The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)

Integration in Action: Rethinking Power

Event report

September 2026



Health and Social Care ACADEMY

ALLIANCE
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE ALLIANCE SCOTLAND
people at the centre

International Foundation for Integrated Care
IFIC Scotland

Introduction

On Wednesday 16 September 2026, the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) and the International Foundation for Integrated Care (IFIC) Scotland hosted the ninth event in our Integration in Action series, exploring Five Ambitions for the Future of Health and Care, a shared vision for a future where people and wellbeing are at the centre.

This online event took a deeper look at the ambition to Share Power by exploring what it means to move beyond participation toward genuine power sharing in health and social care and how systems can change to share power more equitably. By centring the experiences of people directly affected by decisions, the session encouraged participants to reflect on what genuine partnership looks like and how we can create health and care systems where lived experience shapes outcomes.

67 people attended, including professionals working in health and social care, third sector, policy makers, and individuals with lived experience of accessing care and support. The event was chaired by Dr Anne Hendry, Director IFIC Scotland and Jane Miller, Academy Programme Manager, the ALLIANCE, and included a panel discussion with representatives from the Scottish Recovery Network and Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities (SCLD) followed by audience Q&A.

► Watch the Five Ambitions animation here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68qCMqGHllA

Speakers

Iona MacTaggart, Evaluation and Policy Coordinator, Scottish Recovery Network

Iona is the Evaluation and Policy Coordinator at Scottish Recovery Network. At Scottish Recovery Network we believe that transformation in Scotland's mental health system should be powered by lived experience and strengthened by peer support. The first step to truly creating lasting change is rebalancing our current power structures to actually enable peers and people with lived experience to have a true voice at the table, not just a seat.

Natalie Patterson, Rapporteur with Include for Good at SCLD

Natalie has been a Rapporteur with Include For Good since the programme started back in January 2022. Include For Good is SCLD's programme for change and is co-produced between SCLD and the Rapporteurs. The Rapporteurs are paid advisers who work at a strategic level and they lead the work of Include For Good. They research the issues that most impact the rights of people with learning disabilities, report on these and use them to set the agenda with senior leaders and key decision makers, and then hold them accountable for the changes needed to make Scotland a fairer, more equal, place for people with learning disabilities.

Natalie has extensive direct experience of health and social care and self-directed support. In August 2024, Natalie moved into her own home for the first time, opting to take a Direct Payment and recruit and run her own staff team.

Natalie is passionate about using her voice and lived experience to speak up for people like her with a disability and others who can't speak for themselves. As well as being a Rapporteur, she is the Scottish Representative on IMPACT's Co-production Advisory Group. This is a paid role. Earlier this month Natalie started an additional 1 year contract with IMPACT as a Senior Strategic Improvement Coach, working 1 day/week.

Jeannie Clough, Programme Lead for Include for Good, SCLD

Jeannie has been at SCLD since April 2022, having been recruited by Natalie and other Rapporteurs to the position of Programme Lead. Originally a teacher, including in a school for children and young people, aged 3 – 19 years, with additional support needs, Jeannie has also got experience of working in social care. She spent 3 ½ years at Nottinghamshire County Council as the Project Manager leading the integration of Health and Social Care Day Services and supporting the transition to Self-Directed Support. Following a move back to Scotland, Jeannie worked for Third Sector support provider, Support For Ordinary Living, covering North and South Lanarkshire and East Renfrewshire. Initially a Practice Leader managing individual's staffing, Jeannie then moved to the role of Person Centred Approaches Facilitator, a post she held for 5 years before starting at SCLD.

Summary

Iona, Natalie, and Jeannie drew on their experiences working with lived experience-led organisations, peer support networks, and change programmes working to redistribute power among people and communities. They described real power sharing as an ongoing process of relationship building, trust, accountability, and culture change. That starts with creating the right conditions for people to influence decisions and demonstrating through action that people's involvement leads to meaningful change.

Creating the conditions for genuine power sharing

Genuine power sharing begins before decisions are made by co-creating the conditions for confident, safe participation. Iona challenged traditional approaches to engagement, highlighting that too often organisations establish the conditions for participation without involving the people they want to engage. People must be involved from the outset, co-designing how participation will work, reviewing arrangements, and treating criticism as an opportunity to improve.

Jeannie added that creating the right conditions starts with practical considerations about accessibility and inclusion. Reflecting on the development of the Include for Good Rapporteur programme, she described how significant thought was given to creating a physically accessible and psychologically safe environment where people feel able to contribute.

Genuine participation depends on organisations adapting to people's needs, preferences and communication styles, rather than expecting people to adapt to systems. Natalie brought these principles to life through her own experience. She described how barriers to participation are often practical. Being able to access a building with a Changing Places facility, receiving information in different formats, having easy read materials available, and building regular breaks into meetings all make a significant difference.

Participants also reflected on the idea of constructive discomfort. Jeannie described feeling uncomfortable as a sign power is being shared because it means people feel confident to challenge decisions. Power sharing is a two-way process built on mutual trust: Rapporteurs trust that concerns will be addressed, while those supporting the process trust participants to speak up when something is not working. Trust is

built when people feel safe to disagree or raise concerns without fear of negative consequences.

That sense of safety depends on transparency, clear boundaries, and openness to feedback and criticism. Organisations need to understand that this work takes time. Building confidence, developing skills, understanding systems, and creating genuine partnerships cannot be achieved through one-off consultation.

What changes when power shifts?

When asked what success feels like, panellists spoke about the experience of being respected, listened to, and treated as equals.

For Natalie, power sharing means being able to say “I don’t feel good” and being asked what can be done differently. She described success as feeling comfortable raising concerns and knowing her views carry equal weight. The ability to challenge constructively and to have those challenges taken seriously is a key indicator that power is being shared.

Natalie spoke movingly about the support she receives from fellow rapporteurs. They remain in regular contact, support each other, and draw strength from being part of a collective voice, with Jeannie adding “the Rapporteurs are formidable when they are together.” Natalie also described the personal benefits, saying “knowing that I have this group of people in the same boat as me helps me live the life that I want.”

Iona also highlighted the transformative effect of peer support and collective action. Peer support is central to the Scottish Recovery Network’s work, part of which is to amplify people’s voices without claiming to speak for an entire community. She said value comes from shared experience and collective insight, rather than individual stories alone.

For services and systems, shifting power leads to more relevant, responsive, and person centred solutions. When lived experience is embedded in service design, commissioning, policy, and accountability mechanisms, organisations understand what actually matters to communities to better address barriers and support improvement. Meaningful involvement can therefore drive broader system transformation; approaches that put people at the heart of decision making reorientates systems around the needs, priorities, and aspirations of people and communities.

The importance of accountability

A key theme from the session was that engagement without action can be harmful for those involved. Iona spoke candidly about the frustration many people with lived experience feel when they invest significant time and emotional energy into sharing experiences but don't see meaningful change as a result. Meaningful involvement requires organisations to demonstrate how people's contributions have influenced decisions and to revisit commitments over time to ensure actions are being delivered.

At SCLD, Include for Good Rapporteurs pursue accountability by revisiting leaders six to twelve months after raising issues to review progress against commitments. The follow-up process creates ongoing accountability and helps ensure the Rapporteurs' contributions lead to action.

Jeannie said the challenge is not the absence of legislation, rights, or guidance, but ensuring organisations are accountable on delivering them. The focus should be on embedding lived and living experience within existing forms governance systems, inspection, and improvement so people's voices influence decisions continuously.

Looking ahead

The panellists described a vision of systems where lived and living experience is embedded throughout decision making. They called for greater investment in peer support, lived experience leadership, accessible engagement and long-term relationship building. Public service reform was seen as an opportunity to scale up and consistently embed meaningful involvement.

Natalie described her motivation as creating opportunities for others that she herself had not received. Her aspiration was to ensure more people have their voices heard and "more Rapporteurs in different parts of the country so word gets spread quicker and we can help people faster."

Overall, power sharing requires more than consultation. Genuine power sharing demands accessible and inclusive environments, trust, challenge, accountability, and sustained investment in lived experience leadership. When these conditions are in place people feel more confident, communities become stronger, and services are better able to respond to what matters most to people.

About the ALLIANCE Health and Social Care Academy

To achieve a society where people enjoy their right to live well with dignity and respect, we must bring people together to share our learning and identify solutions for a better future. That's why the ALLIANCE's Academy programme offers a safe space for collaborative thinking, the sharing of evidence, and promoting the voice of lived experience, with a focus on health and social care integration. Our work is underpinned by the Five Ambitions for the Future of Health and Care (the Ambitions), which show what we need for a fairer and more sustainable society. Everyone in Scotland deserves a future where their wellbeing is at the centre. The Ambitions shine a light on successful approaches, and spotlight what we can achieve when we work together.

About the ALLIANCE Integration Programme

The ALLIANCE Integration Support programme aims to increase the third sector's contribution to health and social care integration. As a team, we use our platform to promote and champion the role of the third sector and we play a role in ensuring the voice of lived experience is able to influence the design and delivery of integrated services.

About IFIC Scotland

In 2017, the University of the West of Scotland (UWS) established the International Centre for Integrated Care as a global centre of excellence in leading people-centred, integrated care, and as the home of IFIC in Scotland.

In 2020, IFIC and UWS refreshed their partnership and, with the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE), agreed to a new Memorandum of Understanding.

The three strategic partners bring their collective expertise to a shared mission:

Co-creating a healthier future with individuals and communities by developing courageous and compassionate leaders and practitioners with the knowledge, skills and confidence to design, deliver and evaluate people-centred integrated care.

Contact

If you wish to find out more about this event, or if you have any questions, please contact:

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About the ALLIANCE

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) is the national third sector intermediary for a range of health and social care organisations. We have a growing membership of over 3,600 national and local third sector organisations, associates in the statutory and private sectors, disabled people, people living with long term conditions and unpaid carers. Many NHS Boards, Health and Social Care Partnerships, Medical Practices, Third Sector Interfaces, Libraries and Access Panels are also members.

The ALLIANCE is a strategic partner of the Scottish Government and has close working relationships, several of which are underpinned by Memorandum of Understanding, with many national NHS Boards, academic institutions and key organisations spanning health, social care, housing and digital technology.

Our vision is for a Scotland where people of all ages who are disabled or living with long term conditions, and unpaid carers, have a strong voice and enjoy their right to live well, as equal and active citizens, free from discrimination, with support and services that put them at the centre.

The ALLIANCE has three core aims. We seek to:

- Ensure people are at the centre, that their voices, expertise and rights drive policy and sit at the heart of design, delivery and improvement of support and services.
- Support transformational change, towards approaches that work with individual and community assets, helping people to stay 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 better cross-sector understanding and partnership.

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