

The logo for 'mylife dynamic' is set within a white circle. The word 'mylife' is written in a teal, lowercase, sans-serif font, and 'dynamic' is written below it in a magenta, lowercase, sans-serif font. The background of the circle is filled with a pattern of small, multi-colored dots in shades of teal, yellow, and blue.

# EVALUATION REPORT

## Executive Summary

My Life Dynamic (MLD) supports people with mental health issues and autism across Aberdeenshire and is delivered by SAMH (Scottish Association for Mental Health).

My Life Dynamic prides itself on challenging the traditional model of mental health services and SAMH believe that people are able to live their lives fully, regardless of present or past circumstances. The service helps people identify their skills, aspirations and challenges in order to develop options and strategies to move forward. All of the support offered is time-limited and recovery-focused.

Since it was established in 2017, My Life Dynamic has supported over 1200 individuals to achieve their desired outcomes.

In 2020 My Life Dynamic commissioned Iconic Consulting to conduct an independent evaluation of the service. Research was undertaken between March and June 2020 and involved speaking to staff, stakeholders and people who have accessed the service previously. This Executive Summary is taken from the full My Life Dynamic Report that assesses implementation and impact of My Life Dynamic.

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## Our Impact

MLD service users reported improvement on all 28 outcomes statements following their their initial assessments.

The majority of service users who completed the survey reported improvements in their ability to self-manage their mental health and wellbeing, their resilience, their feeling of empowerment, and how hopeful they were for the future.

***“Incredibly freeing to have someone to listen and acknowledge the difficulties going on. Being treated without judgement while given the tools to work through my issues allowed me to feel stronger in every way. Certainly could use some more work but have come far.”***

- MLD service user

***“I managed to get a job which I had been really struggling with for about two years. It has really helped me with seeing myself in a different way to how my ex-employer saw me and I was able to build enough confidence to get an interview and I was offered the job on the spot.”***

- MLD service user

The majority of staff (83%) and stakeholders (71%) agreed that MLD is helping people meet their individual goals.

***“If we didn’t have SAMH it is likely that folk are going to come to us (CMHT) in the long run. To have the option to signpost people to them, that don’t meet our criteria, and can be supported is really important. It’s early intervention because if it wasn’t there people’s mental health would deteriorate. It is a great service.”***

- MLD stakeholder

Overall, the evaluation has shown it is a very valuable service that can point to strong evidence of its success in engaging a wide range of service users who have by and large benefitted from the support.

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## Referrals and waiting times

There has been a significant increase in the number of referrals to My Life Dynamic over the course of the contract with numbers increasing from 410 in 2017 to 860 in 2019.

Overall, the referral process was rated highly with 77% of staff and 61% of stakeholders rating it either 'excellent' or 'good'.

***"The process is quick and the team keep the referrer up to date which is really good for informing clients of their referral progress. I think the form could be done with updating just to make it more appealing but nothing major. The staff are great and have no issues".***

- MLD stakeholder

The length of waiting lists and times demonstrates a very strong level of demand for the service which SAMH is unable to meet with the present level of funding and configuration of available resources.

People who are added to the waiting list are provided with information on resources and services they can access while waiting to be seen by the service.

SAMH has an inclusive approach which has led to a very accessible service.

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## Service Users

My Life Dynamic has engaged services users of all ages within its target range of 16 to 65.

Fifty people have accessed My Life Dynamic services more than once, which is approximately 5% of all service users. The above figure is evidence that service users have been able to maintain their mental wellbeing without the need to re-connect with the service.

The majority of service users, staff and stakeholders rated the support available via My Life Dynamic for people with mental health problems and autism in Aberdeenshire as either 'excellent' or 'good'.

***"The service is empathetic, focused on people not illness, focused on recovery not management, and helps people to care for themselves better in future".***

- MLD staff

***"From my first call to get help to my meetings with the counsellor the staff were friendly, approachable and easy to speak to without judgement."***

- MLD service user

***“Fantastic service that truly meets the needs of its service users. The Resilience Coaches in particular do a fantastic job”.***

- MLD stakeholder

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## The Impact of Diverse Service Delivery

One of the defining features of My Life Dynamic is the availability of a range of delivery options. Delivery has benefitted, in our view, from the availability of several options within My Life Dynamic.

***“My Life Dynamic has so many different facets compared to other services where you might not quite fit in with what they are offering. It was super that I started off with the Resilience Coach and they said they’d move me over to the counselling. It gave you a sense that they really wanted to help. A feeling of support.”***

- MLD service user.

The majority of staff (83%) and stakeholders (69%) agreed that MLD improves people’s choice in relation to their recovery.

***“Look at the principles of My Life Dynamic. It is all about self-management and SAMH was ahead of the game. This is the type of service that SAMH has been banging on about for a long time. The strategy is only just catching up”.***

- MLD stakeholder

## The Listening Project

Staff and stakeholders rated The Listening Project highly with 94% of staff and 78% of stakeholders rating it ‘excellent’ or ‘good’.

***“Six sessions was enough for me at the time. Each session was quite exhausting in itself and I was in a much better place by the end of the six sessions. I got what I wanted out of it. The counsellor said if I needed more I could go back.”***

- MLD service user

We found evidence that the volunteers were well trained, have generally been allocated appropriate cases by the Counsellors, helped to increase the project’s capacity, and delivered valuable support to service users.

## HearME

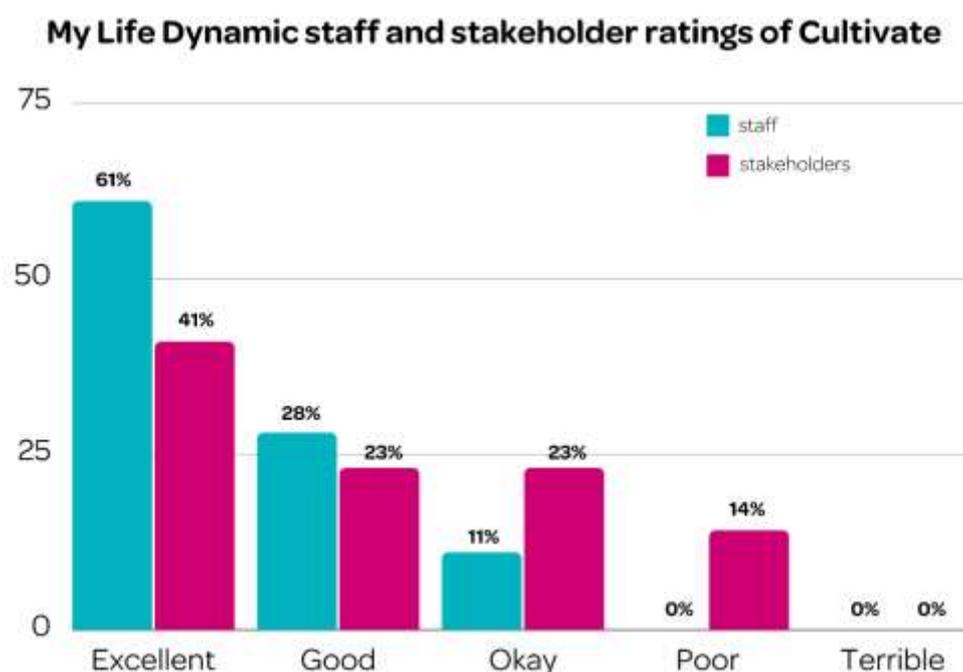
HearME was very highly regarded by staff and the majority of stakeholder.

***“He came across really well, in a way that people understand, rather than talking a load of jargon that nobody understands. If you’ve got people with mental health (problems) you’ve got to speak in such a manner that they understand you and not speak in gobbledegook.”***

- MLD service user

## Cultivate

Cultivate was rated highly by staff and the majority of stakeholders as shown below.



Discussions with the Cultivate team highlighted good links with a network of community growing spaces, gardens and allotments across Aberdeenshire from Inverbervie to Mintlaw.

***“I volunteer with a local community café. I organise a lot of stuff for them like quizzes. I’m feeling better in myself, I’ve come off my depression tablets and I was on them since 2009, the doctors are quite happy for me to come off them. I would say they (SAMH) did help with that, they motivated me right, in the right sort of way. There were times when I talked 1-2-1 with [Therapeutic Horticulture Practitioner] if something was bothering me and I’ve managed to sort things out that way. We used to do monthly meetings. It was through [Therapeutic Horticulture Practitioner] that I found out about the café. I became a full-time volunteer with them. I wasn’t too sure when they first asked, but I met them and we talked about it. I’ve also helped out within another place with their mental health week too. So I’m actually kept quite busy.”*** - MLD service user

## Resilience Coaching

Staff and stakeholder rated the resilience coaching highly with 89% of staff and 77% of stakeholders rating it 'excellent' or 'good'.

Our assessment of the coaching was very positive and the following strengths stood out:

- Goal-orientated – MLD had a very clear aim to focus on individual goals and the Resilience Coaches have helped the service meet this brief.
- Flexibility –The Coaches have [...] used a range of appropriate techniques and tools such as self-help books, worksheets, and thought records in supporting service users, as well as developing Resilience Action Plans which users can refer back to when their support ends.
- Triage –Coaches have fulfilled a very valuable role in assessing need and putting in place appropriate support for new service users [...] they have demonstrated an awareness of when the needs of the service user may be better met by other elements of MLD or other services entirely.

The following comments illustrate the gratitude and the impact of the Resilience Coaches work.

***“My sessions with [Resilience Coach] were life changing and I am so grateful for everything that was done for me and everything they helped me with. I wouldn't have changed anything about the sessions, they were all based around how I felt at the time rather than having a set plan which I would have panicked about. I really enjoyed my experience with My Life Dynamic and would definitely recommend it to anyone struggling with mental health or life in general.”***

- MLD service user

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## Improving Access: Support 'Where' You Need It

The peripatetic nature of MLD is one of its defining, and in our view, most impressive features. Eight out of ten service users rated this as 'extremely' or 'very useful'. Several service users also reported using community buildings rather than a venue known as a base for mental health services helped reduce stigma in accessing the service. The following comments illustrate some of these benefits.

***“Would have struggled to afford to attend sessions if they had been further away.”***

- MLD service user

***“A non-clinical setting local to me made for a more private relaxing meetings.”***

- MLD service user

82% of staff and 77% of stakeholders agreed it improves access to support for people

with mental health issues in Aberdeenshire.

***“The patients I have referred have voiced that they found the input valuable and were grateful for a service to take place in the Shire, rather than them having to make their way into the city, as many of them have anxiety or physical health issues which make this difficult.”***

- MLD stakeholder

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## Partnership Working: Making a Difference

Overall, 70% of stakeholders rated partnership working as ‘excellent’ or ‘good’. In addition, the majority of staff (65%) and stakeholders (59%) agreed MLD is working in collaboration with other mental health services in Aberdeenshire.

***“Every time I have had contact with anyone from MLD they've always been helpful, supportive and informed”***

- MLD stakeholder

There was a consensus among service users, staff and stakeholders that the length of time MLD support is available for appears to be ‘about right’.

***“I think the last person I referred saw their coach for 12 weeks and this was useful for them - knowing from the start it would be time limited and being supported to move on to their next steps.”***

- MLD stakeholder

***“The services are intended to have a time limit to promote a goal-focused approach and independence/self-management so having a clear timeframe with some room for flexibility to meet client needs is important to ensure that this approach is maintained with the long-term benefits.”***

- MLD staff

SAMH is also actively involved with Aberdeenshire Council’s Autism Strategic Outcomes Group and produced a report in July 2019 for the Group summarising My Life Dynamic’s support for people with autism. Additionally, SAMH contribute to the Mental Health Strategic Action Group facilitated by the Aberdeenshire Council.

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For more information on My Life Dynamic or to request the full report, visit <https://www.mylifedynamic.org.uk/>

SAMH is the Scottish Association for Mental Health.  
Scottish Charity No. SC008897  
Registered Office: Brunswick House, 51 Wilson Street, Glasgow G1 1UZ  
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