# Mental Health and Substance Use: Improving Our Response in North Lanarkshire

Learning, insights and recommendations

September 2023

## Introduction

Healthcare Improvement Scotland has been funded by the Scottish Government to improve quality of care and health outcomes for people with mental health and substance use support needs. The Mental Health and Substance Use: Improving our Response Programme will aim to support improvements to:

- Quality of care
- Access to treatment, and
- Overall health outcomes.

**Work is being undertaken in six areas across Scotland, including North Lanarkshire.**

## Aims

In North Lanarkshire, based on analysis of previous reports and conversations with the Alcohol and Drug Partnership, it was agreed to have a general aim of:

*"Building capacity and connections within the systems of support for people with mental health and substance use needs"*

There is a long term strategic goal within North Lanarkshire to create a 'no wrong door' approach that allows people to access the right services for them from any entry point. Core areas of development that will support this approach are to ensure:

1. Staff are able to perform their core roles and responsibilities.
2. Staff are aware of the roles and responsibilities of others within the system.
3. People are supported to access the range of services that meet their needs

This work aims to identify where some foundational work needs to be done in order to support the whole system processes underpinning the 'no wrong door' approach.

We explored opportunities for freeing up capacity within specialist services by supporting others in the system to pick up lower level demand. Therefore, the starting point was looking at how we might:

1. Improve connections and pathways between statutory and third sector services
2. Develop relationships across the third sector

## National Drivers

The aims of this work and the resulting proposals from the work will support North Lanarkshire meet national policy expectations, including the continued focus on implementing the MAT Standards and a local protocol for supporting people with co-occurring mental health conditions and substance use. Both are highlighted in the 2023-24 Programme for Government.

**MAT 9:** Building statutory service staff confidence and knowledge around signposting into third sector services will contribute to meeting MAT criteria around supporting people to access community services.

**Rapid Review recommendations and Protocol Development:** Building collaboration with and between third sector services will help create the conditions that can enable better management of mild to moderate mental health and substance use needs.

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**Healthcare Improvement Scotland**

## Insights

Engagement across North Lanarkshire raised some areas for improvement that will be required to create the conditions for a 'no wrong door' approach:

- Understanding within statutory services what other services are available to support people, or not feeling confident enough to signpost to them; including those services not commissioned by the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (ADP)
- Clarity and support around pathways into mental health services, including for mild to moderate needs
- Clear communication of thresholds and criteria for services
- Close 'walking alongside' support for people to support them to access services, attend appointments and find the right support

## Ideas for Improvement

These ideas were developed in response to specific gaps identified across the range of activities undertaken within North Lanarkshire.

*Cross-Organisation Complexity Support Forum* – a space for professionals to come together to discuss ideas for potential support and make connections in relation to an individuals' support

*Development workers* – based in the community, these workers will provide 'walking alongside' support to people through coordinating formal and informal supports, supporting engagement with services and communicating with key professionals.

*System & Service Online Collaborative Information Sharing Point* – which will hold up-to-date information about all services that support people who have mental health and substance use support needs (including non-mental health or substance use specific services)

*Learning Forum* – a space to bring together what people have been seeing in their work, with the aim of identifying where there might be common themes and areas for collective action, or issues to escalate.

## Recommendations

**1. Convene an inaugural Cross-Organisation Complexity Support Forum** that will:

a. Agree Terms of Reference for the group

b. Clarify and collectively communicate the core aims of the group – differentiating from other collaborative forums as noted in the proposal

c. Develop a measurement approach to review and learn from the efficacy of the Forum

**2. Develop a test of change around supporting Addiction Recovery Team staff to use the recently launched ADP website with service directory,** that will inform ongoing development and improvement of the resource. To include testing out:

a. Methods for more systematic incorporation of conversations with person being supported around potential third sector supports

b. Providing additional information as noted in the proposal

c. Extending the information to include services not commissioned by the ADP, that address wider needs, such as mental health and caring roles

**3. Undertake scoping activity to build a business case for carrying out a pilot programme of the Development Worker proposal**, in order to:

a. Ensure continuity with ongoing initiatives

b. Collate learning from ongoing initiatives

c. Establish aims, objectives and desired outcomes/impact

**4. Identify key forums for presenting the learning from this work and other ongoing work by the ADP** in order to:

a. Build relationships across mental health services

b. Develop a shared understanding across leadership of challenges/direction of travel relating to national priorities

# Mental Health and Substance Use: Improving Our Response in North Lanarkshire

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## Starting with what we know

The Mental Health and Substance Use: Improving Our Response in North Lanarkshire project was developed through looking at a range of activity carried out by North Lanarkshire ADP and understanding where there are opportunities to build the foundational conditions required for system change and improvement.

Key reports considered in the development of this proposal:

- Rapid Review of Substance Use Services in North Lanarkshire – May 2022
- Reducing Harm, Improving Care: North Lanarkshire Findings and Insights – August 2022
- North Lanarkshire ADP Strategy 2021-2024 – 2021
- Hidden in plain sight?: The experiences of families affected by substance use in North Lanarkshire – September 2020

**Shared priorities across key reports:**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Ensuring a whole system approach to support access to the right support at the right time* <br> For example: <br> •Providing advocacy support <br> •Advice and support for navigating services <br> •Information sharing across the system | *Building workforce capability to address a range of needs* <br> For example: <br> •Ensuring there is understanding of all roles and responsibilities within the system <br> •Increased staff retention and upskilling staff <br> •Developing relationships | *Developing a system that looks at all elements of substance use and doesn't over-medicalise* <br> For example: <br> •Better use of community resources/assets <br> •Involvement of families and carers <br> •Looking at the role of housing | *Building strong therapeutic relationships* <br> For example: <br> •Continuity of staff <br> •Longer term relationships within community supports <br> •Peer support and recovery communities |

In looking at recommendations linked to whole system approaches and 'no wrong door' policies it will be important to have **built close relationships** across statutory and non-statutory services and understand the **role of trusted communication and information sharing** within the system. **This piece of work aims to do developmental work on these foundational challenges.**

Findings across the key documents noted **the importance of ensuring that support isn't over-medicalised**. In this regard, work to establish capacity within the third sector and understanding where ADP planning/commissioning can be used to **unlock capacity can expand the role of community, holistic supports in a non-medical frame.**

## Approach:

There were three workstreams within this project:

**Statutory staff engagement:** To understand the practical challenges faced by staff in being able to make connections with community services, including those outside of specific 'substance use' support.

**System mapping:** To outline the system actors in different parts of the system; highlight the connections/relationships between services; and identify barriers and enablers in connections.

**Third sector Ways of Working Forum:** A discussion forum for third sector services to explore their 'Third Horizon' ambitions for the sector and understand what conditions/activities can support this.

# Mental Health and Substance Use: Improving Our Response in North Lanarkshire

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## Our activities

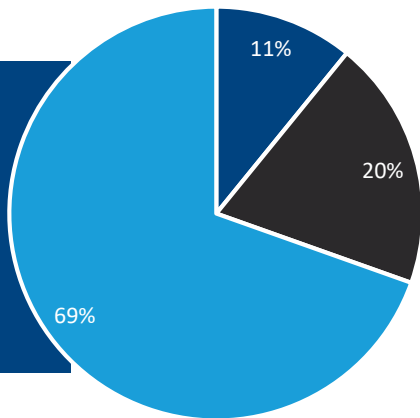**Events held with Mental Health and Substance Use staff**

**7**

**Total Number of Individuals and Organisations Engaged in Conversations or Interactions**

**41**

**Who we engaged with**

- 11% Lived Experience
- 20% Statutory Sector
- 69% Third Sector

| Key recurring themes | | |
|---|---|---|
| Lack of interface working across statutory and third sector services | Diversity of services across the system | System complexity and challenges in meeting complex needs |

## Routes into third sector – an overview of the challenges

The focus of our conversations with stakeholders in North Lanarkshire was exploring routes into third sector support and how we might improve connections with and within the sector. These routes encompass the various entry points individuals use to connect with services, which can include helplines, community centres, online information, signposting, and referrals from other service providers. Navigating the various routes into and between services can be challenging for individuals to know what services are available to them but also for service provides to know what other support is available.

Ultimately, understanding and enhancing these routes involves ensuring that individuals can easily access the support they need with services fostering collaboration between different sectors and promoting continuity of care. Activity from our engagement saw a number of themes emerge from discussion on routes into the third sector which are summarised here and further expanded on over the next couple of pages.

### *Lack of interface working*

Many individuals seeking support may not be directed to the most appropriate services due to a lack of understanding of available community support.

High turnover rates within statutory and non-statutory services can disrupt the development of meaningful relationships between staff and service users.

Statutory services may not fully recognise the holistic benefits provided by third sector organisations. Bridging this gap can lead to more tailored and person-centred support for individuals.

### *Third sector as a diverse range of services*

Services within the third sector have a variety of strengths and expertise focusing on different aspects of community support.

These specialised services form an interconnected network of resources that can address a broad spectrum of social needs.

### *Navigating a complex system*

There is a recognition that the support system in the community can be complex and challenging for individuals seeking assistance.

Many individuals may not receive the depth of engagement they require when seeking support which may lead to their needs not being fully met.

There is a need for better co-ordination and collaboration among these services to ensure a more coherent and effective referral/signposting process.

By reducing the complexity of navigating the support network and promoting effective collaboration among services, individuals can have a smoother journey toward accessing the services.

## Lack of Interface working

It was discussed that services may not have the knowledge and understanding regarding the types of support which is available in the community and their benefits. This presents a notable hurdle in creating a seamless and comprehensive support system with individuals seeking support who may not be directed to the most appropriate services. This challenge stems from a combination of factors such as those already mentioned, which are described in more detail below.

### High turnover of staff

High turnover rates can disrupt the development and maintenance of meaningful relationships between individuals working in statutory services, those in the third sector and service users.

Personal relationships are vital for effective collaboration and information sharing between sectors. A well-established relationship, that includes a mix of formal and informal communication, between individuals in statutory services and in the third sector can facilitate smooth communication, streamline referrals and changes in care, and an understanding of each service. However, when staff turnover is high, these relationships may need to be rebuilt repeatedly, leading to inefficiencies and missed opportunities for co-ordination.

"The addictions team in North Lanarkshire was severely reduced due to staff absence and moving on, but there is now a full team in Coatbridge, with a new team lead who is keen to get out there and build relationships".

Ways of working forum Session 3

### Understanding the benefits of community support

There were discussions that highlighted challenges within statutory services around understanding the benefits that third sector organisations provide beyond the clinical or diagnostic aspects.

Statutory services are typically oriented toward clinical and diagnostic assessments and medical interventions. In contrast, third sector services may emphasise more holistic approaches, community engagement, peer support, and social empowerment. Individuals seeking support may be directed solely toward clinical interventions, overlooking the potential benefits of third sector services. By bridging the gap between clinical and holistic approaches, individuals can receive more comprehensive support tailored to their needs.

"Services just want to know the problems and not what the person is interested in to help the person".

Ways of working forum Session 2

### Commissioning of services

In the third sector, services have to adapt and change in response to funding and commissioning, emerging challenges, and evolving best practices. Limited resources and capacity within certain third sector organisations result in services adopting a more selective approach of the type of support they can offer. These changes in services can create difficulties for statutory and non-statutory services to keep track of the ever-evolving service landscape.

These insights emphasise the importance of moving beyond service delivery and towards a collaborative, outcome-based commissioning approach. By transitioning to outcome-based commissioning, this encourages a more flexible and adaptive service landscape that can rapidly respond to emerging challenges and evolving community needs. This model also fosters a culture of continuous improvement, where both successes and failures are seen as opportunities for learning and improvement. North Lanarkshire's move to longer term contracts is a positive step forward and a great foundation on which to build a more collaborative third sector through innovative commissioning approaches.

"Community funding disappears or objectives change but you don't fit with it so relationships fail"

Ways of working forum Session 1

## Third sector as a diverse range of services

The third sector can often be viewed as a singular entity of support. However, within North Lanarkshire, the third sector offers a diverse range of services. To access support, there may be multiple entry points or pathways with different services having different eligibility criteria, referral processes and systems. Given the vast range of services, individuals may struggle to identify the most appropriate service to address their particular needs.

From a system point of view 'signposting into the third sector' is a core pillar of a 'no wrong door' model, but this needs to be supported by strong connections within the sector itself; so that a referral or access to one service, opens doors across the whole range of third sector services available. This will help support the varied and complex needs of people with mental health and substance use support needs.



Figure 1 : Interconnected System Mapping: Findings and Insights Map highlights the diversity of services available in North Lanarkshire.

## Navigating a complex system
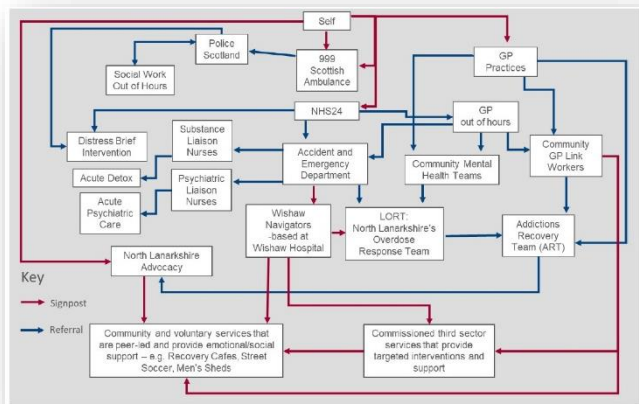


When individuals seek support, they might encounter a different routes of referral points or "signposters" without receiving the necessary depth of engagement. This can cause confusion and become overwhelming, particularly if there is a lack of clear understanding of the distinctions between various services or the specific type of support the individual needs.

Challenging life circumstances often present obstacles to individuals seeking support and engaging with services. Engagement with people with lived and living experiences explored some of these challenges such as a reluctance to engage due to prior negative experiences, a lack of trust in service providers, and communication breakdowns leading to missed appointment.  A 'no wrong door' approach requires seamless connections across services. This includes good communication between services, and the removal of practical barriers to access. By reducing the complexity of navigating the support network and promoting effective collaboration among services, individuals can experience a smoother journey toward accessing the services that will aid in their recovery.

> *"Giving people the support they need, when they need it leads to savings across the system, not just in A&E. When link workers just signpost, this leads to people falling through the gaps".*
> Ways of working forum Session 3

## Further insights

Within each strand of activity there was rich and detailed conversations and emerging learning. To supplement the key insights and findings above and identified as significant priorities within the scope of this work – below are further insights to be considered within the wider strategic context of North Lanarkshire.

Full reports from all our activity can be accessed on request.

**Looking beyond mental health and substance use services and engaging with complex needs**
As part of the project's Systems Understanding phase, HIS led two Interconnected Systems Mapping sessions attended by colleagues from statutory and third sector mental health and substance use services.

This sessions highlighted some additional silos across services, beyond mental health and substance:

- Housing, health, and social work sectors operated independently with separate access pathways.

- Housing and homelessness services had some connections with third-sector substance use support services but not with statutory services like the Addictions Recovery Team.

- Social work appeared isolated, possibly due to underrepresentation. Interactions between NHS/Statutory entities were limited to signposting, lacking formal relationships. In the Substance Use and Mental Health service category, services offered informal support with limited coordinated care, with emerging efforts for closer collaboration. Social/emotional and practical support services relied on individuals seeking access through signposting without established connections.

Additionally, participants identified the Accident and Emergency Department as an area of high demand for exploration. Analysis by the Scottish Ambulance Service revealed a potential unmet need, with 23% of individuals who attended for non-fatal naloxone-administered incidents requiring repeat attendance within 30 days, primarily during service hours. The system's focus on triage leads individuals with severe or complex needs to navigate multiple services for support, resulting in a lack of integrated support for mental health and substance use in acute services and a gap between clinical and community services.

*These insights were further explored and emphasised in conversations with people with experience of accessing mental health and substance use services:*

- **Inadequate Support and Misdiagnosis:** Several participants felt there was inadequate support and misdiagnosis when seeking help for their substance use and mental health issues, with one individual obtaining proper diagnosis and support only through the assistance of a support worker during a medical appointment. Some participants expressed disillusionment with the service system, having experienced traumatic events and not receiving the support they felt they needed from a young age.
- **Need for Personalised Support:** Participants highlighted the importance of personalised, one-on-one support rather than group settings, especially when their anxiety or other mental health issues made group situations overwhelming.
- **Barriers to Accessing Services:** Participants described various barriers to accessing support services, including missed appointments and unhelpful assessments. In some crisis situations, involvement of police created additional stress and fear of potential charges for unnecessary calls.

## Conclusion – towards a no wrong door approach

*Creating the conditions*

There is a strong strategic direction within North Lanarkshire towards the creation of a 'no wrong door' approach. This sits in line with national policy drivers that are highlighting and encouraging such an approach.

This work aimed to provide an understanding around the building blocks required to implement such an approach – with recognition of the considerable work already being undertaken.

The information and insights outlined in this report provide the background for our proposals and recommendations, which we believe will support culture change, allowing for a greater understanding of the whole system and connections across it.



In order to...

"Build capacity and connections within the systems of support for people with mental health and substance use needs"

We need to ensure that...
People are able to perform their core roles and responsibilities
People are aware of the roles and responsibilities of others within the system
People are supported to access the range of services that meet their needs

This will require
Improving connections and pathways between statutory and third sector services
Developing relationships across the third sector

*Next steps*

We recognise that there is a range of ongoing strategic discussions happening within North Lanarkshire ADP and HSCP. The activities recommended will actively support culture change, and support services to connect, along with providing opportunities for learning about how the system can support people with complex needs, that can be fed into ongoing discussions within the ADP and wider system.

Healthcare Improvement Scotland have funding until March 2023 to work with North Lanarkshire and can support with the recommendations; as well as providing wider support around system learning from this, and ongoing work, in a way that will enable greater understanding of how the system can meet people's complex needs.