

Common 'rural idyll' misconceptions...

- Rural people live in supportive communities with beautiful surroundings, so are far more likely to feel good in themselves compared to urban residents.
- If you suffer from depression or anxiety going for a walk will make you feel better.
- Young people can connect online. It is older people who feel lonely.
- Choosing to live somewhere remote means you know not to expect the same level of access to services as people living nearer population centres.
- Rural communities do not face high levels of deprivation, and experience less of a problem with hate crime and discrimination.
- Everyone just 'mucks in' and volunteers their time to make rural communities work. .

These still shape attitudes and policy, preventing rural communities from maximizing opportunities to promote wellbeing. We need to focus on:

ACTING ON EVIDENCE

Scope current evidence and lived-experience to improve life chances and address factors that affect rural mental health.

BUILDING CONNECTIONS

Strengthen relationships between communities, the third, statutory and private sectors to address inequalities and ensure access to support and services.

PLACE MAKING

Invest in locally-led approaches that empower rural communities to build capacity and take action to support individuals' mental health and wellbeing priorities

Accordingly, we support the [Scottish Mental Health Partnership's Manifesto](#), and the call for increased funding to promote mental health & wellbeing over the forthcoming Parliamentary term. Government and public bodies' mental health policies must be **rural & island proofed** through consultation with communities at **all** stages. We propose:

Supporting action research relating to:

- Rural community stressors and resilience factors with focus on young people's and marginalised groups' mental wellbeing.
- Social return on investment of hyperlocal community-led activities promoting community wellbeing
- Rural-specific framework for planning and monitoring mental wellbeing provision, aligning community, third and statutory services.
- Pilot full roll-out of Mental Health First Aid Training in different geographical rural and island communities
- Pilot an LGBT+ Visibility Project in different geographic communities
- Test local approaches to strengthening collaboration between rural private, third-sector and statutory providers.
- Working in partnership with the Highlands and Islands Connections Project to develop community-led Covid recovery plans.
- Work with the Development Trusts Association Scotland and others to develop a 'conversation' campaign to build Anchor Organisations' capacity to make mental wellbeing an integral part of Local Place/Development Plans
- Work with land-based organisations to bring learning from current mental health and wellbeing initiatives to Scotland.