

Community Mental Health Services and Supports Framework Review - Consultation Workshop

Scottish Youth Parliament

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Recommendations

Content:

1. There could be more clarity on how local partnerships and service providers will be held accountable for delivering community based mental health and wellbeing supports and services in line with the Framework's principles.
2. The Framework could be more specific about what the principles for community-based support should look like in practice for children and young people at different developmental stages and ages.
3. The Framework could be clearer in relation to what a minimum standard of support means for the support available for parents/ carers and families.
4. The Framework could clarify the types of community-based supports and services that are accessible to a young person who is also a parent/ carer.
5. There should be more focus on ensuring targeted supports for people in rural and island communities.

Format:

6. The resource list at the back of the Framework could include a sentence with context about how each link connects to the document, and which section each reference relates to. Alternatively, the relevant references could be listed at the end of each section to make sure practitioners are able to easily find additional information to help them effectively deliver the Framework.
7. An easy read version of the Framework would help to make sure the Framework is clearer and more accessible.
8. It would be useful to have an accessible, easy read resource for children, young people, parents/carers and families, and the people who work with them, such as a flyer or web page, which could help people understand the different types of support available for their mental health and wellbeing.

Rights-based approach:

9. The Framework could have a clearer definition of what a rights-based approach is, and what this looks like in practice.
10. The Framework could elaborate more on the rights that children and young people have under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and how these rights are all connected.
11. The Framework could include direct reference to guidance on the *UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024* to help local authorities or service providers understand how delivery of the Framework directly relates to and is impacted by effective implementation of this legislation.
12. The Framework could make clearer that services and support providers should be involving children and young people in all stages of planning, design, delivery, and evaluation, in accordance with UNCRC Article 12.



Introduction

Following SYP's 2022 independent evaluation of Community Based Mental Health Services for children, young people and their families¹ ('SYP's 2022 independent evaluation'), we worked with the Scottish Government to review the updated Community Mental Health Services and Supports Framework. This Framework is designed to give guidance to local authorities and service providers who are planning and delivering this type of support and service for children, young people and their families.

While SYP's 2022 independent evaluation process involved a youth-led series of surveys, focus groups, and thematic analyses, this updated review took the form of a hybrid (i.e. in person and online) consultation workshop held on one afternoon - Thursday, August 8th - at SYP's office in Edinburgh.

Participants included five Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs), one of whom had also taken part in SYP's 2022 independent evaluation, which provided a degree of continuity across this stream of work. The workshop was run by four SYP staff members and was also attended by Peter Innes, Senior Policy Advisor with the Scottish Government. COSLA, who partnered with the Scottish Government to publish the updated Framework, was also invited to attend, but they shared their regrets.

Ahead of the workshop, MSYPs were asked to review the draft of the updated Framework (shared by the Scottish Government), as well as the recommendations from SYP's 2022 independent evaluation that were relevant to the Framework (See Appendix 1).

The aims of the workshop were to produce a series of recommendations - contained within this report - to inform the Scottish Government and COSLA's updated Framework that address:

- What works well and what could make the Framework even clearer?
- Does the Framework reflect the relevant SYP recommendations?
- Is there anything the Scottish Government should be highlighting in relation to co-design and meaningful participation, particularly for young people aged 16-24?

¹ Scottish Youth Parliament (2022) '*Independent evaluation of mental health and wellbeing community supports and services for 5-24-year-olds, their parents and carers*'. Available at: <https://syp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Independent-Evaluation-of-Community-Mental-Health-Supports-and-Services-April-2023.pdf>



Our approach

SYP intentionally recruited workshop participants from our campaign planning group focused on increasing mental health training and education, as this group of young people has demonstrated a vested interest in Scottish mental health policy and programmes.

The session plan for the workshop included:

- 1) Welcome and icebreakers
- 2) Overview of SYP's work on community based mental health services, including SYP's 2022 independent evaluation
- 3) Review of the draft of the updated Framework
- 4) Small and whole-group discussion
- 5) End evaluation

Because most workshop participants were unfamiliar with SYP's 2022 independent evaluation, our session plan ensured all MSYPs were well informed of the context and purpose of the Framework before being asked to critically analyse it.

In this light, we carried out the Framework review through a jigsaw reading activity, where MSYPs were asked to read half of the draft updated Framework ('Section A' or 'Section B') while considering half of the relevant recommendations from SYP's 2022 independent evaluation ('1-4' or '5-8'). Participants with the same set of recommendations then got into small groups to prepare a brief presentation reflecting on:

- Where does the new draft reflect the relevant SYP recommendations?
- Are any of the relevant SYP recommendations missing?
- Are any of the SYP recommendations more prominent than the others?

Once the small groups fed back on their recommendations, SYP staff then facilitated a whole group discussion to pick up broader insights from the MSYPs on the clarity of the Framework and how well the Framework speaks to participation (esp. of 16+ young people).

The workshop concluded with a few words from Peter Innes, informing the MSYP participants of how their feedback from the session would be used to inform the updated Framework.



Results

This section outlines the key issues and themes participants discussed during the consultation workshop, in relation to two key questions:

1. Is the draft Framework clear, and is anything missing?
2. Does the draft Framework reflect the SYP recommendations?

Is the draft Framework clear, and is anything missing?

Overall, all participants agreed that the draft updated Framework is **well organised and clearly structured**.

While participants recognised that the Framework is designed to be guidance for local partnerships to design and deliver community-based supports and services that are appropriate for their areas, they made the following suggestions for changes and additions to make the Framework clearer and to assist with the effective delivery of the Framework:

- The **resource list at the back of the Framework** is helpful, but it could include a sentence with context about how each link connects to the document, and which section each reference relates to. Alternatively, the relevant references could be listed at the end of each section to make sure practitioners are able to easily find additional information to help them effectively deliver the Framework.
- There could be more clarity in the Framework on **how local partnerships and service providers will be held accountable** for delivering community based mental health and wellbeing supports and services in line with the principles of the Framework. Participants were concerned that some people might not trust their local authorities or service providers to support them in a way that works for them. Participants were also concerned that funding provided to support delivery of the Framework might not be used for its intended purpose, and they felt there should be more assurance that the Scottish Government and COSLA are monitoring this.

In addition to these suggestions, participants discussed additional changes which, while not directly related to the contents and layout of the Framework, could sit alongside the Framework to further support its effective delivery:

- An **easy read version of the Framework** would help to make sure it is clearer and more accessible. This is particularly important for people who (for example) experience language barriers, have a learning disability, or are neurodivergent, to enable them to engage with and understand the services and support available to them within the community. Participants suggested there could be a summarised version of the Framework online which outlines the core principles underpinning the Framework, with links



to case studies showing examples of what these principles look like in practice. This could also help local partnerships and service providers to evidence the principles of the Framework within their work.

Does the draft Framework reflect the SYP recommendations?

Eight of the recommendations from SYP's 2022 independent evaluation relate to aspects of the Community Based Mental Health Supports and Services Framework.

Participants could see all eight SYP recommendations reflected in the Framework, but to varying degrees.

Recommendation 1: Children, young people and their families should be able to access a minimum standard of support.

Participants felt this recommendation was evident at the start of the Framework but was less apparent throughout the document.

While they liked the references within the Framework to every child and young person having their say on the design and delivery of supports and services, participants felt there could be **greater focus on how to include everyone**.

Additionally, participants suggested the Framework could be clearer in relation to **what a minimum standard of support means for the support available for parents/ carers and families**. *See also the discussion on recommendation 6.*

“Having equal opportunities across Scotland doesn't mean having the same opportunities, but tailored opportunities are important to make sure people in different communities have equal access to support despite the additional barriers they might face.” - **consultation workshop participant**

Recommendation 2 - Take a rights-based approach at all levels of service design and delivery.

Participants felt this recommendation was evident in the first few pages of the Framework. However, they suggested the Framework could have a **clearer definition of what a rights-based approach is, and what this looks like in practice**. This could be more clearly evidenced throughout the Framework.

Participants highlighted the **importance of recognising that children and young people have a lot of rights, and that these rights are all connected**. Participants noted that Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the only human rights article explicitly mentioned in the Framework. They suggested the **Framework could elaborate on how it relates more widely to other UNCRC and other rights articles**, recognising that *“Human rights, including those within the UNCRC are:*

- *Universal (they apply to everyone, regardless of who they are)*



- *Inalienable (they cannot be taken from you or given away)*
- *Indivisible (they are all equally important)*
- *Interdependent (breach of one impacts them all).’’²*

Note - participants didn’t explicitly use the words in this list, but their discussion indirectly referenced these core principles, as outlined in the Scottish Government’s statutory guidance relating to the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024.

In light of the *UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024*, participants felt the Framework could **include direct links to guidance** for local authorities and other public bodies to help them understand how delivery of the Framework directly relates to and is impacted by effective implementation of this legislation.

“[The Framework] only specifically mentions [UNCRC] Article 12. Ideally, the Framework should elaborate on what taking a rights-based approach looks like and name more rights specifically.” - **consultation workshop participant**

Recommendation 3 - Fund multiple services to ensure support is available in every local authority.

Participants felt **this recommendation is clear throughout the Framework**. They particularly liked the way the Framework advocates for partnerships to work together and create a more cohesive experience for children, young people and their families. They also liked that being ‘easily accessible’ and ‘accessible to all’ were included as core principles of the Framework.

Participants liked that the **Framework gives specific examples of different types of services and support**, including online and in-person options and the importance of out-of-hours services. They felt this makes it clear that people should have real access to services, and not be stuck on waiting lists for a long time.

However, there was a lot of discussion during the workshop about the absence of specific reference to accessibility of **services and support for people in rural and island communities**, and the specific challenges these groups experience in relation to being part of or able to access communities. Participants discussed barriers for rural and island communities including:

- Distance between communities.
- Availability of public transport.
- Poor internet access for online support.

² Scottish Government (2024) ‘*UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 - part 2: statutory guidance*’. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/statutory-guidance-part-2-uncrc-incorporation-scotland-act-2024/pages/3/>



- People not feeling part of or being able to access a community because they are not in school, either because they are home educated or because they have left formal education.

While participants understood that the Framework is designed to give guidance for local partnerships, they felt there could be **more focus on ensuring targeted supports for people in rural and island communities.**

“The Framework advocates for service providers communicating with each other, which is promising for a more cohesive experience.” - **consultation workshop participant**

Recommendation 4 - Increase support for specialist services to provide targeted and intersectional support.

Participants felt **this recommendation is clear throughout the Framework.** They liked that there was specific focus on ‘at risk’ groups, such as those with experience of childhood adversity (ACEs), although they did identify some groups that hadn’t been included, such as young parents, young carers, and people in rural and island communities.

See discussion relating to recommendations 3 and 6 for more detail.

“Accessibility seems to be a main point throughout the Framework, which is great, but there doesn’t seem to be anything addressing accessibility for those outside of a school location where it can be easier to access support. This limbo area feels missing within the [Framework].” - **consultation workshop participant**

Recommendation 5 - Increase community-based support for 16-24-year-olds.

While participants could see reference to this recommendation, they felt the Framework was too generalised so **doesn’t specifically address the unique challenges 16-24-year-olds** experience in relation to mental health and wellbeing support, particularly for those young people outside of school and those transitioning between different services.

Participants discussed the **challenges many young people experience during the transition** from CAMHS or children’s services to adult services, at a time when they may be experiencing multiple transitions in their lives (for example, leaving school and potentially moving away from their family). Participants did not feel this was recognised within the Framework. They suggested the Framework could **be more specific about what children, young people, and families could expect at different ages and developmental stages**, and what the principles for community-based support should look like in practice at each stage.



“I’m not seeing a lot of specific actions for supporting young people in transitioning from children to adult services [in the Framework].” - **consultation workshop participant**

“More references could be made to specific age groups, such as 16-25s, as opposed to just ‘older young people’.” - **consultation workshop participant**

Recommendation 6 - Expand support for parents, carers, and family members.

Participants highlighted that **this recommendation is evident** within the Framework. However, they were concerned that there is **no reference to young parents** who are under the age of 24 (and/or under 16). Additionally, they were concerned that young carers are sometimes expected to make decisions that would normally be made by a parent/carers, which isn’t recognised in the Framework.

Participants suggested there should be clarification in the Framework about the type of community-based supports and services a young person who is a parent or carer would be able to access. This includes whether they can access the same support a parent/carers would be able to access (regardless of whether their own child is also accessing support) in addition to the support that other young people would have access to.

“There should be more clarification about young parents and young carers. Is a young parent treated as a young person or a parent? Is a young carer who has many adult responsibilities and might have to make the decisions a parent would make someone who might benefit from adult care or young person care?” - **consultation workshop participant**

Recommendation 7 - Ensure signposting to services and support is available and accessible.

Participants felt **this recommendation was clear and evident in the Framework.**

However, they suggested it would be useful to have an accessible / easy read **resource for children, young people, parents/carers and families, and the people who work with them**, such as a flyer or web page, which could help people to understand the different types of support available for their mental health and wellbeing. This could more clearly outline the core principles underpinning the Framework in an accessible way, which would help people to understand what community mental health supports and services are and how they can help.

“[An accessible, easy read resource is] really important for community members with learning disabilities and who are neurodiverse to engage with and understand the services that are available to them.” - **consultation workshop participant**



Recommendation 8 - Carry out more regular evaluation of children, young people, and families' experiences.

Participants felt this was the **least evident recommendation within the Framework**. They were particularly concerned that services and support providers should be involving children and young people in all stages of planning, design, delivery, and evaluation because children and young people know themselves and what they need best.

Participants noted that the duties placed on local authorities and those in receipt of public funding outlined in the *UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024* should make it easier to integrate evaluation into the Framework and into the design and delivery of community based mental health supports and services. They felt this could be clearer within the Framework.

“UNCRC incorporation in Scotland should make it easier to integrate this recommendation into the Framework, but at the moment the recommendation isn’t very present. It’s key for this recommendation that meaningful participation with young people is present in the evaluation sections.” - **consultation workshop participant**



Appendices

Appendix 1: Relevant recommendations from the Scottish Youth Parliament's 2022 independent evaluation of community based mental health supports and services

The following recommendations are the eight recommendations as worded in the Scottish Youth Parliament's independent evaluation of community mental health services and support report. These are the recommendations which are specifically relevant to the Community Mental Health Supports and Services Framework.

Recommendation 1 - Children, young people and their families should be able to access a minimum standard of support.

Children, young people, and their families should be able to access the same standard of support, when they need it, regardless of their personal circumstances and where they are in Scotland. Although it is important that services are based on local need, there should be a minimum level of support available in every local authority, for all children, young people, and families who require support.

Recommendation 2 - Take a rights-based approach at all levels of service design and delivery.

Ensure a rights-based approach is taken at all levels of design and delivery of community based mental health services for children, young people, and their families. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring local authorities, service providers, and practitioners are well versed in a rights-based approach, and ensuring children, young people, and their families are meaningfully involved in all levels of decision-making, including in shaping new and existing service provision, and in ongoing review and evaluation of local services and the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Supports and Services Framework.

Recommendation 3 - Fund multiple services to ensure support is available in every local authority.

Continue to provide funding for multiple services, including a mixture of online and in person support, and 'out of hours' support, with quick and easy-to-access routes for self-referral to ensure support is available which meets the needs of the children, young people, and families within every local authority. Regardless of where they live, work or study, children, young people, and families should only need to ask for help once; should be able to access a range of different types of service, in a location and at a time that suits them; and should be supported to make an informed decision about the type of support they receive

Recommendation 4 - Increase support for specialist services to provide targeted and intersectional support.



Increase support for specialist services to provide targeted and intersectional support for children, young people, and families. In addition to funding which is divided between local authorities, funding should be available for national-level organisations to deliver targeted support for specific communities of children, young people and families (such as Black children and young people and People of Colour, neurodivergent children and young people, young carers and young adult carers, care experienced children and young people, and others) to ensure they are able to access specialist support within their community, regardless of where they are in Scotland. This may help to reduce waiting lists for other services, such as CAMHS, where the specialist support is not necessarily available or targeted to an individual's needs.

Recommendation 5 - Increase community-based support for 16-25-year-olds.

Increase focus on providing community-based support for young people aged 16 - 25. The current Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Supports and Services Framework specifically aims to '[a]ssist local children's services and community planning partnerships with the commissioning and establishment of ... community mental health and wellbeing supports or services...'1 This specific reference to children's services may limit local authority willingness or ability to deliver targeted support for older young people. Any review of the Framework should ensure the specific needs of this age group, which may be different to those of children, younger young people, and adults, are understood; that targeted support is delivered for this age group in every local authority; and that support is available for young people to transition from children's services to adult services, when they need it and for as long as they need it

Recommendation 6 - Expand support for parents, carers, and family members.

Expand support for parents, carers and family members, separate to that for their child or young person. This could include, for example, a peer support group for siblings and parents or carers whose children or young people are receiving support, to help them feel they are not on their own, and to help them understand how to encourage and reinforce positive behaviours the child or young person has developed through the support they have received.

Recommendation 7 - Ensure signposting to services and support is available and accessible.

Ensure signposting to services and support is available and promoted in places where children, young people and their families are, in a range of accessible formats. For example, in addition to a national online hub detailing all support available in each area, local Young Scot pages and social media could be used to ensure regular promotion. Furthermore, signposting should be available and visible in education establishments, medical settings (such as GPs and hospitals), and youth centres. Where possible, there should also be links with departments such as Social Work, Community Learning and Development, and Youth Work teams to ensure all children, young people, and families are supported to access support when they need it. Additionally, services should be supported to visit places where



children, young people, and families are, to actively promote the support available directly to them.

Recommendation 8 - Carry out more regular evaluation of children, young people, and families' experiences.

Carry out more regular, ongoing independent evaluation of children, young people and families' experiences. To minimise the pressure on services to gather this data, a central evaluation process could be set up, which services can share directly with service users during and at the end of their time with the service. The results of this feedback could be reviewed by an independent organisation and reported back to the Scottish Government on a regular (e.g., six-monthly) basis. In addition, opportunities should be available and widely promoted for children, young people, and families to take part in national consultations and evaluation activities at agreed times each year.