**Stonehaven District Community Council (SDCC)**

Response to Public Consultation on

Aberdeenshire Adult Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2024

Have Your Say: Working Together for Better Mental Health and Wellbeing

Submitted 25 February 2019

Contents

[Introduction 3](#_Toc2001997)

[Issues Identified 3](#_Toc2001998)

[Third Sector Commissioned Service – My Life Dynamic (SAMH) 4](#_Toc2001999)

[In summary 6](#_Toc2002000)

[Additional Issues Identified 6](#_Toc2002001)

[Lack of Provision for those living with long term conditions 6](#_Toc2002002)

[1. Relapse Prevention 6](#_Toc2002003)

[2. Differing needs across Aberdeenshire 7](#_Toc2002004)

[Potential Service Gaps 7](#_Toc2002005)

[‘Eggs in One Basket’ Strategy 7](#_Toc2002006)

[Appendix 1 - Pillar Activities 2018/19 9](#_Toc2002007)

# Introduction

The delivery of mental health services in Kincardine & Mearns (K&M) and the Stonehaven & District is a key area of interest for our Community Council and it is our intention to submit a Participatory Request to increase our participation in the improvement of outcomes for this critical service.

Public comments of a sensitive nature in relation to Mental Health support within the community have been raised at previous (SDCC) meetings and a sub-group was put in place to look into the delivery of services further in December 2018.

This sub group consists of two people with lived experience of mental illness who also represent over 50 local community members living with mental health problems. In addition, two members have extensive, long term experience in a caring role. Having experienced challenging journeys, these individuals are passionately working together to positively influence effective design and delivery of future services.

Due to personal experiences, this sub group has subsequently benefitted from the freedom to talk with those within our local community who are currently suffering mental health problems. We believe our enquiries provide a platform and opportunity for people to speak up without fear of reprisal and as a result we have an improved and broader understanding of the issues surrounding this high-profile subject.

(SDCC) understands that Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care budgets and resources are stretched and our goal is to ensure that creative approaches are adopted in order that improved standards of accessible services are available and deliverable, despite diminishing budgets.

This consultation provides an opportunity for us to share our initial findings from discussions with members of the public who suffer from mental health issues, their family members and those who support their care and providers of mental health services in K&M.

## Issues Identified

1. Evidence gathered to date suggests that there is a need for improved signposting and referral by relevant health services e.g. GP’s, the Council’s Community Mental Health Team to service providers such as My Life Dynamic (SAMH) and Pillar, to improve effective access for service users or family members seeking advice and support. Specifically, it is unclear how these respective services work together to provide a joined up accessible service that places the individual at the heart of the service regardless of where they access the system.
2. Evidence also suggests there are limitations within the delivery of the current contracted service, regarding the length, depth & effectiveness, which creates gaps and overlaps in provision. For example, we believe the contracted service is required to provide a number of elements which may duplicate that of the statutory services such as the Community Mental Health Team, Employability team, counselling e.g. Mearns Counselling & Cognitive Behaviour Therapy treatment through GP practices. We would like to see this issue of potential duplication addressed and an emphasis placed upon joint working practices as a focal point within the current review of the mental health strategy.
3. The current mental health strategy is aimed at people who meet Aberdeenshire Council’s Social Work criteria and this does not appear to us, to be a preventative strategy because:
	1. this overlooks individuals who have support needs but do not meet the gateway criteria
	2. those living with long term or complex diagnosis may experience fluctuations in the severity of their conditions which requires cultivation of long-term self-management strategies.

## Third Sector Commissioned Service – My Life Dynamic (SAMH)

**Resilience 1-1 Coaching** – individuals target their personal goal/s so that a positive outcome can be achieved over a period of approximately 3 months. Through testimonies it is clear that there are some very positive short-term outcomes from this service. This in itself cannot possibly however support the community’s mentally ill with their long-term needs. This service has been beneficial to some and yet not so for others who we talked to.

**Aye Connect** provides additional online support material which will benefit a limited number of people with a leaning towards this type of learning delivery. These materials have been available to the public online via reputable mental health organisations for many years and (SDCC) see this an effective way of providing information for those in a position to access it. We also understand that the Facebook account for Cultivate went live in November, in an attempt to improve visibility of the services.

My Life Dynamic signposts to websites such as “Paths for All” which can put people in touch with walking groups.

There was however no apparent evidence of any direct links to local walks within K&M and in particular the Stonehaven community, as referred to in the My Life Dynamic website.

**SWELL** is a service which will support people who are well on the way to recovery and who desire to engage with the employment market – we believe that this type of support is delivered by existing teams within Aberdeenshire council by way of their Employability teams. From the evidence gathered 4 people in south Aberdeenshire have been working on goals to work towards employment by way of coaching, with one person securing a college place, however this service has not attracted much interest. This may be due to issues such as the Aberdeenshire Council service specification that states “Service Users accepted by the service will meet the Council’s moderate, substantial & critical levels” eligibility criteria. People that do meet these criteria, may be less likely to be able to engage with this service due to their mental health condition and vulnerability.

**Cultivate** offers gardening projects in Mintlaw, Peterhead, Macduff and Inverbervie and it is pleasing to see that some of these projects have won awards. The process is to provide initial support to set up community groups with the hope that they will be continued by those clients attending them. The initial challenge is a lack of clients in various areas, with 4 and soon to be 5 attending the Inverbervie project for example. Thereafter, without paid facilitators, the sustainability of such projects is questionable.

Although there was reference on the My Life Dynamic website that staff could go to clients, there was no evidence of any such known activity of this being delivered within our own community and it was concerning that only a limited number of people in concentrated areas will benefit from this part of the service, as a result of the recognised travel issues.

**The Listening Project** offers up to 6 sessions of 1-2-1 support, subject to referral from the CPN or other members of the Community Mental Health Team. Such sessions within Stonehaven are delivered in the local library or other community facilities or by Skype. We are aware of two people from Stonehaven reporting negative outcomes following referral to this project, hence we appreciate that it will have its limitations. Volunteers from the community are being trained by qualified Counsellors to deliver this service.

**Hear ME** provides Peer Support events in Aboyne, Ellon and Peterhead and periodic workshops are delivered across Aberdeenshire. We understand that two of these workshops have been delivered in Stonehaven and that they were poorly attended. Concerns at a lack of transport were evident and this in itself could impact on attendances at such events. My Life Dynamic are reviewing the delivery of these events.

These workshops offer individuals the opportunity to provide feedback on their experiences in the community. SDCC would question how likely it would be for clients/members of the public to reveal at public meetings, their own private circumstances.

**Know Where To Go** provides a contact telephone number **0300 1234 677** and email: enquiries@mylifedynamic.org.uk

We have endeavoured to obtain information about the progress of the current commissioned services since its launch on 1st January 2017, however obtaining such information within the public domain has not been easy. The only reference we could find was to a 6 monthly report issued by Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership to the Aberdeenshire Joint Integration Board on 30th August 2017 and nothing since. (SDCC) would like to see more transparency in relation to the monitoring and reporting of services.

SDCC must thank My Life Dynamic management for providing samples of their 2017 annual report and quarterly reports for the first 9 months of 2018.

### In summary

My Life Dynamic appears to be making progress after a very difficult start. Recruitment and catching up on a backlog of referrals, were major issues for them. By December 2017 they had 19 appointed staff, however there appears to have been be a high turnover of staff in 2018 which is a concern. Training of new staff takes considerable time and resource.

Future development to deliver services seems to be based on training volunteers and encouraging existing clients to self-run their own groups as identified in the cultivate programme. SDCC believe that this could work for clients with short term mental health problems and who make a complete recovery. However we have concerns that vulnerable clients with longer term or complex mental health conditions would be unable to self-manage without appropriate safeguards such as professional facilitation, therefore reliance on independent groups is unlikely to be an effective or sustainable strategy for these specific clients.

Concerns over referral rates in the south were raised by My Life Dynamic management, who believe generally throughout Aberdeenshire, people don’t appear to know about the service – it was felt that referrals from the south were declining in Q4 and it was acknowledged by My Life Dynamic that they have a limited presence in Stonehaven other than services being delivered in the local library. GP’s have only referred 9 cases to MLD this quarter of which 7 were from Portlethen and 2 from Stonehaven.

The Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) referrals are considerably less than that of GP’s e.g. Q3 1 CMHT and 6 GP referrals in South Aberdeenshire.

Approximately 20% of referrals do not progress, of which half of them were self-referred.

MLD have requested that good quality information is provided with referrals.

Whilst referrals have been declining for My Life Dynamic, by contrast another mental health charity, Pillar, who have a 30 year presence in Stonehaven have seen a 39% increase in referrals in 2018.

## Additional Issues Identified

### Lack of Provision for those living with long term conditions

### **Relapse Prevention**

SDCC acknowledge that mental illness is a health condition which is not time limited as each individual’s needs can differ significantly. Some people make a quick recovery, whilst others require long term support. During recovery periods there can be significant volatility between good and poor mental health and on occasions some may experience relapse. For people with moderate to acute mental health conditions, the recovery period is more than likely to be a long term process.

### **Differing needs across Aberdeenshire**

The current mental health strategy has endeavoured to encompass the whole of Aberdeenshire, which includes the North, Central and South, as a single entity, however SDCC believe that we are not seeing the services delivered efficiently within the SDCC area. We would like to see a more focussed delivery of services in each individual part of Aberdeenshire, which reflects the actual service and resource needs of local people. Currently this is not the case and we believe that focussing area specific services relevant to the areas specific needs will result in good value Mental Health Service provision.

## Potential Service Gaps

Identified concerns and potential gaps within the current strategy are as follows:

1. The need for service users accessing the commissioned service to meet Aberdeenshire Council’s moderate, substantial and critical levels.
2. The Listening Project is provided by volunteers and NOT qualified Counsellors.
3. Restricting sessions to specific numbers can be more harmful than therapeutic. Many clients may require long term, professional counselling to safely support the recovery process, as clients may take a lengthy period to even begin the process of identifying underlying personal issues.
4. There is no community base for drop in support and a general lack of community presence. Currently public facilities such as the local library have been used for 1-2-1 sessions which we do not believe is appropriate regards the sensitive nature of a client’s needs.
5. There is no long-term support for relapse prevention
6. Lack of promotion of the services within the community
7. Poor partnership working – low referral rates
8. Lack of opportunities/solutions for people experiencing isolation due to their mental health problems
9. Lack of facilitated, self-management support groups

## ‘Eggs in One Basket’ Strategy

Following the award of the mental health services contract to My Life Dynamic, Pillar has continued to work in the local community alongside MLD and Community Health services, to support clients with mental health needs. They have done this on a self-funded basis and despite this continue to support many clients of the CMHT in the SDCC area.

The continued existence of any organisation on a self-funded basis is uncertain and we are naturally concerned about the potential risk to a valued local service provider. It is not clear that the current contract holder would be able to replace Pillar’s service capacity should they cease which could significantly impact the provision of mental health services in the SDCC area.

That said, we have no evidence at this time to gauge the demand for mental health services in the area and whether there is a need for one or more service providers. We merely wish to note at this time that the strategy should consider the need for both greater access (resource provision) and a broader service (that caters for both immediate to long term mental heath needs). Should the strategy continue to fund a single service provider then it is imperative that the ability of that provider to deliver both resource capacity and breath of scope, should be clearly established. The evidence gathered to date, while not conclusive suggests that this is not the case and should be considered more closely in the current review.

FYI Pillar’s services are detailed in APPENDIX 1 and this is something (SDCC) do not believe should be lost without some sort of replacement within the community.

There is sufficient concern regarding the existing arrangements that warrants a review and subsequent re-tendering process to ensure that Stonehaven’s community needs are fully met.

## Appendix 1 - Pillar Activities 2018/19

**Self-management, recovery support groups**

Weekly Programme of activities – designed to provide educational sessions, structure and routine, social and community inclusion and peer support

* Monday: Registered Paths for All Walking group; Individual appointments
* Tuesday: Meet & Eat; Exercise session; Individual appointments
* Wednesday: Mind & Body Programme
	+ - * Creative Minds (10-week block)
			* Active Minds (10-week block)
			* Healthy Minds (10-week block)

Social Horticulture throughout spring, summer, autumn

* + - * Planting and tending to vegetable, fruit, flowers
			* Mindfulness sessions
* Thursday: Adult Peer Learning Programme

Young People’s Peer Learning Programme

* Friday: Individual appointments

**Minds at work**

* Mental Fitness Workshops
	+ Employability Team workshops
	+ Primary Schools
	+ Secondary Schools
	+ CPD for adults
* Volunteer work placements
* Board membership

**By arrangement**

* Appointments for family members and carers
* Appointments with Pillar member and relevant professionals
* Social Work student placements
* Placement visits for nursing students
* Young Philanthropist Initiative

**Pillar Outcomes 2018**

**Consistently reported outcomes**

* Increased feelings of hope
* Improved feeling of inclusion and reduction in isolation
* Improved Core 10 results
* Reduction in levels of fear and anxiety
* Prevents hospital admission or reduction in length of admission
* Improved relationships
* Increased meaningful connections and networks of support
* Increased self confidence
* Improved self-esteem and self-worth
* Increase in physical activity levels
* Improved self-management skills
* Reduction in relapse episodes
* Improved confidence around trying new activities and learning new skills
* Improved ability to include structure and routine in daily lives
* Value the opportunity to support others, contribute to their community and to shaping service delivery
* Positive impact on family/carers

**Investment in Local Communities 2018/19**

**Community Events**

* Pedal for Pillar – annual event
* Pop-up shops – 6 monthly
* Mental health awareness week – daily events throughout this week in May
* World Mental Health Day 10th October – AGM followed by buffet lunch
* Community engagement events 2018
	+ Library Mindful Creative Sessions
	+ GP Mental Fitness Presentation
	+ Lunch & Learn at GP practices
	+ Flu clinics
	+ University English Literature and Wellbeing Society
	+ Scotmid awareness raising events and talk at AGM
	+ The Belvedere Quiz team awareness raising events
	+ Local Radio – service promotion
	+ Together We’re Winning – short film

**Additional promotion and awareness raising**

* Social Media
	+ Facebook Page – regular updates; sharing of local events; health tips
	+ Twitter – as above
* Website
* Information brochures
* ALISS - A Local Information System for Scotland
* Aberdeenshire Development Plan – Workshop at Community Empowerment Act public event in Portlethen; article in newsletter