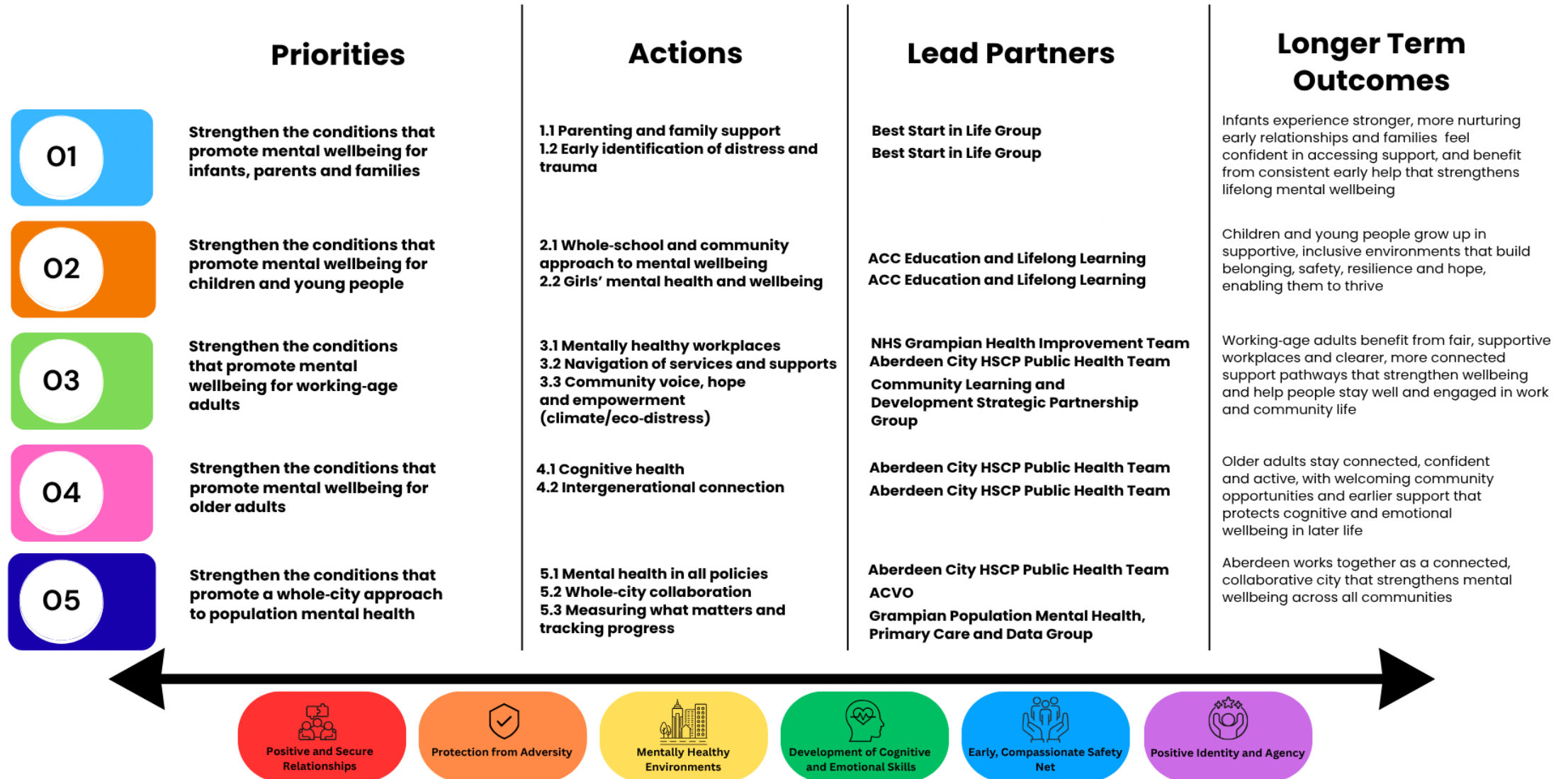
These 'Building Blocks' provide a shared way of understanding how mental health is shaped and a practical framework for taking action across different stages of life. The 'Building Blocks' are:



The 'Building Blocks' run through every part of this action plan, helping to focus activity on prevention, reducing inequalities and strengthening the foundations of mental health and wellbeing for the whole city. While these 'Building Blocks' are presented separately, they are closely connected and interdependent.

Action plan on a page

This year one action plan is organised around a life-course approach to population mental health, supported by a set of cross-cutting actions. This structure reflects the evidence that mental health is shaped by experiences and conditions across life, while also recognising the need for coordinated action at a city level.



Purpose and progression of the action plan

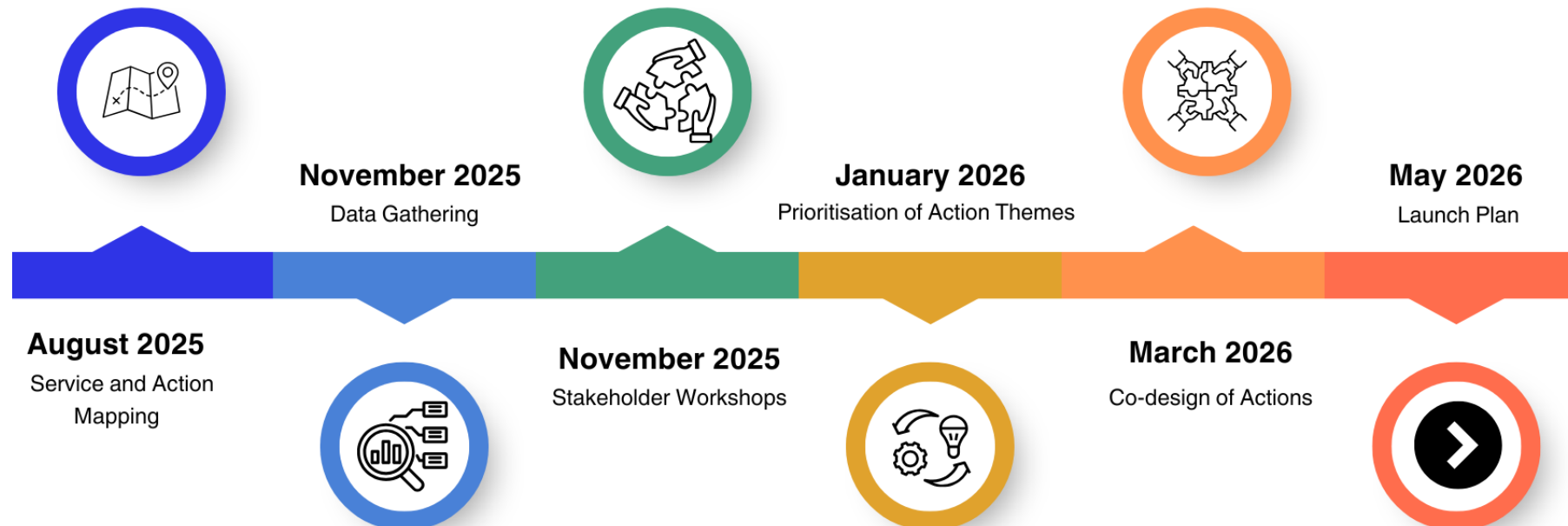
This action plan brings together evidence and local knowledge to provide a clear structure for joint action on population mental health in Aberdeen. It will support collaboration, guide annual delivery planning and help ensure that mental wellbeing is considered in decisions across the city.

The plan is designed to progress over four years:

- Year one (this plan) focuses on alignment, partnership-building and enabling conditions.
- Year two focuses on delivery and scaling effective approaches.
- Year three and four focuses on embedding what works.

How this plan has been developed

This plan has been developed through a collaborative, evidence-informed process between June 2025 and March 2026. It brings together insights from people, services and communities across Aberdeen, alongside national and local data. In total, approximately 180 stakeholders from across the city have helped develop the plan.



01

Strengthen the conditions that promote mental wellbeing for infants, parents and families

Why this matters

Pregnancy, infancy and early childhood are critical for lifelong mental health and wellbeing. This priority focuses on pregnancy, infancy and early childhood, recognising the foundational importance of secure attachment, nurturing relationships and supportive early environments for lifelong mental health and wellbeing.

What we need to do

Parenting and family support

Strengthen and align a clear, city-wide parenting and family support offer so families can easily find early help, supporting good mental wellbeing through stronger relationships, confidence and early support.

Early identification of distress and trauma

Strengthen how services and communities recognise and respond early to signs of distress and trauma in infants and young children, so that concerns are identified and addressed before they get worse.

How we will do it

- Understand what parenting support exists, where it is, and who can access it.
- Help services work better together.
- Make it easier for families to find and access support.
- Strengthen how services notice and respond early to distress.
- Test small improvements to parenting support and early identification of distress.

How will we know we have made a difference?

- Families can find support more easily.
- Services are better joined up.
- More families get help early.
- Early concerns are identified and supported sooner.



02

Strengthen the conditions that promote mental wellbeing for children and young people

Why this matters

Childhood and adolescence are critical stages of life, shaping emotional development, identity, relationships and future life chances. Strengthening the everyday conditions that support mental health and wellbeing for children and young people is a core prevention priority, supporting better outcomes across education, health, employment and community life.

What we need to do

Whole school and community approach to mental wellbeing

Strengthen and align school and community mental wellbeing support, identify gaps, and agree shared priorities to improve consistency, inclusion and early response.

Girls' mental health and wellbeing

Strengthen and align support for girls' mental wellbeing, identify gaps, and agree shared preventative priorities across schools and communities.

How we will do it

- Bring together schools, youth work and community support to understand what mental health support exists and where there are gaps.
- Involve children, young people and families in shaping support.
- Understand the different needs of young people, including girls and those who may need extra support.
- Strengthen existing mental wellbeing support and test new approaches in schools and communities.

How will we know we have made a difference?

- Children and young people feel more supported and included.
- Support is clearer and easier to access.
- More young people feel listened to.
- Help is provided earlier.



03

Strengthen the conditions that promote mental wellbeing for working age adults

Why this matters

For many working age adults, mental health and wellbeing is shaped by a wide range of factors including job and financial security, caring roles, experiences of discrimination, and how easy or difficult it is to find help when things start to feel overwhelming. This priority focuses on early, preventative action to reduce mental health challenges, improve inclusion and support people to stay well and take part in work and community life.

What we need to do

Mentally healthy workplaces

Design and deliver a joined-up workplace mental health and wellbeing offer across the city.

Navigation of services and supports

Improve coordination and navigation of services and supports so people can access the help they need more easily.

Community voice, hope and empowerment

Deliver community-based approaches that strengthen voice, belonging and hope, including support related to climate and eco-distress.

How we will do it

- Strengthen mental wellbeing support in workplaces.
- Make it easier to navigate and access services.
- Strengthen coordination between services.
- Test community-based approaches, including a mental wellbeing focused Community Appointment Day.
- Build capacity to address climate distress in communities.

How will we know we have made a difference?

- People find it easier to get help.
- Less confusion about where to go for help.
- Workplaces better support mental health and wellbeing.
- People feel more connected and supported.
- People feel better supported with concerns about the climate emergency.



04

Strengthen the conditions that promote mental wellbeing for older adults

Why this matters

Later life can be a positive and fulfilling stage of life, but it can also bring changes that increase the risk of poor mental wellbeing. This priority focuses on later life, recognising that things like social connection, confidence, physical health, independence and having a sense of purpose all play a major role in mental wellbeing as we get older. It prioritises early, preventative action to promote connection and reduce isolation, and to support cognitive health and emotional wellbeing.

What we need to do

Cognitive health

Build a shared understanding of activity that supports cognitive health and promote approaches that support mental wellbeing.

Intergenerational connection

Strengthen relationships between older adults and younger people to reduce loneliness and support wellbeing.

How we will do it

- Strengthen and build on opportunities for social connection
- Support intergenerational activity and strengthen existing programmes.

How will we know we have made a difference?

- Older people feel less lonely.
- More older people take part in activities.
- Older people feel more confident and connected.



05

Strengthen the conditions that promote a whole city approach to population mental health

Why this matters

Improving population mental health in Aberdeen requires action that cuts across all stages of life, services and supports. A set of cross cutting actions are needed to create the conditions for good mental wellbeing, reduce inequalities and ensure sustained, coordinated action across the city. This priority focuses on how Aberdeen works together, rather than on individual population groups. It provides the enabling framework that supports delivery of all other priorities in the action plan.

What we need to do

Mental Health in All Policies (MHiAP)

Embed mental health and wellbeing into policy, planning and decision-making across the city.

Whole city collaboration

Create a city-wide forum to bring partners and lived experience together to share learning and work jointly.

Measuring what matters and tracking progress

Develop a shared approach to measuring and tracking population mental health.

How we will do it

- Embed mental health in decisions across the city.
- Bring partners together to work in a more joined-up and collaborative way.
- Use data, lived experience and evidence to guide decisions.
- Develop a shared approach to measuring what matters, including agreeing indicators and tracking progress.

How will we know we have made a difference?

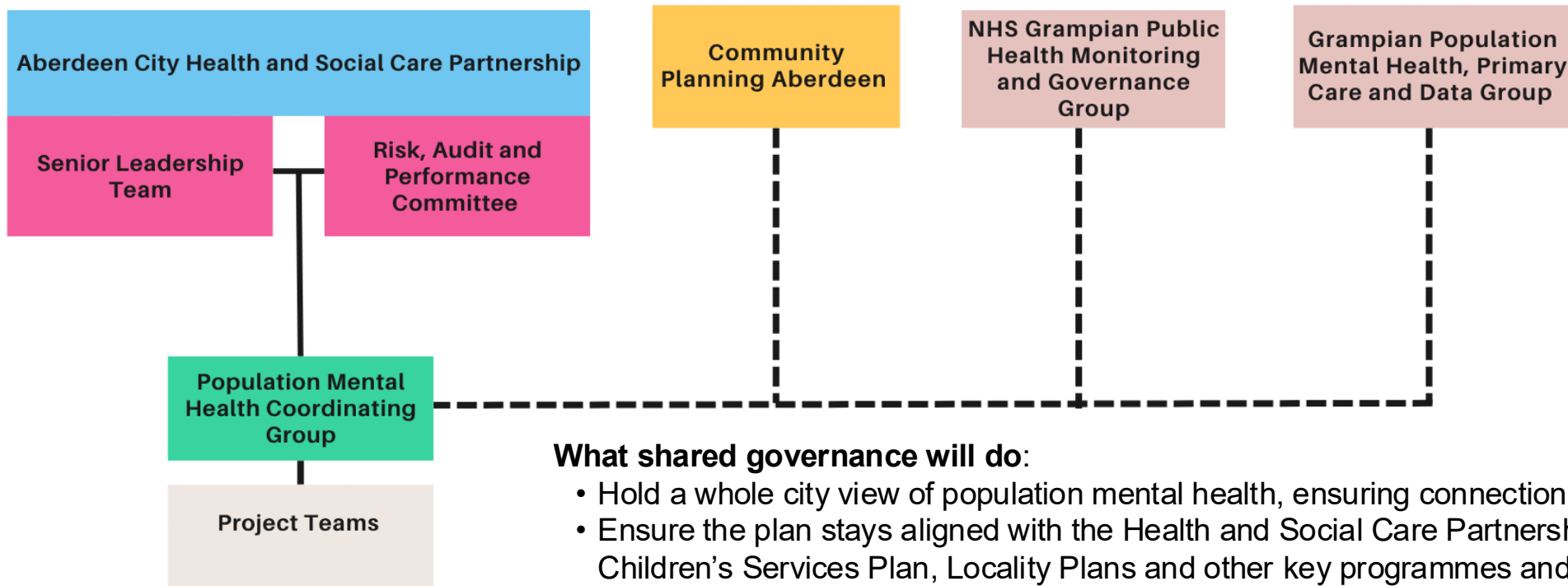
- Mental health and wellbeing is considered in decisions, policies and plans across the city.
- Organisations and communities are working better together with shared understanding and joint priorities
- There is a clearer shared picture of population mental health, using data and lived experience.



Shared governance

A shared governance approach is needed to support a whole city effort on population mental health. Because many of the factors that shape mental wellbeing sit outside any single service, governance must bring together partners from across the city.

In year one, interim governance arrangements will be put in place to support delivery of this action plan while wider Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) structures are finalised. This will involve establishing a focused coordinating group to oversee progress, support alignment and enable decision making across priorities.



What shared governance will do:

- Hold a whole city view of population mental health, ensuring connection across all five priorities.
- Ensure the plan stays aligned with the Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan, LOIP, Children's Services Plan, Locality Plans and other key programmes and projects.
- Support shared ownership of outcomes, rather than responsibility sitting with one service or team.
- Enable collective decision making, particularly where actions cut across sectors (schools, workplaces, communities, health, social care and third sector).
- Oversee learning, improvement and adaptation as new insights, data and lived experience emerge.
- Provide a route for regular reporting and monitoring.

What happens next?

The Aberdeen City Population Mental Health Action Plan sets a shared direction for the city. Named leads will take forward the actions in the plan, working through existing groups and new spaces.

In year one, the plan focuses on strengthening and connecting existing mental health and wellbeing activity across Aberdeen. This includes building a shared understanding of what is already happening, improving alignment between partners and agreeing priorities for future years.

Some small test and learn activity will take place to support our aim of moving towards a prevention focused city. These are designed to build insight and shape future delivery, rather than introduce new services.

If you or your organisation would like to connect into this work, you can do so by contacting healthimprovement@aberdeencity.gov.uk

We look forward to continuing to work together to improve mental health and wellbeing across Aberdeen.