

# The ALLIANCE

## Annual Conference 2023



**Strengthening  
Our Collective Voice**

**Mapping the way  
forward for health and  
social care in Scotland**



# 2023 Conference roadmap

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Opening session</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. Panel discussion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4. Equality</b>	<b>5</b>
4.1 Listen to understand: How can healthcare be equitable	5
4.2 Values First! Effective communications around poverty and social issues	6
4.3 Health inequalities: Bridging the implementation gap	7
<b>5. Person centred care</b>	<b>8</b>
5.1 Embedding lived experience in health and social care	8
5.2 Intelligent Kindness: You make a difference	9
<b>6. Barriers to health and social care</b>	<b>10</b>
6.1 The Cost of Cutting: a way forward for the third sector in crisis	10
6.2 Let's Be Heard: Public engagement in the Scottish COVID-19 Inquiry	11
<b>7. Human Rights</b>	<b>12</b>
7.1 SNAP 2: Scotland's second national human rights action plan	12
7.2 See Hear: Collective sensory experiences contributing to the future	13
<b>8. Hear from the delegates about what they enjoyed about the conference</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>9. Taking The Scenic Route: Art, Wellbeing and Music</b>	<b>15</b>
9.1 Creative Stand: Project Ability	15
9.2 Wellbeing Session: Therapeutic Sound Bath	15
9.3 The Fridays	15
<b>10. Mental Health</b>	<b>16</b>
10.1 Mental Health Updates: Law review and strategy	16
<b>11. A New Path for Care</b>	<b>17</b>
11.1 Measuring outcomes that matter	17
11.2 The National Care Service: Where do we go from here?	18
<b>12. Innovation</b>	<b>18</b>
12.1 Transforming health and social care with Artificial Intelligence	18
<b>13. Conclusion</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>14. Event sponsors and stands</b>	<b>21</b>

# Introduction



**Strengthening our voice has never been more important.**

The 2023 ALLIANCE annual conference was an opportunity for a diverse range of delegates to come together and tackle the changing landscape of health and social care in Scotland.

Through workshops, talks, discussion groups and information stands, delegates were able to network, collaborate, learn about new developments, and share their diverse perspectives.

This year's conference was the ALLIANCE's first hybrid conference. Delegates could join in-person and online. Digital accessibility is an important lesson from the pandemic that allows more people to participate in, and influence collective change. This year's conference was the first hybrid ALLIANCE conference, with delegates joining in-person and online.

Delegates engaged with stakeholders across the sector, from government officials, front line workers, third sector organisations and people with lived experience. By working across the population, the conference brought together a variety of perspectives and opinions.

This report will highlight the conference content and help us map the way forward to strengthen the health and social care sector, and emphasise the impact of working together.



**127 Attendees online**



**225 Attendees in person**

**#ALLIANCEConf23**



**Watch the video highlights of the annual conference**

# Opening session

This year's conference was chaired by Penny Taylor, an award-winning journalist and broadcaster. She fielded questions from participants, mediated debates, and encouraged participation throughout.

The keynote speaker, Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care Michael Matheson opened the conference by highlighting an important message we must meaningfully listen to those with lived experience. This set a theme for the day and emphasised the path to improving care and support.

“As we go forward, I want to make sure we are doing what we can to allow you to be at the heart of how we shape our approach to health and social care in the future.”

Individuals' lived experiences are what shape a collective voice, and the Cabinet Secretary asserts they should be at the centre of policy and governmental decision-making. By embedding lived experience, policy and services promote human dignity and value those most impacted.

Chair, Penny Taylor opened the conversation, and invited delegates to contribute to and shape the discussion by asking questions and sharing thoughts.



**Pennie Taylor,**  
Journalist and  
broadcaster



**Michael Matheson,**  
Cabinet Secretary for  
NHS Recovery, Health  
and Social Care

“ **The chair was exceptional.**

- ALLIANCE delegate

Delegates were active in voicing their frustrations over the standing of the health and social care system. When questioned about funding for the third sector by an ALLIANCE member, the Cabinet Secretary explained that due to budget cuts, inflation and high energy costs, priorities have had to be made about where money is allocated.

“ **The message on finance is not a good one and will continue to be constrained for a period of time given the messages from the UK Government on policy.** - ALLIANCE delegate

Despite budgetary constraints, the Cabinet Secretary shared several initiatives and programmes the government is working on, and has worked on alongside the ALLIANCE; the Self Management Fund, the 'Our Voice' Programme and digital initiatives such as the NHS 24 App, and the at home video consultation service 'Near Me' that pave the way towards better inclusion, access to information and quality of care.

Michael Matheson's keynote and ensuing questions was a reminder that this is only the beginning of a journey towards a more equitable, suitable, and inclusive health and social care system in Scotland. Moving forward, he encouraged engagement in co-design events for the National Care Service, a continued commitment to hearing about peoples' lived experiences, and opportunities for innovation in the digital health and social care field.

## Panel discussion

Panel members from diverse professional backgrounds were invited to take part in a discussion around the topic of health inequalities in Scotland. Panellists engaged in a captivating, convincing and critical conversation about the barriers and limitations of the health and social care system, and issued a persuasive call-to-action. A member of the audience later reflected on the discussion, stating that panellists "really got to the heart of things. They were very knowledgeable and provided thought-provoking answers and comments."

“ The panel discussion was great - very honest. - ALLIANCE delegate

When asked about the Ministerial address, David Finch explained that it had "touched around the edges" and did not mention "that for the most deprived people in Scotland, health is starting to fall behind the rest." He explained there is a clear frustration from people on the ground about the gap between policy and action. This gap in implementation is highlighted in participant feedback, which emphasises the importance of listening to individuals' concerns and improving delivery of care services based on shared knowledge and experience.

This was a point that Karin Goodwin expanded upon. She suggested that hearing from people's stories, no matter the scale, can have a true impact and bring about change. Karin explains that as a part of a journalist's work, "teaming up and hearing from people about the things they want us to look at, and finding data and evidence" is part of change-making work.



**David Finch**, Assistant Director in the Healthy Lives directorate



**Karin Goodwin**, Co-editor of The Ferret



**We need to stop looking from this top-down perspective and trust people and do a bottom-up approach.**

- Karin Goodwin

Katie Kelly spoke of the wider issue – the sector must be reformed and fit-for-purpose. The pandemic was a lesson for all those involved in the health and social care sector and was a reminder that reform must be worked on collectively, using a solution-based approach. She recognised that often, disagreements come in the way of making meaningful and long-lasting change, and that people ought to come together to look at the shortcomings of the sector through the lenses of health, but also of economy and geography.

Richard Meade was vocal about the “increasing pressures on health and social care services” due to the lack of investment and public funding. He specifically addressed the issues faced by carers in Scotland, ranging from health inequalities to poverty, and lack of capacity and identification. Richard Meade made recommendations of immediate actions to drive positive change: working on prevention, listening to peoples’ voices and understanding what is causing the implementation gap.



**Katie Kelly**, Former Depute Chief Executive with East Ayrshire Council



**Richard Meade**, Director of Carers Scotland and Northern Ireland



**Today is a great opportunity to hear what people think and what some solutions might be.** - ALLIANCE delegate



**It is time now not to build on top of existing systems, but to reimagine what we need in the 21st century to live happy and healthy lives.**

- Katie Kelly



**We must shift to think about prevention, support and intervention services.**

- Richard Meade

Members from the panel and audience raised several concerns such as the need for cooperation, co-design and co-creation, long-term funding, and a stronger focus on human rights. A consensus was reached - the sector must change to better support individuals with disabilities, long-term conditions and their unpaid carers.



# Equality



Equality workshops focused on how the delivery of, and access to health and social care varies across Scotland. Health inequalities are rising, and as time goes on, more people are facing barriers when trying to access the care they need.

There are a variety of factors that may affect access to health and social care providers and services. For example, people in rural areas have a harder time accessing the necessary services due to limited geographical access. Other similar barriers to access are limited funding, lack of information and a disconnect between policy and implementation in day-to-day life.

---

## Listen to understand: How can healthcare be equitable

---

Delegates heard about the role of Community Links Practitioners, which encourages GP practices to work closer with community resources. Community links practitioners use the Links Approach to work with primary care interprofessional teams, and create an environment that enables better access to information, knowledge, wellbeing, skills, relationships and resources.

The aim of their work is to minimise the impact of social determinants on individuals' ability to access quality and well-rounded care. This programme is person centred and seeks to hear from those who have lived experience by asking "what matters to you", and discussing how practitioners can continue to change the lives of all those seeking care.

The Links Programme maps the way forward to a more integrated and holistic form of health and social care. The long-term impacts of the approach are yet to be measured so that long-term funding can be obtained, and developments in terms of digital work are being considered.

Read more about the [Links approach](#).<sup>1</sup>



---

## Values First! Effective communications around poverty and social issues

---

Individual empowerment is a key part in ensuring equality across health and social care. The Values First! workshop presented useful tools to talk about poverty and social care - basing the argument on shared values, stating the problem and its impact, using an image or metaphor, and stating the solution wanted and who by.

Participants were introduced to “10 ways to talk about poverty and social issues”.<sup>2</sup> The workshop gave people the tools to speak up and advocate for themselves and others. This would in turn allow participants to be agents in shifting limiting beliefs around poverty and social care that create barriers to ending injustice of poverty and social issues.

“ People respond to human values, such as compassion and justice. Values can then make the moral case for necessary change to poverty and social issues. - ALLIANCE delegate

Delegates raised the importance of the language of values, and explained that terms such as empowerment, respect and independence can be interpreted differently depending on context and audience. Clarifying values and their meaning is therefore a crucial step in communicating the subject matter.

Through this interesting conversation, delegates made positive connections amongst each other, and were positive about this being the start of a bigger conversation about reducing health inequalities in Scotland.

We encourage everyone to participate in the Challenge Poverty Week from the 2nd to the 8th of October 2023 to raise your voice against poverty and call for a more just and equal Scotland.<sup>3</sup>

“

We're not trying to say what's popular; we're trying to make popular what needs to be said.

- ALLIANCE delegate

“ Values are so important. They often give you the 'why' of why you do what you do. - ALLIANCE delegate



---

## Health inequalities: Bridging the implementation gap

---

A workshop by the Health Foundation highlighted that health and living standards have stagnated in the last decade demonstrated by a rise in drug deaths, infant mortality and poverty rates. Wide inequalities are forming, disproportionately impacting individuals based on geography and income.

The Health Foundation explained that this was concerning because there is a gap in implementation, where policy is not turning into practice. Oftentimes, what is happening at the highest level is not being experienced by people looking to access care on the ground.

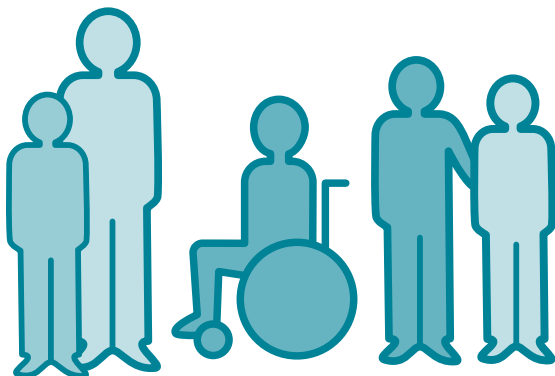
“ It’s interesting how, whether it’s legislation, policy, initiatives and so on, how they actually filter down into practice. - ALLIANCE delegate

“ There is a disconnect between what professionals and practitioners should know and the understanding that people should be using as part of their practice. - ALLIANCE delegate

Barriers to this implementation are caused by lack of funding, resources, and a long-term plan. The workshop aimed to learn from delegates how the gap in implementation has impacted them, what the greatest challenges are in facing these, and what actions need to be taken.

Delegates discussed the need for a new bold, creative, and radical change - an effort of cooperation and co-production, one that is a considered implementation of the value of equality.

“ I’m just going to throw the word ‘radical’ out there. - ALLIANCE delegate



Proposed solutions included the use of a bottom-up approach, whereby those most impacted shape policy, training on how to reach individuals who are rarely engaged with, and collaborative work.

# Person centred care

Workshops focusing on person centred care were an opportunity to share, listen to and learn from people's lived experiences to shape services.

---

## Embedding lived experience in health and social care

---

In this workshop, there was a discussion about what practical measures could be taken to ensure those who have stories can share them, and those who must listen can take note. Delegates mentioned flexibility in terms of how experiences are shared (e.g., online, in-person, one-on-one), transparency about how experiences will be used in policy, and the need for staff support and training.

“ **If people with lived experience are included in discussions at the very inception of projects, then we can save time and money by getting it right in the first place - this is why it is so important to co-produce.** - ALLIANCE delegate

Delegates agreed that being able to share knowledge through their experiences is essential to raise awareness of conditions so that preventative measures can be taken in time, and individuals can seek early intervention. Speaking up means that negative health and care experiences do not have to be repeated, and well-informed practices are put in place.

The workshop highlighted individuals' agency, creativity and determination to make a difference by contributing their own voice and turning this determination into actionable change.

“ **People need to feel empowered to be at the centre of their own health decisions, including policy around their care. They are not just a patient, but a person too- their lived experience is valid, and they have important contributions to make.** - ALLIANCE delegate



---

## Intelligent Kindness: You make a difference

---

Another focus in this field is the experience of carers and those they care for. During this workshop, delegates engaged in an empowering conversation about what each individual can do now to better their own experience as a carer, and that of those they care for.

**“ As an unpaid carer, this talk was so poignant, so touching and relatable. - ALLIANCE delegate**

Participants spoke of intelligent kindness - what it means to truly engage in person centred practice by asking two very simple questions ‘what matters to you’ and ‘who matters to you’.

Listening, and taking individual experiences into account when writing policy and providing services ensures that individuals can contribute to shaping the services they provide and receive care in. This challenges the traditional hierarchy in decision-making which often means services are inadequate and incompatible with peoples’ needs.

**“**

**Human connections are everything.**

- ALLIANCE delegate

**“ We should matter to the organisations we work for. We should matter to the organisations we receive any form of support from. - ALLIANCE delegate**

**“ Over and above policy and strategy, it’s people who change lives. - ALLIANCE delegate**

# Barriers to health and social care

In the past few years, health and social care barriers such as the cost-of-living crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic have made it harder for individuals to receive the care they need, and have underlined a number of shortcomings the sector must overcome to better cater to all those involved.

“Challenges facing the sector are unsustainable, impacting the people and staff within the sector.” - ALLIANCE delegate

Workshops emphasised that these challenges have had a disproportionate impact on some, and have entrenched health inequalities which must be addressed so that everyone in Scotland can access quality health and social care.

“Health inequalities are much broader than financial implications and we must recognise that we are still living within a pandemic.” - ALLIANCE delegate

---

## The Cost of Cutting: a way forward for the third sector in crisis

---

Delegates came together to share the challenges they have been facing within the third sector as a result of the cost-of-living crisis. Participants addressed the top challenges they faced as a result of the crisis; ranging from inflation, to difficulty fundraising and poor working conditions for staff and volunteers.

While funding has not changed, the third sector is experiencing cuts due to inflation. Paired with an increased demand for services, staff and volunteers are “starting to feel apathetic and cynical about the impact they are able to make.”

Another common concern was that as a result of inflated costs, service users are often unable to afford services, treatment and support. While these issues are hard to address, delegates used a solution-based mindset to map a way forward, agreeing that things had to be done differently.



**In public health, we need to take a preventative approach while operating under the current financial constraints.** - ALLIANCE delegate

Delegates discussed the need for long-term and sustainable funding to support organisations in their mission to provide adequate support and services, and the importance of safeguarding the longevity of staff and volunteers by offering them “cost of living payment uplifts and dedicated time to take care of themselves.”

The workshop concluded that the silver-lining from this obstacle is that the system is getting better at working collectively to amplify the voices of those with lived experience, and at holding decision-makers, funders and the government to account.



**We need to keep advocating for decisions to be based on sustaining the sector.**

- ALLIANCE delegate

---

## **Let's Be Heard: Public engagement in the Scottish COVID-19 Inquiry**

---

The ‘Let’s Be Heard’ team facilitated a conversation between healthcare workers during the pandemic, those who had experience with the virus, and anyone who had been impacted by it. Let’s Be Heard is a programme of national engagement that invites a wide range of individuals with lived experience of COVID-19 to derive knowledge, recommendations and lessons that will influence Ministers in future decision-making.

The workshop sought to spread the word about Let’s Be Heard, and receive feedback on the inquiry and on the COVID-19 pandemic. Delegates recommended that the Let’s Be Heard programme hear from third sector organisations such as the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, people who are not digitally connected, those who are visually or hearing impaired, and individuals with disabilities and long-term conditions.

Participants recommended that the programme focus on the experiences of those with long COVID-19, the financial implications of the pandemic, the impacts of working from home, and the considerations workplaces need to make when dealing with individuals with long-term symptoms resulting from the virus.



**Learning lessons for the future is the core of the inquiry.**

- ALLIANCE delegate



**Voice is the most powerful story you’ve got.**

- ALLIANCE delegate

# Human Rights

In a field that centres around people and their experiences human rights seem like a natural fit. Specific rights like the right to health, the right to adequate housing, and the right to life all tie directly into the health and social care sector. The Human Rights Based Approach (HBRA) to health and social care is newly emerging. In other fields, a HRBA helps to centre the most marginalised communities, emphasising a bottom-up approach. When we focus on human rights, treating people with dignity becomes the primary focus.

“ **Human rights are a mechanism to improve how we live, work and love in Scotland.** - ALLIANCE delegate

---

## SNAP 2: Scotland's second national human rights action plan

---

The United Nations recommends that countries have a national action plan for human rights. With **SNAP 2**, and its predecessor SNAP, Scotland distinguishes itself among the international community.<sup>4</sup> The workshop gave participants an opportunity to hear about the process of developing Scotland's second national human rights action plan, and reflections from the Leadership Panel who reviewed, revised, finalised and launched it on their reflections going forward

“ **SNAP doesn't exist in a vacuum... will need collective effort.**  
- ALLIANCE delegate



SNAP 2 sets out 54 recommended actions on ranges of issues. In practice, organisations can look at SNAP 2 and understand how they could work with others – and particularly rights holders – to deliver these actions.

**“ We should be proud of the document, but paper is paper. Aspirations in the document should live in hearts and minds - be the change we wish to see. - ALLIANCE delegate**

In order to ensure that these actions make it off the page, delegates called for well-rounded incorporation, funding and support. Part of ensuring this change is support for the emerging Human Rights Bill, which would increase access to international human rights laws in Scotland. In this workshop, participants were reminded of a quote from Margaret Mead - “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world.” When enough like-minded people come together, they can influence the lives of those in the most marginalised spaces.

---

## **See Hear: Collective sensory experiences contributing to the future**

---

In the See Hear workshop, participants had the opportunity to give feedback on the See Hear Strategy that will be launched in 2024. While the primary focus of this workshop was getting input and feedback, the speakers emphasised the continued shift in sector policy towards a human rights approach. The strategy takes a person centred and holistic approach to ensure human rights are being respected.

The See Hear Strategy supports individuals with sensory disabilities and will act as a toolkit for professional policy makers. It was essential that participants in this workshop shared their thoughts and ideas on what should be included, in order to learn from living experience.

Delegates identified that a key part of ensuring success will be effective communication of the strategy, and appropriate outreach for feedback prior to finalisation. Other input on the strategy included: early intervention, supporting transitions between diagnosis and support, and ensuring equality when it comes to access.

It is important to continue the conversations started in this workshop and encourage further feedback. Feedback can be shared with [The Scottish Sensory Hub](#).<sup>5</sup>

## Hear from the delegates about what they enjoyed about the conference

“ It was an opportunity to meet others with similar experiences.



“ Conversations about tackling inequalities were excellent - particularly within the context of unpaid carers.



“ Very informative and a good learning experience. Great awareness raising and networking opportunity.



“ The energy and buzz in the breakout moments between sessions. The range of speakers, diversity of speakers, lived experience of speakers.

“ The opening session was interesting and engaging, and set a great tone for the day.

# Taking The Scenic Route: Art, Wellbeing and Music

Delegates were able to enjoy activities alongside the day's events through a range of activities. These underlined the importance of creativity, relaxation and mindfulness.



## Creative Stand: Project Ability

Throughout the day, people were invited to have their portraits drawn by artists from **Project Ability**.<sup>6</sup> This inclusive art community welcomes people with learning disabilities and experiences of mental ill-health, and provides them with the opportunity to practise, showcase, and sell their artwork.

## Wellbeing Session: Therapeutic Sound Bath

During the lunch break, Tony from the **Sonic Den** hosted a therapeutic sound bath to promote wellbeing and relaxation.<sup>7</sup> In a shortened version of the sound bath session, participants had a full-body listening experience during which they entered a calm and mindful state.

## The Fridays

To mark a close to the day's conference, **The Fridays** performed three uplifting and energetic songs - one of their own, "How does it feel", and covers of "Suddenly I see" by Kt Sunstall and "Stuck in the middle with you" by the Stealers Wheels.<sup>8</sup> This positive send-off showcased the talents of musicians who are part of MusicAll, an organisation that encourages talented disabled and neurodivergent people to showcase their musical talent.



# Mental Health



---

## Mental Health Updates: Law review and strategy

---

A focus on mental health is important not only for individuals in their own lives, but for the delivery of care across the sector. The workshop was an opportunity for delegates to hear directly from the Scottish Government about the Scottish Mental Health Law Review (SMHLR). The SMHLR was commissioned in 2019 but the wider context surrounding the law is changing with the emerging Human Rights Bill proposals for a National Care Service, and the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This was an opportunity to gather feedback, and it was emphasised that this was only the start of that process.

**This is a very detailed topic, with many moving parts. The main messages from the authors of the report are:**

1. Strengthen the voices of people who use services and those who care for them
2. Reduce the need for coercion in the system
3. Secure rights to the help and support needed to live a good life

Discussion topics branching from these included a focus on equality, stronger accountability, support for people who offend and prevention of crisis. These topics represent a shift to a modern mental health system - one that is based on human rights, wellbeing, and choice over one's life, care and treatment.

Participants asked a variety of questions related to the implementation of the law and the role of public bodies such as the Police. They openly discussed the challenges to mental health services today. Many operate at capacity or without adequate funding. This feedback reiterated a final point - "There is a need for more consultation. We will be reaching out, to bring people on who are interested, to help us work through all of that detail."

It is essential that these conversations continue outside of the conference space, to clear a path forward, designed by and for those most impacted by new law and policy.

# A New Path for Care

As a result of the limitations and barriers faced by the health and social care sector in Scotland, government bodies and organisations have thought of new and innovative ways to transform the system so that it is fit for purpose in the 21st century. The conference was an opportunity for such ideas to be presented, moulded, and worked on collectively for appropriate and well-informed practice to be implemented.

---

## Measuring outcomes that matter

---

Delegates learned about the National Performance Framework (NPF) which is undergoing review. The NPF acts as a set of guiding principles for local governments, public services, charities, organisations and businesses in Scotland.

Outcomes within the NPF are like a golden thread, used to guide decision-making so that it is in line with Scottish values. Currently, the NPF comprises 11 National Outcomes including Education, Culture, Health and Human Rights.

One of the focuses of the NPF review is the potential addition of a National Outcome on Care to cover all elements of care from childcare to elderly care, paid and unpaid care. The aim of this outcome is to “try to get more positivity into the debate and argument in people’s view of social care”.

The proposed outcome reads: “we fully value and invest in those experiencing care and all those providing it.” As of now, over 60 organisations support this suggestion. Outcomes are meant to be more than a ticking-box exercise and should be based on the voices of those with lived experience.

This workshop was an opportunity to do just that - delegates shared their thoughts and feedback to shape the report which will ultimately influence the review process. Delegates proposed the word ‘support’ instead of care. They also spoke of the essential nature of lived experience, and that it must be accompanied by evidence and tracking to be most impactful. Finally, a point was made about the need to stay flexible and remain person centred - outcomes must not lose sight of people, their individuality and the services that are being provided.

“ Care is invisible in the NPF. - ALLIANCE delegate

“ If it is not there then who is going to care about care in the policy and political world. - ALLIANCE delegate

“ You’ll remember somebody’s voice, you’ll remember somebody’s story, you won’t remember a number or a percentage. You won’t care about a statistic; you’ll care about a person. - ALLIANCE delegate



---

## The National Care Service: Where do we go from here?

---

The National Care Service (NCS) is a proposed service which aims to provide access to high-quality, integrated and consistent care support around Scotland. It was recently announced that the implementation of the NCS would be delayed to allow for further discussion with stakeholders and the public.

The workshop was set up so that delegates could participate in the process of co-design, so that the NCS can be informed by those with lived-experience. The session welcomed speakers from the Scottish Government, Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland, the ALLIANCE and from individuals with lived experience perspectives. Bringing together individuals from these backgrounds was essential in gathering well-rounded and informed feedback for the implementation of the NCS. Participants noted the potential for improvements, and the accountability challenges that exist in the current system.

# Innovation

---

## Transforming health and social care with Artificial Intelligence

---

In a world of changing technology, it is important to stay up to date on emerging tools. What can the sector do to incorporate innovative practices? In the workshop, participants discussed Artificial Intelligence (AI) - an emerging technology with potential pros and cons for use in health and social care. This was an opportunity to discuss a variety of views and attitudes towards AI while it is still in its infancy.

The Scottish AI Alliance introduced delegates to AI technology, and shared how it has, and could be used within the system to alleviate the strain faced by workers and service users in the industry.

The workshop demonstrated examples of the uses of AI in the sector; for example, to support assisted living, and be implemented within housing and care systems. The Scottish AI Alliance proposed that by delegating simple tasks to AI, human resources could be freed up and instead directed towards offering human connection which is essential to reduce isolation and loneliness.

Delegates were asked to share their thoughts on AI before and after the workshop to gauge how awareness of the technology impacts their impressions on its implementation. At the start of the workshop, delegates seemed suspicious, and used words such as "unsure", "concerned", "dubious", "apprehensive", "excited" and "confused". At the end of the workshop, participants were more hopeful, expressing that they felt "intrigued", "interested" and "informed".



This section of the conference highlights the importance of education on new or unknown topics. Where they were once unsure or apprehensive, delegates left with a new perspective on some possible benefits of AI in this field. Throughout this year's conference, delegates and speakers expressed their passion for change and advancement to better services and care. Incorporating innovative practices and new technology is one way to drive such change.

## Conclusion



The 2023 ALLIANCE Annual Conference, 'Strengthening Our Collective Voice' provided delegates with an opportunity to learn from others, share their opinions, and collaborate on ways forward. The focus on topics like mental health, person centred care and innovation , provided expansive opportunities for further understanding. Overall, participants walked away with new knowledge, resources for further learning, and opportunities to share their knowledge and experience with the panellists and speakers. The keynote speaker and panellists sparked passionate discussion amongst participants, who were able to engage directly on important issues like representation, policy, healthcare and advancements in the field.

As the ALLIANCE's first hybrid annual conference, participants were able to join online , where they had access to workshops and plenary sessions. This was a successful way to include a variety of modalities, which will be essential for inclusion moving forward. BSL and Electronic Note Takers at event, booked through Sign Language Interactions, provided accessible support to delegates in-person and online.

Delegates were able to channel creative energies with the inclusion of the art, wellbeing and music areas - adding variety to the experience for the in-person aspect of the conference.

For the closing remarks of the conference, activist Mala Jayhindaran, and disability consultant and actor, Kirian Saeed took the stage and paved the way forward. Each speaker shared their unique lived experiences and wisdom which are an indispensable part of our collective voice. This served as a reminder of the importance of individual experiences. Participants shared their enthusiasm about ending the day with such inspirational messages, that underlined the common thread of the conference. Ending on this note left participants with an inspirational message, and centred the value of channelling lived experience into change.

Coming together to map a way forward in this sector requires open communication and discussion. This conference and its workshops were essential steps forward for a variety of policies and topics. Delegates enjoyed being able to network, meet "others and hear their stories" and "similar experiences". Looking to the future, it is essential that those across the sector channel these experiences and conversation, turning good intention into purposeful change.



In today's world, our collective voice is very important as it will enable us to develop, learn and understand through our life experiences. will enable us to develop, learn and understand through our life experiences - Mala Jayhindaran



It is crucial to get involved, it saves time and money, and gives better impact. It makes things easier for everyone - Kirin Saeed



# Event sponsors and stands

- Silver Cloud
- Sights Scotland
- Home Energy Scotland
- The Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments
- Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland
- Scottish Parliament
- Project Ability
- Sign Language Interactions
- The Access Group
- Support ED
- Scottish COVID-enquiry
- Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living
- University of Strathclyde
- Linking Lives UK Social Security Scotland



# Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> GP Practice Development - Health and social care integration ([alliance-scotland.org.uk](http://alliance-scotland.org.uk))
- <sup>2</sup> [values\\_first\\_may\\_2023-1.pptx](#) (live.com)
- <sup>3</sup> Challenge Poverty Week - The Poverty Alliance
- <sup>4</sup> SNAP 2 – Scotland's second National Human Rights Action Plan ([snaprights.info](http://snaprights.info))
- <sup>5</sup> About the Scottish Sensory Hub - Scottish Sensory Hub ([alliance-scotland.org.uk](http://alliance-scotland.org.uk))
- <sup>6</sup> Home - Project Ability ([project-ability.co.uk](http://project-ability.co.uk))
- <sup>7</sup> The Sonic Den - Health-wellness Events | AllEvents.in
- <sup>8</sup> Events - musicALL ([musicallscotland.org.uk](http://musicallscotland.org.uk))

# About the ALLIANCE

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) is the national third sector intermediary for health and social care, bringing together a diverse range of people and organisations who share our vision, which is a Scotland where everyone has a strong voice and enjoys their right to live well with dignity and respect.

We are a strategic partner of the Scottish Government and have close working relationships with many NHS Boards, academic institutions and key organisations spanning health, social care, housing and digital technology.

Our purpose is to improve the wellbeing of people and communities across Scotland. We bring together the expertise of people with lived experience, the third sector, and organisations across health and social care to inform policy, practice and service delivery. Together our voice is stronger and we use it to make meaningful change at the local and national level.

The ALLIANCE has a strong and diverse membership of over 3,300 organisations and individuals. Our broad range of programmes and activities deliver support, research and policy development, digital innovation and knowledge sharing. We manage funding and spotlight innovative projects; working with our members and partners to ensure lived experience and third sector expertise is listened to and acted upon by informing national policy and campaigns, and putting people at the centre of designing support and services.

We aim to:

- Ensure disabled people, people with long term conditions and unpaid carers voices, expertise and rights drive policy and sit at the heart of design, delivery and improvement of support and services.
- Support transformational change that works with individual and community assets, helping people to live well, supporting human rights, self management, co-production and independent living.
- Champion and support the third sector as a vital strategic and delivery partner, and foster cross-sector understanding and partnership.



**ALLIANCE**  
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE  
ALLIANCE SCOTLAND  
people at the centre



☎ 0141 404 0231 ✉ [info@alliance-scotland.org.uk](mailto:info@alliance-scotland.org.uk) 🐦 @ALLIANCEscot 📘 ALLIANCEscot  
📷 [alliance.scot](https://www.instagram.com/alliance.scot) 🌐 [alliancescotland](https://www.linkedin.com/company/alliancescotland) 📺 [alliancescotland](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqW0W1R5G1Y1Y1Y1Y1Y1Y1Y) 🎧 ALLIANCE Live 🗣️ ALLIANCEscot

[www.alliance-scotland.org.uk](http://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk)

**Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)**  
Venlaw Building, 349 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 4AA

The ALLIANCE is supported by a grant from the Scottish Government. The ALLIANCE is a company registered by guarantee. Registered in Scotland No.307731. Charity number SC037475. VAT No. 397 6230 60.