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Inspire response to *Call for Evidence – Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Model of Care*

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Overview

Inspire is an all-Ireland charity and social enterprise. Working alongside people living with mental ill health, intellectual disabilities, autism and addiction, our vision is wellbeing for all. We ensure that those we support live with dignity and realise their full potential.

Our person-centred, whole-society approach means that we believe in a culture of compassion, creating a community free from stigma and focusing on individuals and their abilities. We are driven by these core values:

- **We are Inclusive:** We put the people who use our services first
- **We are Passionate:** We believe in what we do
- **We are Determined:** We find a way
- **We are Kind:** We care about each other
- **We are Honest:** We act with integrity
- **We are Innovative:** We nurture new ideas

Inspire delivers a full range of support and therapeutic services. Through our supported housing and community wellbeing and addiction services, Inspire works in communities throughout Ireland. Our social enterprise, Lena by Inspire, provides employee and student support to hundreds of organisations across the island.

Introduction

Inspire welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this call for evidence and share examples of the neighbourhood health initiatives that we deliver throughout Northern Ireland. Our approach is rooted in promoting wellbeing for all within communities and supporting individuals to lead fulfilling lives, reflecting the organisation's commitment to wellbeing. However, we are concerned about the limited engagement around co-production of the model. It seems as if decisions have been made around delivery mechanisms, geographical locations to be included and areas of care. We would also note that there is very limited information on the priority areas in this call for evidence.

This response has taken care to present a broad range of evidence that reflects the diversity and impact of our work. This includes examples from our **community wellbeing services, supported living services, advocacy services, floating support and community-based counselling and therapeutic services.**

Together, these initiatives demonstrate that we have worked collaboratively to strengthen neighbourhood health, reduce inequalities and empower people.

We have also outlined Inspire's community-based and person-centred services. Each year, in partnership with our statutory colleagues, we deliver tens of thousands of episodes of care. We recently commissioned Oxford Economics to quantify independently the value of the services we provide. Preliminary findings show that *'every £1 of Inspire funding saved £5.10 in NHS costs.'*

Our Vision for the Neighbourhood Model of Care

At Inspire, we want to see a neighbourhood model of person-centred, community-based care. Such support should be accessible, inclusive and responsive to local needs. It should seek to reduce health inequalities and empower individuals as they take control of their wellbeing.

This means investing in preventative services, strengthening partnerships between statutory and voluntary/community organisations and creating environments where people can thrive physically, mentally and socially.

It must be underpinned by sustainable funding, collaborative planning and a commitment to early intervention and holistic care.

There are certain fundamental building blocks of success for the proposed model that we have not seen addressed in consultation so far:

- Disparities in **investment in workforce capacity** and development in the voluntary and community sector. This is a vital element for success and a key component of the Mental Health Strategy that remains unmet. We have, at the time of writing, just learned that the Minister of Health's commitment to paying independent-sector social care workers the real living wage will not be met. This leaves our staff undervalued and demoralised, compounding recruitment and retention issues across social care. It will be impossible to effect 'full integration of the community and voluntary sector' while this issue remains unresolved.
- We must harness the **potential presented by technology** to ensure seamless data sharing across providers. A robust, solution-focused approach to technology can allow multiple organisations to work together and provide genuine person-centred care – a critical component of a successful new model.
- A model **focused primarily on physical health and wellbeing is not holistic**. It will do little to address the current unacceptable level of health inequalities of our population. Instead, it is likely to compound existing budgetary inequalities between the mental and physical health. A neighbourhood model must focus on the **wellbeing, ability and recovery** of all people, families and communities, with specific focus on individuals most in need of services but least likely to access them.

At Inspire, our model of **wellbeing, ability and recovery** incorporates:

- **Community wellbeing services** as a foundation for promoting mental health, resilience and social connection within communities.
- **Supported living** as a core component, offering compassionate, cost-effective alternatives to institutional care and enabling people to thrive.
- **Advocacy** for all, regardless of background or diagnosis, to ensure that individuals can shape the support they receive and experience safe, equitable care.
- **Floating support** as a practical, personalised approach that keeps people well and connected in their own homes.
- Locally embedded **community counselling and therapeutic services** that provide rapid access to mental health support, prevent escalation and build resilience.

Examples of Best Practise

Mental Health – Supported Living Services

Our mental health supported living services provide a vital bridge between hospital-based care and independent living. This approach enables those with enduring mental health needs to live safely and meaningfully within their communities.

These services are grounded in the principles of recovery, autonomy and inclusion, aligning closely with the aims of neighbourhood care by delivering personalised, trauma-informed support in community-based settings.

Inspire's supported living model offers 24/7 or tailored support to individuals transitioning from long-stay wards, acute mental health units and unstable housing. Our services are designed to promote stability, reduce hospital readmissions and empower individuals in taking control of their recovery journeys.

Support is delivered in shared or individual tenancies. It includes:

- Daily living skills and tenancy management
- Emotional and psychological support
- Medication adherence and health appointments
- Social inclusion and community engagement
- Vocational and educational pathways
- Advocacy and safeguarding support

Our supported living teams work in close partnership with:

- Community mental health teams (CMHTs)

- GPs and primary care providers
- Housing associations and local councils
- VCSE organisations and peer networks
- Crisis response and safeguarding services

This collaborative approach ensures continuity of care, early intervention and a holistic response to the social determinants of health.

Outcomes and Impact

- Sustained tenancies and reduced risk of homelessness
- Improved mental health and recovery outcomes
- Reduced reliance on emergency and inpatient services
- Increased engagement with community-based health and wellbeing services
- Enhanced independence, confidence and quality of life
- Positive feedback from residents, families and professionals

Lessons Learned

- Community-based supported living reduces pressure on acute services and improves long-term outcomes
- Trauma-informed, person-centred care is essential to recovery
- Cross-sector collaboration enhances service delivery and continuity
- Stable housing is a foundation for health, wellbeing and social inclusion
- Staff wellbeing and reflective practice are critical to sustainable care

Inspire believes that supported living must be recognised as a core component of neighbourhood care. It offers a compassionate, cost-effective and empowering alternative to institutional care, enabling people to thrive in the heart of their communities.

House 10 – A Model of Relocation and Recovery

House 10 is a supported living service designed to provide safe and stable accommodation to individuals experiencing significant mental health challenges. The service was established to facilitate the transition of individuals with enduring mental health needs from long-stay wards within the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust into community-based supported living, promoting recovery, independence and social inclusion. The service is embedded within the local community and operates in partnership with statutory mental health teams, housing providers and voluntary sector organisations.

Our model focuses on relocation with purpose, supporting individuals to transition from hospital, institutional care or unstable housing into a therapeutic environment that promotes recovery, autonomy and social inclusion.

Key Features of the Inspire Model at House 10

- Trauma-informed support: all staff are trained in trauma-informed practice, reflective supervision and de-escalation techniques. This ensures that care is delivered with empathy, safety and consistency.
- Person-centred planning: each resident co-produces a recovery plan tailored to their goals, strengths and needs. Plans include access to mental health services, physical health checks, social activities and vocational pathways.
- Integrated partnerships: House 10 works closely with CMHTs, GPs, social workers and housing officers to ensure continuity of care and timely interventions. This reduces reliance on emergency services and prevents hospital readmissions.
- Community connection: residents are supported to engage with local services, volunteer opportunities and peer networks. This builds resilience, reduces isolation and strengthens neighbourhood ties.
- Staff wellbeing and development: Inspire invests in staff wellbeing through supervision, training and reflective practice. This enhances service quality and supports workforce retention.

Impact and Outcomes

- Reduced hospital admissions and crisis interventions
- Improved medication adherence and engagement with primary care
- Enhanced wellbeing scores among residents
- Positive feedback from families, professionals and residents
- Stronger community links and reduced stigma

Lessons Learned

- Relocation must be trauma-informed and paced to individual readiness
- Community-based models require strong cross-sector collaboration
- Staff training and development is critical to sustaining high-quality care
- Housing is not just shelter; it's a foundation for recovery

House 10 demonstrates how neighbourhood-based mental health support can deliver meaningful outcomes for individuals, communities and the wider health system. Inspire is committed to expanding this model and working with partners to embed it within the future neighbourhood care framework.

Community Wellbeing Services

Our community wellbeing services operate across multiple neighbourhoods in Northern Ireland and are built on the following principles:

- Accessibility: services are delivered in familiar, non-clinical settings such as community hubs, community centres and local facilities.
- Early intervention: individuals can self-refer or be signposted by GPs, social workers or community partners, permitting pre-crisis support.
- Trauma-informed practice: staff are trained to recognise and respond to trauma, thus fostering safe and empowering environments.
- Whole-person support: we address mental health, physical wellbeing, social connection and practical needs through integrated planning.
- Partnership working: we collaborate with GP federations, health and social care trusts, local authorities and VCSE organisations to ensure continuity of care and shared outcomes.
- Stepped care: Inspire operates within a stepped care framework, supporting individuals to move both upward and downward through established referral pathways, based on their changing needs.

Impact and Outcomes

Our community wellbeing services have demonstrated measurable benefits aligned with the neighbourhood care model:

- Demonstrated improvements in overall health and emotional wellbeing
- Progress toward personalised recovery goals and increased self-efficacy
- Decreased demand on GP services and emergency care through timely, community-based interventions
- Greater participation in preventative health initiatives, including screening and immunisation programmes
- Strengthened community resilience fostered through peer-led support, volunteering and local partnerships
- Consistently positive feedback from service users and their families, as well as from referring professionals

Advocacy Services

Our advocacy services are embedded within communities, supported living environments and statutory care settings. We work alongside individuals with mental ill health, learning disabilities, addiction challenges and complex social needs to foster autonomy, dignity and inclusion.

Inspire's HSCT Advocacy Model

- Person-centred support: advocates work directly with individuals to help them understand their rights, navigate services and participate fully in important decisions about their care and support.
- Early intervention: advocacy is often the first point of contact for individuals facing safeguarding concerns, breakdowns in communication with providers and barriers to access.

- Community-based delivery: services are delivered in familiar, non-clinical settings, including community hubs, supported housing and local outreach points. Direct support is also provided in hospital settings.
- Partnership working: Inspire collaborates with health and social care trusts, VCSE organisations, housing providers and safeguarding teams to ensure that advocacy is integrated into care pathways.
- Safeguarding and rights protection: advocates play a critical role in identifying and responding to safeguarding issues, ensuring that individuals are protected and supported through appropriate channels.

Advocacy for All

Advocacy for All worked alongside individuals, families and service providers to uphold rights, challenge inequality and promote person-centred decision making. Our advocates operated within communities, hospitals, supported living settings and care homes. As a result, people are able to access support close to home and within familiar environments.

We helped people to:

- Navigate health and social care systems
- Understand their rights and options
- Participate meaningfully in care planning and reviews
- Raise concerns or complaints safely
- Access safeguarding and mental health protections

Our advocacy model is built on collaboration with:

- Health and social care trusts
- VCSE organisations
- GP federations and community teams
- Housing and support providers
- Local government and safeguarding bodies

These partnerships enable us to respond quickly to emerging needs and reduce barriers to access. Advocacy is, therefore, available at key transition points, such as hospital discharge, relocation or changes in care provision.

Impact and Outcomes

- Increased engagement in care planning and service reviews
- Improved understanding of rights and entitlements among service users
- Reduced escalation of concerns through early resolution and mediation
- Enhanced safeguarding outcomes and protection of vulnerable individuals
- Positive feedback from individuals, families, and professionals

Inspire is committed to expanding access to independent advocacy and ensuring that every person, whatever their background or diagnosis, has the opportunity to shape the support they receive. We believe that advocacy is essential to delivering safe, equitable and person-centred neighbourhood care.

Floating Support

Our floating support services provide flexible, person-centred support to individuals living independently in the community, many of whom are facing significant challenges, from complex mental illness and addiction issues to social isolation.

These services are key to constructing a community-based model. They align closely with the principles of neighbourhood care by offering the kind of tailored support that promotes independence, prevents crisis and strengthens connections.

Inspire's floating support services are designed to help individuals maintain their tenancies, improve their wellbeing and build the confidence that they need to grow and prosper. Shaped by a person's goals, preferences and evolving needs, support is delivered in people's homes or in community settings.

Key areas of support include:

- Mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Budgeting and managing finances
- Accessing health and social care services
- Building social networks and reducing isolation
- Navigating housing, social security and tenancy issues
- Promoting safety, self-care and daily living skills

Our floating support teams work closely with:

- Housing Executive – Supporting People
- Health and social care trusts
- GP practices and community mental health teams
- VCSE organisations and local councils

This collaborative approach guarantees co-ordinated, wraparound support relating to both clinical and social determinants of health.

Outcomes and Impact

- Sustained tenancies and reduced risk of homelessness
- Improved mental health and self-management of long-term conditions
- Reduced use of emergency services and unplanned hospital admissions

- Increased engagement with preventative care and community services
- Greater independence, confidence, and social participation
- Positive feedback from service users, families and professionals

Lessons Learned

- Flexibility is key: support must adapt to individual needs and life changes
- Early intervention prevents crisis and reduces long-term costs
- Housing stability is foundational to health and wellbeing
- Strong local partnerships enhance outcomes and service continuity
- Community-based support builds trust, resilience and inclusion

Inspire believes that floating support should be recognised as a core element of neighbourhood care. It offers a practical and cost-effective way of delivering personalised support aimed at keeping people well.

Community-Based Counselling – Step 2

Inspire's Counselling Model

- **Accessibility:** services are delivered in suitable venues, such as wellbeing hubs and community centres. This aids in reducing stigma and boosting engagement.
- **Early intervention:** individuals can self-refer or be signposted by GPs, CMHTs, addiction services. This allows people to get the support they require before crises escalate.
- **Trauma-informed practice:** counsellors are trained to work sensitively with trauma, grief, addiction and complex mental health needs.
- **Short-term, goal-focused support:** sessions are structured to help individuals build coping strategies, improve emotional regulation and reconnect with daily life.
- **Integrated pathways:** we work closely with primary care, mental health, addiction teams and VCSE partners to ensure continuity and appropriate onward referral when needed.

Outcomes and Impact

- Improved emotional wellbeing and reduced psychological distress
- Increased engagement with preventative care and community services
- Reduction in alcohol/drug use
- Reduced demand on GP appointments and emergency services
- Enhanced recovery and resilience among individuals and families
- Positive feedback from service users, referrers and community partners
- Positive core outcome measures

Our counselling services are embedded within wider neighbourhood initiatives, including:

- Addiction and mental health services stepped care models
- Community wellbeing services
- GP-linked community support pathways
- Self-harm networks
- Suicide prevention and postvention networks
- Peer-led recovery and resilience groups

Lessons Learned

- Community-based counselling reduces barriers to access and stigma
- Early support prevents escalation and promotes long-term recovery
- Trauma-informed care must be standard across all neighbourhood models
- Collaboration across sectors enhances outcomes and service continuity
- Staff wellbeing and supervision are essential to sustainable delivery

Inspire is committed to expanding our community counselling provision and ensuring that it is embedded within the future neighbourhood care framework. We believe that increased accessibility and localised mental health support are critical pillars of resilient communities and good population health. Having rapid access to therapeutic support reduces the need for higher tiered interventions. In addition, harnessing the skills in our therapeutic workforce could deliver significant positive outcomes.

Drink Wise, Age Well (stood down in 2021)

Our Drink Wise, Age Well programme offered a targeted, community-based approach to supporting individuals aged 50 and over who are affected by alcohol use, whether through personal experience, family impact or broader social challenges.

This programme, which is rooted in the principles of prevention, early intervention and recovery, aligns closely with the goals of neighbourhood care by addressing the complex interplay between physical health, mental wellbeing, social isolation and substance use in later life.

Programme Overview

Drink Wise, Age Well is delivered via local partnerships and outreach teams. It provides tailored support to older adults through:

- One-to-one support: confidential, non-judgmental guidance for individuals concerned about their drinking or its impact on their wellbeing
- Group work and peer support: facilitated sessions that promote connection, reduce stigma and build recovery capital
- Community outreach: engagement in local venues such as libraries, community centres and GP practices to reach individuals who may not access traditional services

- Training and awareness: delivery of age-sensitive alcohol awareness training to professionals, carers and community groups
- Advocacy and signposting: helping individuals navigate health, housing and social care systems to access the support they need

Outcomes and Impact

- Improved physical and mental wellbeing among participants
- Reduced alcohol-related harm and hospital admissions
- Increased engagement with preventative health services
- Enhanced social connection and reduced isolation
- Greater awareness of age-related alcohol issues among professionals and communities
- Positive feedback from service users, families and referring agencies

Lessons Learned

- Age-sensitive approaches are fundamental to effective alcohol support
- Community-based delivery reduces stigma and improves access
- Peer support strengthens recovery and community resilience
- Prevention and education must be prioritised in neighbourhood models
- Integrated care pathways improve outcomes and reduce duplication

Intellectual Disability and Autism Services – Supported and Residential Living

Our supported living and residential services align with the principles of neighbourhood care by offering person-centred care and support in a community setting that is designed to promote independence, inclusion and wellbeing. They work closely with health and social care trusts, housing providers, families and community organisations.

Service Models

Support is delivered in shared or individual tenancies and includes:

- Focus on daily living skills, emotional wellbeing, health management and community engagement/involvement
- Support plans that reflect individual goals, preferences and communication needs
- Staff trained in areas such as positive behaviour support (PBS) and safeguarding

Residential Services

- Provide 24/7 care and support for individuals with complex needs

- Ensures stability, safety and meaningful engagement
- Supported by multi-disciplinary teams

Both service models work with:

- Health and social care trusts (LD teams, community nursing, psychiatry, PBS, etc.)
- Housing Executive, HAs – Supporting People
- Advocacy organisations
- Families and carers
- Community groups

Outcomes and Impact

- Sustained tenancies
- Improved physical and mental health outcomes
- Increased independence
- Reduced reliance on inpatient and emergency services
- Positive feedback from individuals, families and professionals