

## Mental Health Strategy 2021-2031 Consultation Response Document

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Are you responding on behalf of an organisation?	Yes
Organisation (if applicable)	<b>Belfast City Council</b>
<b>Vision and Founding Principles</b>	
Do you agree the vision set out will improve outcomes and quality of life for individuals with mental health needs in Northern Ireland?	
Fully Agree	
Please add any further comments you may have	
Council agrees with all three elements of the vision as outlined in page 13.	
Do you agree the founding principles set out provide a solid foundation upon which to progress change?	
Fully Agree	
Please add any further comments you may have	
Council agrees with the 7 principles outlined. Principles 1 to 4 – also need to clearly identify the role of, and needs of, family members in relation to impact of trauma, service design and care options. Suggestion for an additional principle or expansion of principle 4 on choice to include ‘timeliness and appropriateness – that services will be available at the point of need/ presentation of need.’	
<b>Theme 1: Promoting wellbeing and resilience through prevention and early intervention</b>	

Do you agree with the ethos and direction of travel set out under this theme?

Mostly Agree

Please add any further comments you may have

Would like to have seen a clearer reference made to the Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing approach and the role of online supports such as those being provided through the Covid Wellbeing NI website and how these could both be built upon and further developed over the life of the strategy.

Do you agree with the actions and outcomes set out under this theme?

Mostly Agree

Please add any further comments you may have

As noted above – the majority of the actions listed under this theme whilst welcomed (especially the increased resources for talking therapy hubs and multi-disciplinary teams within GP surgeries) are still in the main service/provision of care focussed albeit at early intervention level.

Suggest need additional specific action(s) focussed on prevention and specifically the promotion of wellbeing and resilience and e.g. regional awareness-raising campaign underpinned by local actions – this could be supported by community planning structures at LGD level and further development of up to date, relevant, targeted and accessible information across a range of communication channels.

Action 1 – the proposed plan should build on the vast range of work already being undertaken, particularly within the community and voluntary sector in terms of prevention and early intervention projects, services and initiatives which are often innovative but under-resourced and subject to time-bound, short-term funding.

Council would like to draw attention to the 'Elephant in the Room' report, which was jointly produced by the Belfast and NI Youth Forums, particularly the recommendations, and request that these are considered in terms of implementation of the strategy.

<https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Documents/youth-forum/Elephant-in-the-room>

In relation to this theme the report noted that: *'A key issue for young people is that there is little to no positive mental health language; they told us that society frames mental health in a negative way and this makes young people associate it with negative thoughts.'*

*As a result the report recommended the creation of a youth-led, government backed mental health campaign, challenging the culture of silence and negative stigma and that young people were engaged with to create and fund safe digital solutions to receive mental health information and support. These digital solutions should be designed by young people for young people.*

Council is encouraged to note the additional focus on, and funding for, mental health in schools – again the Elephant in the Room report concluded that a compulsory curriculum programme for all schools and colleges on mental health and wellbeing should be established and appropriate training provided to teachers, support staff and youth workers.

Action 3 – should include reference to the role of Family Support Hubs and services such as Sure Start, etc. in terms of families accessing prevention and early intervention support.

## Theme 2: Providing the right support at the right time

Do you agree with the ethos and direction of travel set out under this theme?

Fully Agree

Please add any further comments you may have

Council very much welcomes the ethos and direction of travel as set out within this theme – particularly the wording at point 62/page 26 which states that:

*Providing services at the right time means that support has to be available when people need it. That might be through appropriate crisis support, but it also means ensuring quicker access to appropriate services without multiple onward referral processes – a “no wrong door” approach. We also need to consider support for individuals with mental health needs holistically, to ensure that they do not fall between gaps in services if they have a dual diagnosis of mental ill health and an addiction, and to ensure they receive support for their physical health as well as mental health.*

Elected members consistently raise concerns via Council structures and processes on behalf of their constituents about the need for better joined up, accessible and responsive services for those with mental health, substance misuse and homelessness needs (and more worryingly for those living complex lives where all three issues are impacting) where it is very apparent that they are falling between gaps.

Do you agree with the actions and outcomes set out under this theme?

Fully Agree

Please add any further comments you may have

Council welcomes the focus on children and young people, increased funding for and reorganisation of CAMHS, the focus on the needs of older people, the improved role of GPs and GP Federations and on in-patient mental health services.

Council agrees on the need for crisis services and that there should be equity of access across the region, however Council would welcome more detail on what a ‘regional crisis service’ would look like and how it would operate and would therefore anticipate that the findings of the ‘expert review’ referred to in point 142/page 42 are shared and the recommendations in terms of the way forward are widely consulted on. It will also be important that as well as staff within these services being able to offer immediate support on mental health/suicide prevention issues that they are also able to offer advice and support and access treatment pathways for substance misuse issues also.

Action 20 – Creation of a Managed Care Network – dual diagnosis staff supporting and building capacity in mental health and substance misuse services.

Whilst this action is welcome it does not go far enough to address the significant issues people with combined needs have in accessing support through these services currently – it also appears to be statutory focussed and aimed at high end/Tier 3 clients. There is a pressing need to support and build capacity at Tier 2 level and particularly with C&V sector service providers who are often the services providing help to such clients whilst they try to navigate or are waiting to access statutory services. There is also a need to build relationships and pathways between statutory and C&V providers across both mental health and addiction services – relates to Actions 11 and 12.

Clarity is needed, and should then be communicated, on whether drugs and alcohol/addictions falls under the umbrella of mental health within statutory HSC services or sits separately as it appears as if it the former structurally but the latter in practice.

**Theme 3: New Ways of Working**

Do you agree with the ethos and direction of travel set out under this theme?

Fully Agree

Please add any further comments you may have

Belfast City Council welcomes the opportunity to consider the draft strategy 'Mental Health Strategy for NI, 2021-2031.'

Councillors continue to raise concerns about the impact of mental health on individuals, families and communities in Belfast on an ongoing basis.

It remains our position that there is a need for more effective coordination and collaboration at both service planning and service delivery levels and therefore that both the new strategy, and structures associated with it, need to integrate and align with community planning structures to ensure both regional and local impact can be maximised. Clear governance at both a regional and local level will facilitate flexible inter-agency action across organisations and also ensure collective accountability.

Given the prominence of related outcomes in the Belfast Agenda, Belfast City Council would like to emphasise that it wants to be an active participant and co-producer of any strategies and action plans seeking to address these issues in Belfast for the benefit of its citizens.

Do you agree with the actions and outcomes set out under this theme?

Fully Agree

Please add any further comments you may have

Action 26 – Workforce review and development – welcome the fact that staff need to be trauma-informed and trained in suicide prevention skills - relating to earlier points would also argue that drug and alcohol awareness/skills also needs to be built in to the training plan and/or that multi-disciplinary teams within mental health should have addictions specialists within them and vice versa in the addictions services.

**Prioritisation**

If you had to prioritise the actions set out above, which top 5 actions would you take forward (with 1 being the most important to you, and 5 being the 5th most important to you)?

1

2

3

4

5

Finally, is there any one key action which you feel is missing from the draft Strategy?

It is very difficult to prioritise given the breadth and scope of the actions from prevention through to specialist services and the significant needs and gaps that have been

identified. As noted previously Council welcomes the focus on prevention and that Action 1 states that an action plan will be developed to promote positive mental health and wellbeing. We are also pleased to see the role of C&V service providers being acknowledged and welcome the aim outlined in Action 11 to fully integrate community and voluntary sector in mental health service delivery. Finally, Council welcomes the actions (7 & 19) re. ensuring timely and accessible crisis services are in place for both children and young people as well as the adult population and that these will be linked into wider stepped care network of services.

It will be important, as stated in the consultation guidance document, that the accompanying funding and delivery plans clearly outline the anticipated timeframes and targets for each of the actions identified and that there is a clear and transparent process in terms of how these plans are developed and signed off.

However, it will be important for the final version of the strategy and/or the accompanying implementation plan to outline anticipated timeframes for each of the actions identified and perhaps to prioritise under each theme.

It will also be important that clearer linkages are made across the Mental Health Strategy, the Mental Health Action Plan, Protect Life 2 and the new Drug and Alcohol Strategy (currently being consulted on) as there are obvious areas of duplication or similarities where structures and actions could and should be merged or expanded on to create better outcomes at commissioning, service delivery and at an individual level.

#### **Impact Assessments/Screenings**

Do you agree with the outcome of the Impact Assessment screening?

Fully Agree

Please add any further comments you may have

Thank you for taking the time to respond to the consultation.

Please submit your completed response by **5pm on 26 March 2021** using the details below:

**E-mail:**

[mentalhealthstrategy@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:mentalhealthstrategy@health-ni.gov.uk)

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