

Mental  
Health  
UK



# Mental Health UK Strategy

2026–2031



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# Introduction

## A new chapter for Mental Health UK: Our 2026–2031 Strategy

“Someone was always at the end of the phone to put me at ease.”

— Ali, Mental Health & Money Advice client

Facing redundancy, debt, and health challenges, Ali felt overwhelmed. When he reached out to Mental Health UK, we helped him secure the benefits he was entitled to, make informed decisions about his finances, and regain control of his life.

Ali's story is one of thousands. Every day, we stand alongside people navigating tough circumstances — managing debt, trying to find work, balancing a job while living with mental health challenges, or supporting a young person under pressure at school. Too often, they fall through the gaps between daily pressures and overstretched services.

We're also seeing the impact of poor mental health on employment more clearly than ever, with rising numbers of people unable to stay in work or struggling to enter the workforce — particularly young people facing increased pressure and uncertainty.

**This strategy sets out how we will respond — with practical, life-changing support at scale.**

Across the UK, many people still find it hard to get the support they need, when they need it, especially if they're also dealing with pressures like money worries, caring responsibilities, insecure work, or loneliness. At the same time, the cost of living is rising, public trust is falling, and vital services are under pressure. Demand for support is rising faster than services can keep up with, leaving too many people without appropriate help. Mental Health UK exists to fill the gap, providing accessible support at the moments that matter the most.

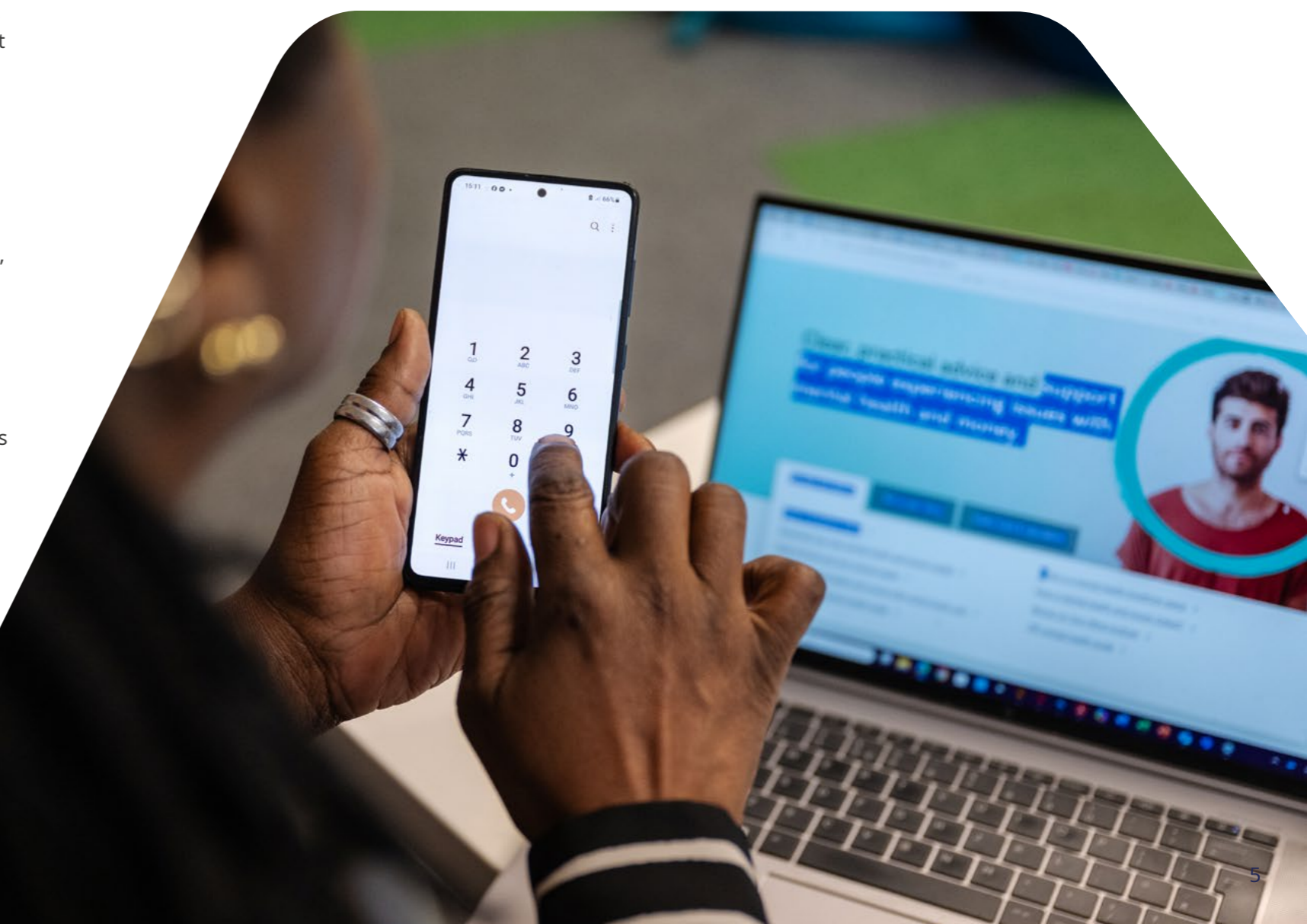
At Mental Health UK, we meet people where they are — at home, at school, and at work. Our work is both local and national, delivered through an alliance with our four founding charities — Rethink Mental Illness (England), Adferiad (Wales), Change Mental Health (Scotland), and MindWise (Northern Ireland).

This alliance is at the heart of who we are. It helps us spot new challenges early, test fresh ideas, and grow what works across all four nations — giving us national reach without losing local relevance. Our strength lies in deep insight, trusted relationships, and over 50 years of supporting people living with mental illness, poor mental health, and related challenges across the UK.

Mental health is part of daily life. Good mental health underpins strong communities, a productive economy, and the ability of people to thrive at every stage of life. Everyone has ups and downs, but with the right support, people can get through challenges and move forward. That means dealing with the real pressures that put mental health at risk, standing up for fairness, and making sure support truly fits people's lives.

This strategy builds on the success of our programmes and charts a course for what comes next. It lays the foundations to strengthen our approach, grow what works, and shape a future where everyone has the support they need to navigate life's challenges and unlock their potential.

**This isn't just a strategy about what we do now; it's about the change we want to see and how we'll make it happen, together.**





## A message from Brian Dow, CEO of Mental Health UK



### The world around us is changing fast. People are feeling it in their everyday lives: financial insecurity, rising inequality, and overstretched services are all taking a toll on mental health.

At Mental Health UK, we see this reality every day. We hear from people struggling to manage their mental health while holding onto work, navigating school, caring for family, or trying to make ends meet. And we see the difference that the right support can make.

We are seeing the impact of mental health on employment more clearly than ever. Too many people who want to work are held back by poor mental health and too many workplaces are not yet equipped to prevent burnout or support people to return safely after periods of ill-health. These rising numbers, particularly among young people, show the urgency of earlier intervention and more recovery-ready workplaces. These are challenges we understand deeply at Mental Health UK and we know we can make a meaningful contribution.

Our work is grounded in compassion and practicality. We work side by side with communities, partner with frontline services, and use real experiences to shape better support. We know life brings challenges, so our role is to help people find the right tools, get the right support, and build bridges to better outcomes.

This strategy is our response to the challenges we see — and the opportunities we believe in. It

sharpens our focus, amplifies our voice, and renews our commitment to reaching the people and places most often left without support.

### But we can't do it alone.

The scale of the mental health challenge means we need partners — funders, businesses, policymakers, and people with lived experience — to work with us. Together, we can grow new ideas, strengthen services, and reach those most often left without support.

We are proud of what we've achieved so far, but we know we must go further. With urgency, clarity, and heart, this strategy sets out the path ahead.

Good mental health is not just personal — it's the foundation of strong families, thriving communities, and a productive UK. If we fail to act now, we'll all pay the price later. That's why Mental Health UK is here: to stand alongside people with practical support, and to work with partners across the country so people can always get the right support when they need it.

Let's build a future where support is always within reach, and where people get the help they need to live well — whatever challenges they face.





## The case for change

**The UK is facing a pivotal moment in how we respond to mental health. Right now, more people than ever are struggling, and too many are going without the support they need.**



**Poor mental health costs the UK an estimated £117 billion a year<sup>1</sup> — but the real price is paid in people's lives, families, and communities. Every day, millions of people are dealing with rising living costs, overstretched services, insecure work, and growing inequality, all of which put huge strain on wellbeing.**

Too many people are left to cope alone without accessible, appropriate support — especially young people, women, and those on low incomes. One in five aged 8 to 25<sup>2</sup> now experiences a probable mental health condition, with most issues starting in the teenage years<sup>3</sup>. These are the people we prioritise — working with young people, women, and underserved communities to make sure no one is left to cope alone. This includes the 'hidden middle' — people who don't meet criteria for clinical support but live with stress, anxiety, or money worries that put them at risk of worsening mental health. Our programmes provide early, practical help before crisis point.

Meanwhile, over 2.5 million people of working age are out of work because of long-term sickness and more than half report depression, anxiety, or similar mental health issues<sup>4</sup>, highlighting the urgent need for approaches like our Into Work programme, which supports people to overcome barriers to find meaningful employment. Money problems also take a heavy toll: half of all adults with a debt problem also live with mental ill-health<sup>5</sup>, one of the clearest examples of how financial and mental health challenges reinforce each other.

Trust in services is falling, and many people feel lost in a system that doesn't always fit their lives. This moment calls for more than quick fixes. We need practical, long-term solutions that fit real life, shaped by people who use them.

Our 2026–2031 strategy is Mental Health UK's answer to this challenge. It reflects the world as it is and sets out a vision for how we believe it can be.

**We're committed to working alongside communities, programmatic and funding partners, and policymakers to drive change that's practical, inclusive, and grounded in real-life. Because if we don't act now, the cost to individuals, families, and society will continue to grow.**

# Who we are and where we make change happen

**Mental Health UK is a charity in its own right, and a UK-wide alliance of four national charities (one in each nation of the UK). Our alliance combines deep local knowledge with UK-wide reach — enabling us to test, adapt, and scale programmes while staying rooted in communities.**

We focus our work where mental health is most shaped: at home, in school, and at work — the places where real pressures and opportunities most affect our wellbeing. Whether it's money worries, school demands, or workplace stress, we help people in the moments that matter most.

### Across all settings, we:

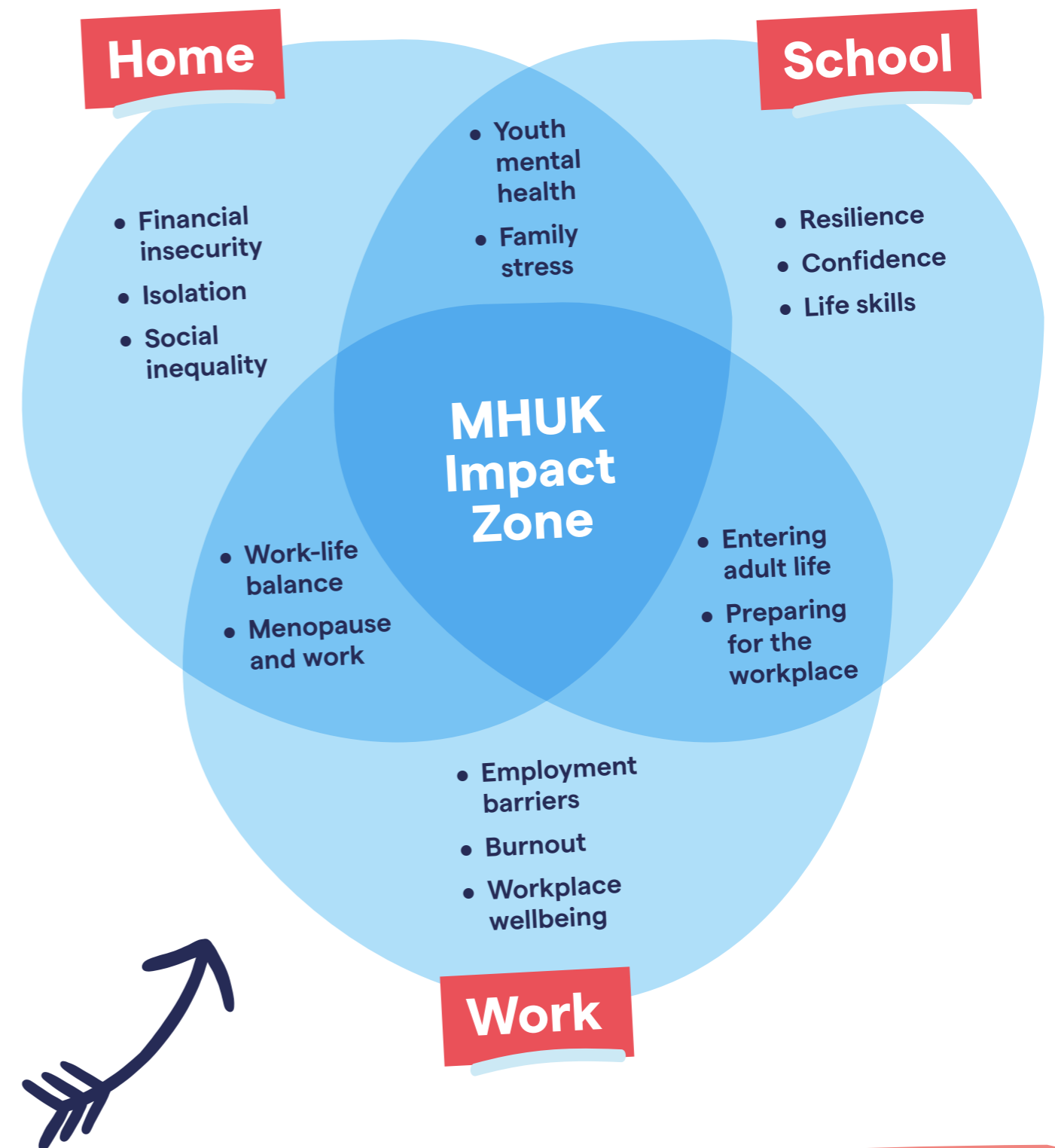
- **Build programmatic partnerships** with schools, employers, and communities to deliver support where it's needed the most.
- **Involve people with lived experience** in shaping and improving our work.
- **Share insights to shape better services** and long-term change.
- **Grow funding partnerships** with corporates, trusts, individuals and commissioners to make this sustainable.

We also recognise that we work within a wider and often overstretched mental health system. Our role is not to replace it, but to fill the gaps, connect people with support, and share learning so services work better for everyone. This means making sure people get help before things reach crisis point — often in settings where mental health support hasn't traditionally been found, such as debt advice or employment programmes.

Our programmes are grounded in our Cycle of Change: a model that starts with listening, builds solutions together, tests what works, and keeps improving through learning and influence. This model ensures that every programme, whether it's supporting young people, helping someone into work, or tackling financial stress, follows a consistent cycle of listening, co-designing, testing, and improving.

**To see how we turn our mission into action, there's a snapshot of our core programmes over the page.**

## Where we make change happen — MHUK's focus areas in every day life



# Our core programmes at a glance



## Mental Health & Money Advice

Trusted advice for people facing money worries and mental health challenges.

### What we do:

- Provide free, confidential advice via phone and digital platforms.
- Offer tools to help people manage debt, benefits, and budgeting.
- Influence creditors and regulators to better support vulnerable clients.

### Impact:

- In 2024–25, over 1 million people accessed support.
- £11 million in financial support outcomes.
- 89% reported improved wellbeing.

*“I finally felt listened to about my money worries.”*  
— Client

## Your Resilience

Helping young people (14–18) build confidence and practical coping skills

### What we do:

- Co-designed workshops with young people.
- Focus on stress management, peer support, and self-confidence.
- Target underserved communities where support is limited.

### Impact:

- Supported over 5,000 young people in 2024–25.
- 86% reported increased confidence in managing mental health.

*“Your Resilience stopped my daughter from needing CAMHS.”*  
— Parent

## Bloom

Equipping young people (14–18) with tools to manage mental health at school.

### What we do:

- Deliver workshops in schools through trained facilitators.
- Build resilience and coping strategies for everyday pressures.
- Provide teacher training for sustainable in-school delivery.

### Impact:

- Supported over 500,000 young people to date.
- 78% felt better prepared for life's challenges.
- 5,000+ teachers trained across the UK.

*“The Bloom training helped my pupils cope with exam stress.”*  
— Teacher, Wales

## Me & Money

Helping young people (14–18) connect money and mental health early.

### What we do:

- Teach financial and emotional education.
- Deliver workshops and digital resources shaped by young people.
- Build confidence in managing money and reduce money-related anxiety.

### Impact:

- Piloted nationally in response to feedback from Bloom and Your Resilience.
- 74% of participants felt less stressed about money.

*“I feel calmer about money. I know where to start if I'm worried.”*  
— Young participant

## Workplace Mental Health & Training

Helping employers create mentally healthy workplaces.

### What we do:

- Deliver training for managers and staff on mental health awareness.
- Provide tools and resources to reduce burnout and sickness absence.
- Publish thought leadership such as the annual Burnout Report.

### Impact:

- Thousands trained each year.
- 90% of managers report greater confidence in supporting staff.

*“Reading your report, we changed our sickness policies.”*  
— HR Director

## Into Work

Supporting people with poor mental health into meaningful employment.

### What we do:

- Provide tailored employability coaching and training.
- Build confidence, skills, and pathways to work.
- Partner with employers to reduce stigma and create supportive workplaces.

### Impact:

- In 2024–25 pilot, 98% reported improved wellbeing.
- 45% moved into work or volunteering.

*“Into Work gave me hope when I'd lost it. Now I go to work, I have a team, I feel human again.”*  
— Client

## Women's Mental Health

Developing approaches across life stages, shaped by lived experience.

### What we do:

- Co-produce resources with women who've experienced challenges.
- Focus areas include perinatal health, menopause, and unpaid caregiving.
- Build advice, awareness campaigns, and pilot services.

### Impact:

- Emerging strand of work with dedicated lived experience groups.
- Early pilots show positive impact on confidence and peer support.

*“Being part of the women's group gave me a voice. I wasn't alone.”*  
— Participant

At the heart of our work is a simple belief: life's pressures can deeply affect mental health — and we're here to make sure support is within reach.

## Our vision

A future where good mental health is a shared priority, and everyone has the tools and support they need to live well and get through life's challenges.

## Our mission

We make sure people get the support they need to look after their mental health and unlock their potential — at home, at school, and at work.

## Our values

### Collaboration

We achieve more together.

### Equity

We focus on those most affected and challenge inequality.

### Innovation

We try new things and grow what works.

### Impact

We measure what matters and focus on making a real difference.

### Lived experience

We listen, learn, and co-design with people who've been there.



# How we work

a practical, proven approach

Our work is anchored in five thematic areas — Money, Employment, Young People, Advice & Information, and Women’s Mental Health. These themes act as the lenses through which we identify need, design and deliver programmes, and measure impact. They ensure our programmes are focused where we can create the greatest change, while giving us the flexibility to respond to emerging challenges across the UK.

Across all themes mental health is shaped by where we live, learn, and work. In each setting, we use our Cycle of Change — a simple but powerful way of turning insight into action, and local learning into national impact.



# Understanding the challenge ahead

The next five years will bring big external pressures that shape how we deliver and grow our impact. From insecure work to rising costs, these factors can put more strain on people's mental health and stretch the support systems they rely on.

At Mental Health UK, the first step is to name these challenges clearly. They are exactly what our strategy is designed to tackle. Each one also presents an opportunity to demonstrate our relevance and impact.

## 1. Challenges facing people and communities (beneficiaries)

- **Barriers to accessing fulfilling and sustainable work:** Many people want to work but face real barriers — from a lack of opportunities, to support that doesn't fit their needs. This is why our workplace interventions are vital to building confidence and tackle stigma.
- **Economic pressures:** Rising living costs and limited public funding are driving more demand for support. We're focusing on sustainability — by building long-term funding partnerships and scaling models that reach more people.
- **Public trust and system fragmentation:** Services often feel overwhelming or inaccessible. Our role is to act as a bridge — connecting people with the right support, and using lived experience and local insights to improve services.

## 2. Challenges facing Mental Health UK (infrastructure and delivery)

- **Workforce pressures and burnout:** Like the wider health and care sector, our staff and delivery partners are under pressure. We are committed to supporting staff wellbeing across our alliance.
- **Policy and political shifts:** Changing political priorities can affect funding and mental health support. Through our influencing work, we will make sure lived experience and evidence remain at the heart of national conversations.

Through all of this, we remain committed to adapting with clarity and compassion, while staying focused on impact.



# Our strategic objectives

Our four strategic objectives set the direction for the next five years. Each one is rooted in our Cycle of Change and brought to life through our alliance and programme delivery.

These objectives aren't abstract — they're about making a real difference in people's lives. Together, they provide a shared focus for our team, our alliance partners, and everyone who supports our work.



## Innovate

### Ambition

Create practical solutions that respond to real-life challenges like money worries, school pressures, and workplace burnout.

### What we'll do

- **Launch** two innovation pilots by 2028 (youth employment, workplace wellbeing, women's mental health).
- **Evaluate and refine** through a shared outcomes framework.
- **Scale** successful pilots nationally by 2030.

### Measures of success

- **Launch** two evidence-based priority pilots by 2028.
- **Comprehensive evaluations** and future plans completed by 2029.
- **At least one pilot** developed and scaled nationally by 2030.
- **Demonstrable improvements** for clients' wellbeing, financial security, or employment outcomes.

## Expand

### Ambition

Break down barriers so more people — especially in underserved communities — can access inclusive support.

### What we'll do

- **Strengthen and sustain** proven programmes, focusing on financial wellbeing, young people, and workplace support.
- **Build local partnerships** and expand digital delivery so support is accessible where and when people need it.
- **Adapt models** to better support young people moving into employment.

### Measures of success

- **Ensure that 1 million people** each year benefit from our information, tools, and support for the duration of this strategy.
- **Aim to ensure** 40–50% of people supported are from underserved communities.
- **Maintain a general improved** wellbeing and/or access rate of 70%.
- **By 2031, develop and embed** a dedicated pathway for youth employment support, integrated across our Into Work and Young People's programmes.

## Evolve

### Ambition

Build a culture of learning, inclusion, and innovation across our programmes and alliance.

### What we'll do

- **Embed lived experience** into all new programme design.
- **Strengthen staff** and partner capacity in equity, inclusion, and innovation.
- **Share learning** consistently across our alliance and with partners so what works in one place benefits all.

### Measures of success

- **100% of new programmes** will be co-designed with people with lived experience by early 2026.
- **By 2029, lived experience insights** will have been used to effectively scale and develop existing programmes, with enhanced delivery.
- **All programmes** will integrate lived experience insight on an ongoing basis, with year-on-year improvements in equity of access and outcomes.

## Influence

### Ambition

Use lived experience and programme learning to influence services, policy, and practice across the UK.

### What we'll do

- **Share frontline insights** with policymakers, commissioners, and employers.
- **Publish flagship thought leadership pieces**, including the annual Burnout Report, to shape national debate.
- **Build alliances** to advocate for system change in employment, financial wellbeing, and young people's support.

### Measures of success

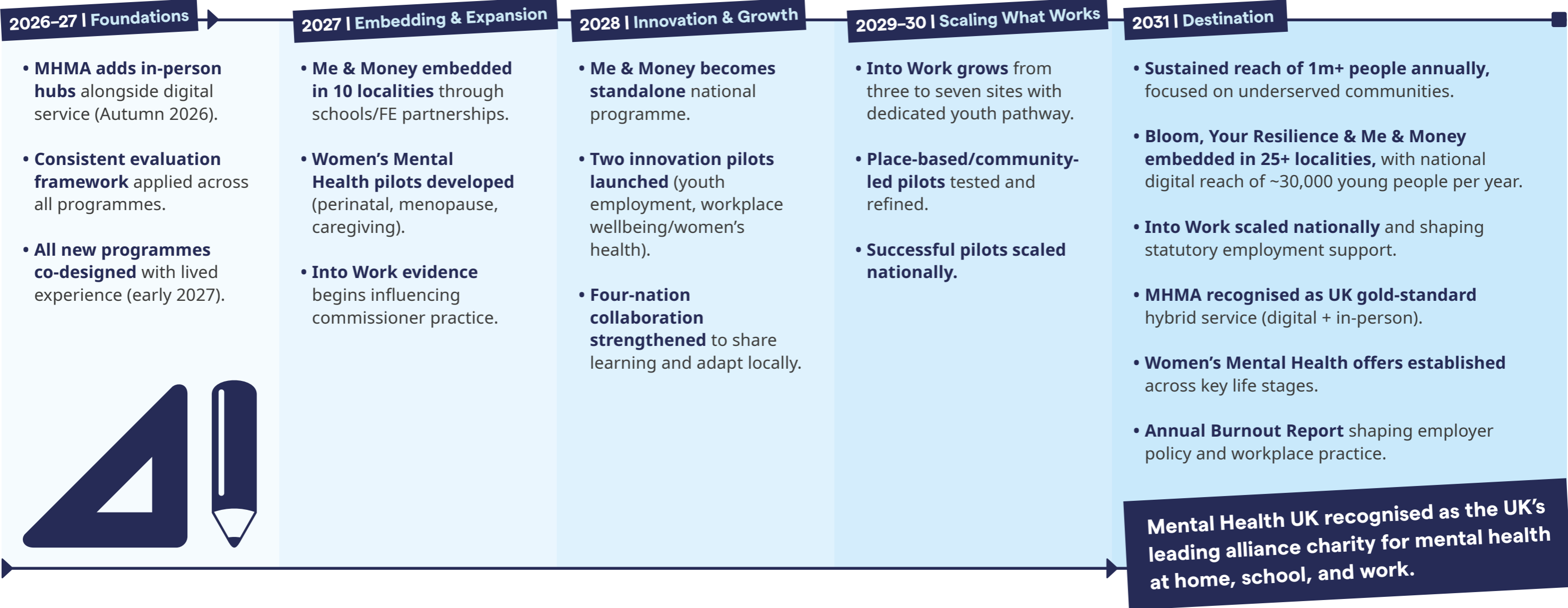
- **Programme insights** cited in national consultations.
- **Policy commitments** secured at UK/nation level.
- **Annual flagship reports** published and adopted by employers, funders, or policymakers.

# Bringing our strategy to life

The timeline below illustrates our path from now to 2031. It shows the progression:

- Foundations** (laying the groundwork)
- Embedding** (strengthening and expanding proven programmes)
- Innovation** (piloting new ideas)
- Scaling** (growing what works)
- Destination** (achieving national impact by 2031)

These are examples of the milestones we will deliver — a way of showing how strategy translates into action, year by year.





# Year one: Laying the groundwork for growth

The first year of our strategy is about laying the groundwork for long-term impact. It's a year for strengthening what works, deepening our partnerships, and creating the right conditions for innovation and growth. We'll focus on three priorities:

## 1. Consolidate and strengthen

We'll review and refine our existing programmes, so they stay effective, scalable, and rooted in real-life needs. This includes:

- Reviewing and improving our current delivery models.
- Building stronger relationships with local partners and underserved communities.
- Prioritising long-term, sustainable funding to support future growth.

## 2. Build infrastructure and capability

To support future growth, we'll invest in the people, systems, and tools that power our work. In year one, we will:

- **Strengthen capacity** around evaluation, co-production, and digital delivery.
- **Grow the role of equity and lived experience** in programme design, delivery, and governance.
- **Create ways to measure learning** and track progress against our objectives.
- **Map our data systems** and address the biggest gaps in collection and reporting.
- **Strengthen baseline metrics** and tracking for each strategic objective, ensuring consistent measurement across all programmes.
- **Build shared learning systems** so programme insights are collected and used across the alliance.

## 3. Set the stage for innovation

We'll lay the groundwork for testing and scaling new approaches. This includes:

- **Identify opportunities for new pilots** through research and community insight.
- **Strengthen** the way we test and evaluate new ideas.
- **Create** the space, tools, and partnerships needed to innovate at scale.

By the end of Year One, we will be able to demonstrate stronger programme delivery, strengthen baseline data, and the foundations in place to test and grow new ideas at scale.





# Sustaining our impact

**Delivering this strategy will take more than ambition. It needs long-term, sustainable funding — so we grow what works, invest in people and systems, and reach communities where support is often missing.**

At Mental Health UK, we go beyond funding requests — we build strategic relationships that align with our mission and create lasting impact. Our funding model rests on three commitments:

## 1. Diverse and balanced income

We will continue to grow a balanced portfolio of income streams, including charitable trusts and foundations, corporate partnerships, individuals, public fundraising and donations, and sustainable statutory funding sources. This approach ensures resilience and flexibility, helping us remain agile in a changing funding landscape.

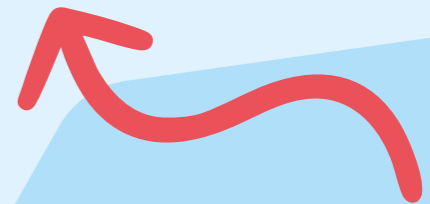
## 2. Mission-aligned funding partnerships

We work closely with partners to co-create, deliver, and evaluate high-impact programmes that make a difference. Our award-winning collaboration with Lloyds Banking Group, for example, has helped over a million people through Mental Health & Money Advice. Our partnership with Bank of America supported us to pilot Into Work, helping people with mental health challenges find and stay in employment.

We know funders want to see meaningful outcomes, and we are committed to demonstrating the value, insight, and long-term impact their support makes.

## 3. Investment in impact and innovation

We put funding behind ideas that work, and scale them carefully. That means investing in both proven programmes and in new approaches that respond to emerging need. Whether it's developing services for women's mental health or improving digital access, we use insight and evidence to guide investment and measure outcomes.



# What will help us succeed:

## Our key enablers

**We know that delivering this strategy is not just about the programmes we run — it's about the values and conditions that underpin everything we do. At the heart of this is our commitment to being an anti-racist organisation.**

**We actively challenge discrimination, bias, and structural inequality within Mental Health UK and across the systems we seek to influence. This commitment shapes how we design programmes, collaborate with partners, and involve communities.**

Alongside this, our ability to succeed depends on five key enablers that create the conditions for growth and lasting change:

**1. Inclusion and participation** — involving people with lived experience and removing barriers so every voice is heard.

**2. Evidence-informed practice** — using data, research, and insight to guide decisions and demonstrate impact.

**3. Partnerships** — working with our four-nation charities and cross-sector partners to maximise reach and influence.

**4. Sustainability** — building financial resilience, strong governance, and ways of working that protect staff and programmes.

**5. Data and Technology** — making support more accessible, personalised, and ethical through digital innovation.

**These commitments and enablers ensure our strategy is not just ambitious, but achievable — and that we remain accountable to the people and communities we serve.**



# Partnering for impact



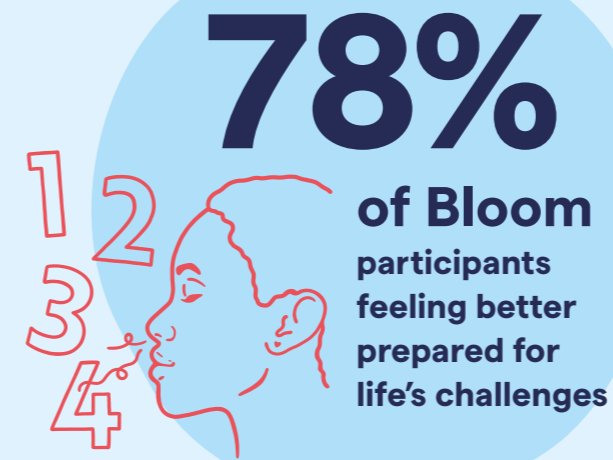
We know lasting change in mental health takes more than a single programme — it takes a movement of people and organisations ready to imagine a better future.

At Mental Health UK, we've built a trusted model that combines real-world insight, innovation, and national reach. But we also know we can't do this alone. To achieve the vision set out in this strategy, we need to work in partnership with funders, businesses, policymakers, communities, and people with lived experience.

Together, we can create a UK where mental health is supported at every stage of life, and where no one is left behind because of their background or circumstances.

## Why funders partner with us:

- **Proven impact:** Over 500,000 young people supported through our resilience programmes and £11 million delivered in financial outcomes via Mental Health & Money Advice.



- **Scalable delivery model:** Our UK-wide alliance enables us to grow programmes nationally while staying rooted in local needs.
- **Award-winning partnerships:** We've co-created programmes with partners like Lloyds Banking Group and Bank of America.

- **Influential insights:** Our frontline insights shape national conversations — for example, through our annual Burnout Report.
- **Demonstrating impact:** We track outcomes consistently so funders can see the impact of every pound invested — from 78% of Bloom participants feeling better prepared for life's challenges, to 98% of Into Work participants reporting improved wellbeing and 45% moving into work or volunteering.



Over **500,000** young people supported through our resilience programmes



**£11 million** delivered in financial outcomes via Mental Health & Money Advice



# Join us

**The scale of the UK's mental health challenge calls for bold, collaborative action. Mental Health UK is ready to deliver this strategy, but we need partners who share our belief that everyone deserves the right support to live well.**

Backed by our unique and trusted alliance — Mental Health UK alongside four national charities with deep community roots — we offer partners the opportunity to make a difference nationally while staying rooted in local needs. Whether through funding programmes, shaping policy, or co-creating new solutions, you can play a vital role.

**If you share our vision, stand with us. Together, we can make sure everyone has the support they need — at home, at school, and at work. Let's build a UK where good mental health is part of daily life for everyone.**



## References

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# Thank you

At Mental Health UK, we are deeply grateful to everyone who stands with us — fundraisers, volunteers, partners, and supporters. Your commitment makes it possible for us to be there when people need support most, and to shape lasting change for the future.

Together, we are giving people the tools to look after their mental health at home, at school, and at work — and helping more people find support that truly fits their lives.

You are not just supporting our work — you are part of it. None of this would be possible without you.

**Get in touch**

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