

Aberdeen Cyrenians

Our Strategic Plan

2025 – 2030





Foreword

At Aberdeen Cyrenians, we believe no one should be left to face crisis alone. Yet we know that too many people in our city still experience homelessness, poor health, and social isolation – often at the same time. These challenges are not simply the result of individual circumstances; they are shaped by the wider social determinants of health – housing, income, education, work, and access to care.

This Strategic Plan sets out how Aberdeen Cyrenians will respond to that reality over the next five years, with compassion, determination, and a focus on prevention.

Our ambition is clear: to prevent homelessness and unnecessary hospital admissions by taking a community based, public health approach. This means shifting the emphasis from reacting when people are in crisis to addressing the causes before they take hold. By working earlier, more holistically, and in closer partnership with our stakeholders, we can reduce pressure on emergency services, strengthen communities, and improve people's quality of life.

This plan has been shaped together – with the voices of the people we support, our staff and volunteers, and our partners across Aberdeen. People with lived experience of homelessness, trauma, or exclusion have told us what works and what must change. Health and housing professionals, community groups, and local authorities have shared their expertise and insight. The result is a plan that reflects the reality on the ground, the national evidence, and the hopes we share for the future.

OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, WE WILL:

- ✓ Focus on prevention and early intervention to stop problems escalating.
- ✓ Deliver integrated support that brings together housing, health, social care, and employability.
- ✓ Empower and include people so they can take control of their lives and contribute fully to our community.
- ✓ Drive collaboration and system change, using data and lived experience to influence policy and practice.
- ✓ Build the foundations for sustainable social change, ensuring our organisation is resilient, adaptable, and ready for the future.



We know we cannot achieve this alone. Real and lasting change will only happen when we stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our partners in health, housing, social care, the third sector, local businesses and communities, our supporters, staff, and volunteers – and most importantly, the people who rely on our services. Together, we can make Aberdeen a city where support is accessible, dignity is protected, and everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

We invite you to read this plan, share it, and join us on this journey. Change is possible and together, we can make it happen.

Donna Hutchison, Chief Executive Officer
Alastair Bisset, Chair of the Board of Directors

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Executive Summary

AMBITION

To prevent homelessness and hospital admissions through a community-based, public health approach that addresses wellbeing disparities. By focusing on prevention and community support, we will reduce pressure on emergency and statutory services, improving wellbeing in the city.

PURPOSE

Aberdeen Cyrenians supports marginalised and vulnerable people, tackling housing and social issues, providing high-intensity drop-in support and integrated health and social care services. We work closely with stakeholders to raise awareness and empower people to make lasting, positive change.

APPROACH & PRINCIPLES

- ✓ Evidence-based alignment with local and national strategies.
- ✓ Partnership focus across public, private, and third sectors.
- ✓ Integration of lived experience into service design and delivery.
- ✓ Resilience through balancing service delivery with organisational sustainability.

STRATEGIC THEMES & GOALS

01: PREVENTION & EARLY INTERVENTION

We will expand upstream services, deepen our trauma-informed practice, and increase awareness of homelessness, focusing on those who are marginalised and vulnerable to reduce crisis and improve long-term outcomes.

02: INTEGRATED HEALTH, HOUSING, SOCIAL CARE & EMPLOYABILITY

We will deliver holistic, wraparound support that meets people where they are – connect support pathways; develop multidisciplinary teams; expand high-intensity support hubs; and assist transitions from hospital, prison, or care to stable housing.

03: EMPOWERMENT & INCLUSION

We will co-produce services with people who have lived experience; foster peer-led initiatives, independence, confidence, and community belonging; provide life skills, and reduce digital/financial exclusion.

04: COLLABORATION & SYSTEM CHANGE

We will lead and participate in city-wide coalitions to influence policy with data and lived experience, align with Marmot City principles, and drive system change.

05: FOUNDATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL CHANGE

We will invest in our people, digital systems, and research, retain and adapt services, ensure full cost recovery or planned subsidies, and diversify funding to ensure long-term resilience and evidence social value.

Why it Matters – Tackling Inequalities in Aberdeen

Health inequalities in Scotland are avoidable, systematic, and deeply unjust. [The Health Inequalities in Scotland – First Report](#) makes clear that these inequalities are not simply the result of individual choices, but stem from the social determinants of health – housing, income, education, employment, and access to services.

These factors combine to create poorer health and shorter life expectancy for many people, and they disproportionately affect those we support: people experiencing homelessness, trauma, substance use, or poor mental health.

In Aberdeen, the reality is stark. People living in our most deprived communities experience significantly fewer years in good health compared to those in more affluent areas. The risk of avoidable hospital admissions, reliance on emergency services, and long-term illness rises sharply for those facing housing insecurity or social exclusion.

That's why there's a pressing need for:

01: UPSTREAM INVESTMENT IN PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

02: PLACE-BASED ACTION THAT RESPONDS TO LOCAL NEEDS

03: COLLABORATION ACROSS SECTORS TO TACKLE THE ROOT CAUSES

04: PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE IN DESIGNING SOLUTIONS

These principles are at the heart of our Strategic Plan.



Statistics

MENTAL HEALTH



- 01: People in the most deprived areas are **twice as likely** to experience poor mental wellbeing compared to those in the least deprived (p.17).
- 02: **One in three** people experiencing homelessness also has a diagnosed mental health condition (p.17).

SUBSTANCE USE



- 01: Hospital admissions related to drug use are **seven times higher** in the most deprived areas compared to the least deprived (p.18).
- 02: Alcohol-related harm is **five times higher** in the most deprived communities (p.18).

HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS



- 01: **Poor housing** is associated with a **25% increased risk** of ill health and reduced life expectancy (p.14).
- 02: People experiencing homelessness are **six times more likely** to attend A&E and **four times more likely** to be admitted to hospital (p.15).
- 03: Rough sleepers have an **average life expectancy of just 47 years** – almost 30 years shorter than the general population (p.15).

INCOME & EMPLOYMENT



- 01: People in the most deprived areas are **three times more likely** to be unemployed or economically inactive (p.20).
- 02: Low income is linked to increased risk of **chronic illness, food insecurity, and housing instability** (p.20).

LIFE EXPECTANCY & HEALTH INEQUALITIES



- 01: There is a **13-year gap in life expectancy** between the most and least deprived communities in the region (p.10).
- 02: Healthy life expectancy – years lived in good health – is **20 years shorter** for those in the most deprived areas (p.10).

Our Purpose and Ambition

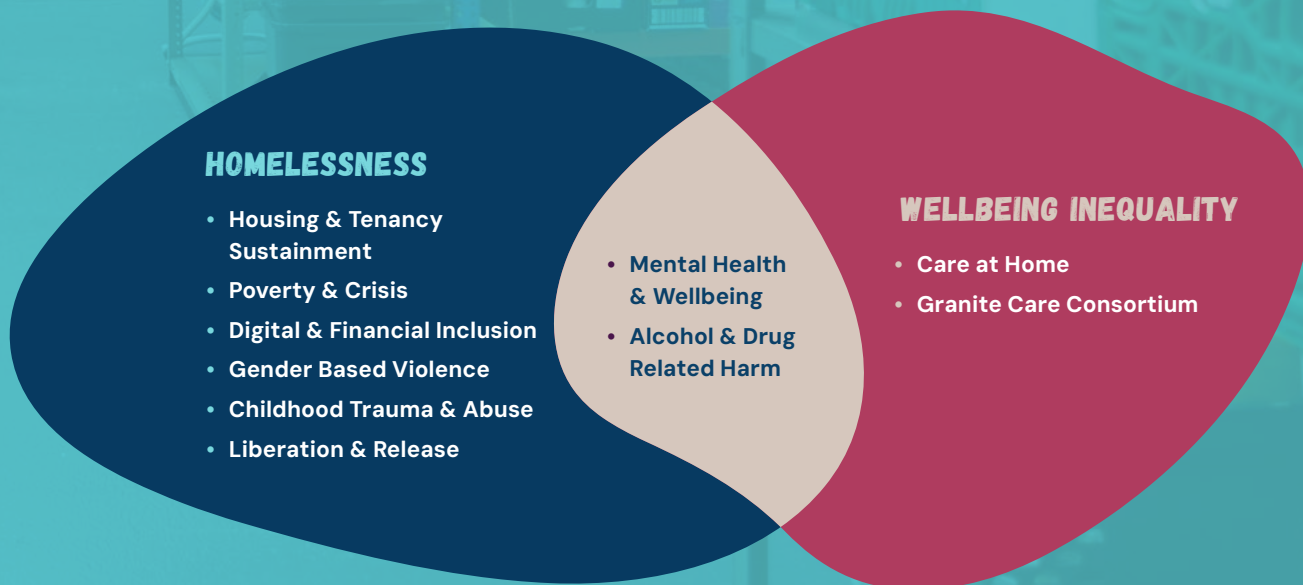
ABERDEEN CYRENIANS IS FOR SOCIAL GOOD – PARTICULARLY HELPING THE MARGINALISED AND VULNERABLE

Aberdeen Cyrenians helps people in need, especially those who are struggling or left out by society.

We focus on:

- helping people find and keep a place to live
- offering a welcome space where people can drop in for support
- providing health and care services to improve people’s wellbeing

We work closely with other organisations and use our combined skills and experience to raise aware about the issues people face, and support people in making lasting, positive changes in their lives.



OUR SERVICES PREVENT HOMELESSNESS AND HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS THROUGH A COMMUNITY-BASED, PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH THAT ADDRESSES WELLBEING DISPARITIES.

Sourced from 'Population Needs Assessment' report for Aberdeen. July 2025.

Our Approach

This plan sets out how Aberdeen Cyrenians will work with partners across the city to prevent homelessness and unnecessary hospital admissions by addressing the root causes.

We will:



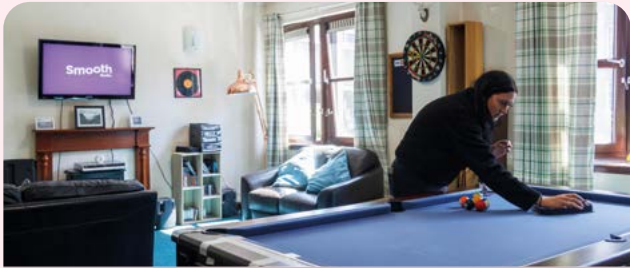
Act earlier

Embedding trauma-informed practice and early outreach to stop problems escalating.



Work holistically

Integrating housing, health, social care, and employability support.



Empower communities

Co-producing services with those who have lived experience, ensuring solutions are grounded in reality.



Drive system change

Using local data and lived experience to influence policy and funding, ensuring our city's approach reflects the needs of its people.

By aligning our work with the recommendations of the Health Inequalities in Scotland report, we are making sure our efforts contribute not just to individual recovery, but to a fairer, healthier Aberdeen for everyone. Our approach also reflects the priorities of Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeen City Health & Social Care Partnership, and the Scottish Government – with shared commitments to prevention, integrated health and housing, community empowerment, and tackling inequalities across the city and beyond.

Strategic Themes and Goals

01: PREVENTION & EARLY INTERVENTION



GOAL

Reduce homelessness and preventable calls on public services (such as hospital admissions and anti-social behaviour) before they occur.

KEY ACTIONS

- 01: Expand upstream services to prevent homelessness and calls on public services, with a focus on those who are marginalised and vulnerable.
- 02: Strengthen trauma-informed practices across all services, particularly in early engagement and outreach.
- 03: Through our community hubs, act as a trusted connector for marginalised and vulnerable people in relation to public health campaigns.
- 04: Raise awareness of early signs of crisis and available support. These campaigns will be tailored to people experiencing crisis, agencies who support people facing crisis, and local community groups.
- 05: Develop wider public understanding of hidden homelessness and other societal challenges, and their impact on people and society.

IMPACT

Reduces pressure on public services by improving long-term outcomes for vulnerable people.

GLOSSARY

- MARGINALISED:** Focuses on exclusion and being pushed to the periphery of society (social, economic & political).
- VULNERABLE:** Focuses on being at risk and needing protection. Those who are at a higher risk of harm, exploitation, or adverse outcomes due to their circumstances or characteristics. Can be temporary or permanent and can be due to physical, emotional, or social factors.
- CRISIS:** Significant disruption or emergency situation that poses an immediate threat to health, safety, or wellbeing. It requires urgent intervention/immediate action to prevent further harm or damage.
- INTERVENTION:** Involves actions taken to address and manage a crisis or problem that has already occurred. It aims to mitigate the impact, provide support, and resolve the situation. Responding and managing existing problems.
- DISADVANTAGED:** Lacking economic, social, or educational resources and opportunities that others have, leading to poorer outcomes in health, education, employment and overall quality of life.



02: INTEGRATED HEALTH, HOUSING, SOCIAL CARE & EMPLOYABILITY

GOAL

Deliver holistic, person-centred care that addresses wellbeing – both health and social needs.



KEY ACTIONS

- 01:** Provide person-centred crisis and intervention support on behalf of statutory partners, integrating this into wider service provision.
- 02:** Continued development of multidisciplinary teams to deliver wraparound support (mental health, substance use, housing, financial inclusion, trauma) and link into the city networks and community partnerships.
- 03:** Expand high intensity drop-in support hubs to serve as access points for integrated care.
- 04:** Support transitions from hospital, prison, or care settings into stable housing with ongoing support.

IMPACT

Improves physical and mental wellbeing, reduces repeat crises, and supports holistic sustainable recovery.

03: EMPOWERMENT & INCLUSION

GOAL

Enable individuals to take control of their lives and participate fully in society.



KEY ACTIONS

- 01:** Co-produce services with people who have lived experience of homelessness, trauma, or marginalisation.
- 02:** Provide life skills, education, volunteering and employment pathways to support confidence building, belonging, and independence.
- 03:** Foster peer-led initiatives and community integration programmes.
- 04:** Support digital and financial literacy and access to reduce exclusion and dependency.

IMPACT

Builds confidence, independence, and a sense of belonging among those we support.



04: COLLABORATION & SYSTEM CHANGE

GOAL

Influence broader systems to create sustainable, long-term solutions.



KEY ACTIONS

- 01:** Participate and, where appropriate, lead in city-wide coalitions to address systemic issues.
- 02:** Use data and lived experience to influence policy and funding decisions, driving change locally and nationally.
- 03:** Align with Marmot City principles to address social determinants of health and wellbeing.
- 04:** Be the trusted local partner for data, and the authentic voice, grounded in lived experience, on societal challenges.

IMPACT

Creates a more supportive ecosystem and drives systemic change for social good.



05: FOUNDATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL CHANGE

GOAL

Ensure Aberdeen Cyrenians is a sustainable, resilient organisation capable of delivering long-term impact.



KEY ACTIONS

- 01:** Consolidate and retain existing services while adapting to changing community needs. Identify and pursue growth opportunities that align with mission and capacity. Strategically deploy our reserves to support innovation, resilience, and purpose-aligned initiatives.
- 02:** Develop workforce and volunteer capability, including training, wellbeing, and leadership development. Invest in infrastructure and digital systems to support service delivery and innovation.
- 03:** Diversify funding through non-government contracts, social investment, and earned income. Ensure full cost recovery for services or implement planned subsidies where appropriate.
- 04:** Support research and evaluation that demonstrates our social value and cost avoidance. Enhance organisational reputation with partners, funders, and the public through transparency, impact reporting, and engagement.

IMPACT

Strengthens organisational resilience, supports staff and volunteer development, and builds trust to enable long-term, purpose-driven impact.



Journeys of Change



Every person we support has individual strengths, aspirations, and potential. Their stories show how the right support at the right moment can restore stability, rebuild confidence, and open the door to new opportunities. They remind us that change is always possible when people are valued, included, and not left to face crisis alone.


WILLIAM

Living alone with a heart condition, William was struggling with housing, bills, and isolation. At his lowest point, he attempted to take his life. By chance, he went to Aberdeen Cyrenians for a food parcel, and staff acted immediately, getting him to hospital. Since then, they've been a constant source of help – resolving housing and financial problems, assisting with complex forms, and always offering a listening ear.

“ They never judge you, they sit and really listen to you and make you a cup of tea,” he says. “ If it wasn’t for them, I literally wouldn’t be here.”



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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 weareac.org



Photos: Centre for Homelessness