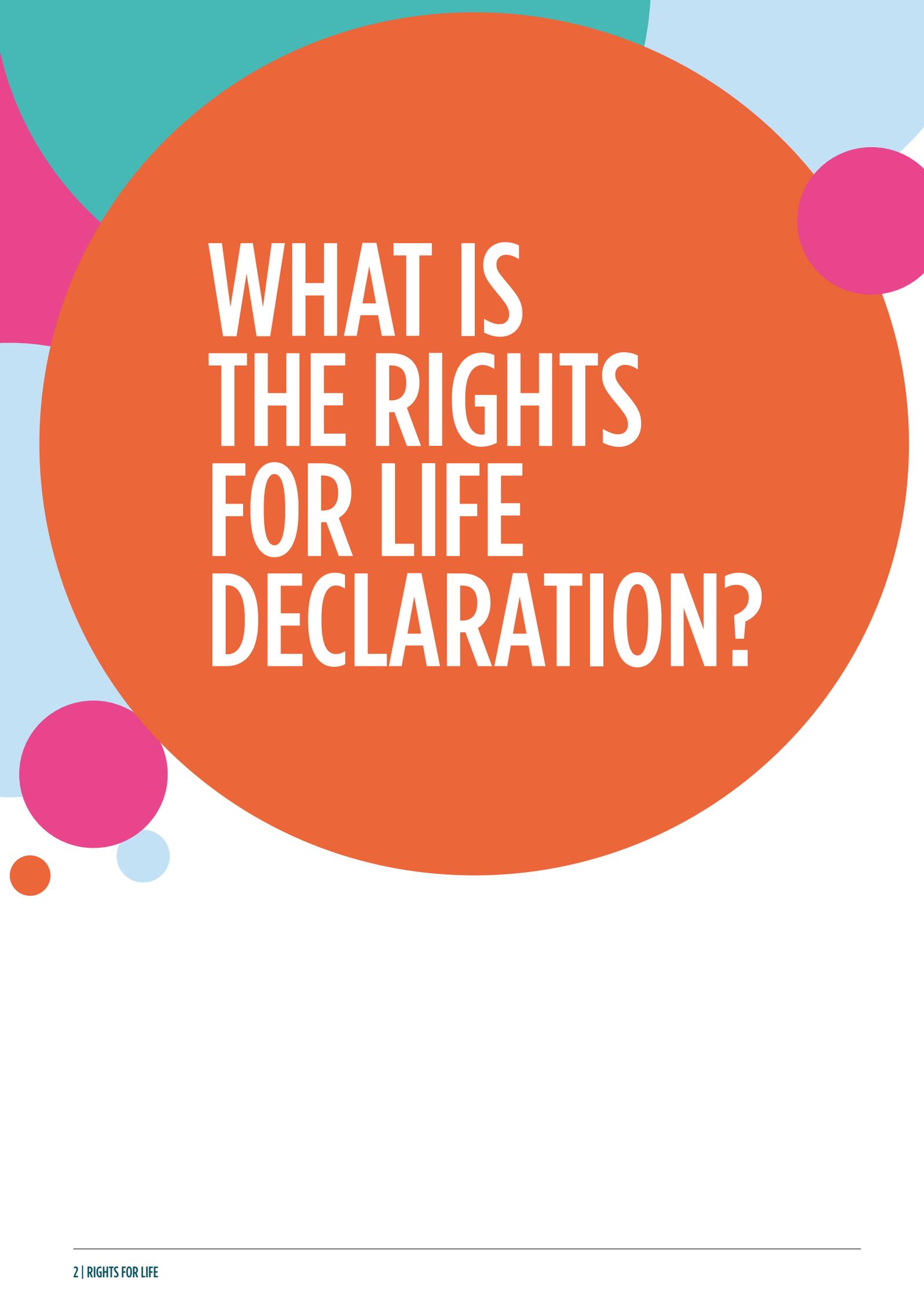




RIGHTS FOR LIFE

A declaration of rights for
mental health in Scotland



WHAT IS THE RIGHTS FOR LIFE DECLARATION?



The **Rights for Life declaration** is a statement of the rights that people affected by mental-health issues in Scotland are calling for. Its aim is to help achieve change in the way people affected by mental-health issues can exercise their rights.

The declaration reflects the principles and standards of international human rights agreements that bind the UK and Scotland. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Civil and Political Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is also guided by the rights-based PANEL principles of 'Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination, Empowerment and Legality'.

HOW WAS IT DEVELOPED?

The declaration is based on the views of hundreds of people with mental-health issues and the families and friends who care for them. It started to take shape at the landmark Rights for Life conference in June 2015 (www.rightsforlife.org). After the event, the Rights for Life Steering Group organised widespread consultation on early drafts regionally, nationally and online.

WHO IS THE DECLARATION FOR?

The declaration is for people affected by mental-health issues, who can use it to help exercise their rights. The people and organisations responsible for respecting, protecting and fulfilling rights in Scotland can use it to inform their policy and practice and the way they respond to people who want to exercise those rights.

WHY DO WE NEED A DECLARATION OF RIGHTS FOR MENTAL HEALTH IN SCOTLAND?

While people affected by mental-health issues have the same rights as other members of Scottish society, they face significant barriers when it comes to exercising them. These barriers are well known and widely documented.

People with mental-health issues:

- face unacceptably high levels of stigma and discrimination;
- can die 20 years younger, are poorer on average and have fewer opportunities in life than the general population;
- can have their rights limited in a legal sense and laws designed to protect their rights are ignored;
- are excluded from decision-making processes that affect their lives; and
- are denied access to timely, acceptable, quality care and support.

WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL THIS MAKE?

We hope this declaration will help inform people about their rights and support them in exercising them. However, this is just a start. The partners involved in supporting its creation are committed to developing a programme of action designed to make the declaration's aims and demands more real in the lives of people affected by mental-health issues in Scotland.

Find out more by visiting:

www.rightsforlife.org

People with experience of mental-health issues and the family and friends who care for them have the following rights.

1

The right to be treated with dignity and respect and be free from any form of discrimination including because of mental-health status.

2

The right to the highest possible standard of physical and mental health.

This includes timely access to a range of quality care and treatment, without discrimination.

3

The right to meaningful and active involvement in decisions at all levels, using co-production (see below) as standard and independent support if needed.

This includes taking part in decisions about:

- developing and putting into practice laws, policies and budgets;
- designing and delivering services and support, including health and social care, welfare, education, employment and housing; and
- care, treatment and support, with 'informed consent' (see below) given for any action taken.

(Co-production is a process of discussion and agreement through an equal partnership of those delivering services and those using them. This is done in a way that draws on the knowledge, skills and resources of everyone involved.)

(Informed consent is when permission is given in full knowledge of the possible consequences.)

4

The right to information that is provided in a clear and accessible format, tailored to the needs of each person.

This includes information about rights.





5

The right to hold to account the people and organisations responsible for protecting and respecting people's rights, to provide feedback without fear of reprisals and to have access to justice when their rights are affected.

6

The right to independent advocacy, both individual and collective.

(Advocacy can happen on a one to one basis as well as collectively. With one to one advocacy an advocate will help an individual to find out about their rights, ensure their voice is heard and support them to make informed decisions and choices. Collective or group advocacy is about a group of people with a shared agenda coming together to lobby, campaign and influence legislation, policy, practice and services.)

7

The right to equal treatment and recognition by the law and to the law's equal protection and benefit.

8

Access to the full range of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights.

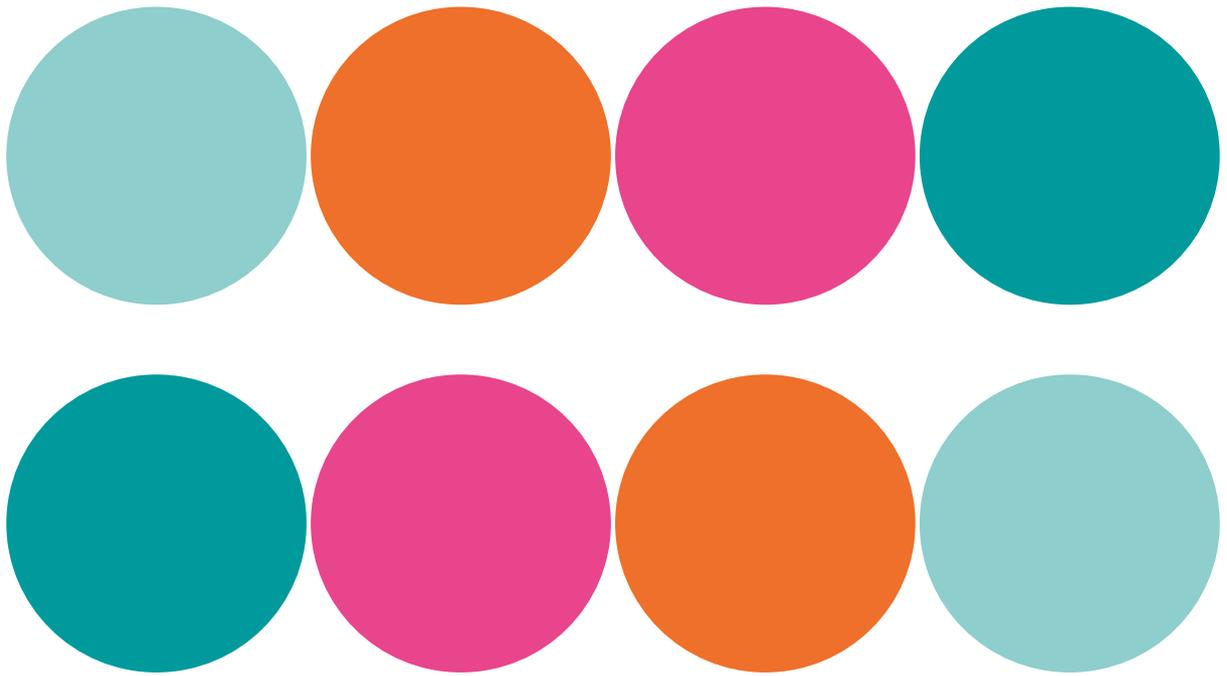
In terms of mental health this includes a particular emphasis on:

- being involved in the community and society on an equal basis;
 - a good standard of living and legal and social protection (preventing and managing negative situations that affect people's well-being);
 - access to lifelong education and learning opportunities;
 - employment and work opportunities;
 - freedom, privacy and the right to a family life; and
 - security and the right to be free from torture and abuse.
- 



People with disabilities: We recognise that it is controversial to include people with experience of mental-health issues in the definition of ‘people with disabilities’ and that not all people with mental-health issues will identify themselves as having a disability. We include people with experience of mental-health issues in the definition of ‘persons with disabilities’ following the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) which, in Article 1, states: “Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has clearly stated that the CRPD applies to people with experience of mental-health issues.

People affected by mental-health issues: By this we mean people who have experienced mental-health issues and the family and friends who care for them. We know that people may identify themselves using different terminology than ‘a person with experience of mental-health issues’ and that there are a number of different terms for people who have experienced mental-health issues.



Rights for Life Steering Group - At the time of launching the Rights for Life declaration, the members of the steering group included Mental Health Network (Greater Glasgow), Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance, Scottish Human Rights Commission, Scottish Recovery Network, See Me and Voices Of eXperience.

Rights for Life website

www.rightsforlife.org

Twitter

Join the conversation using

[#rightsforlife](https://twitter.com/#!/rightsforlife)



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