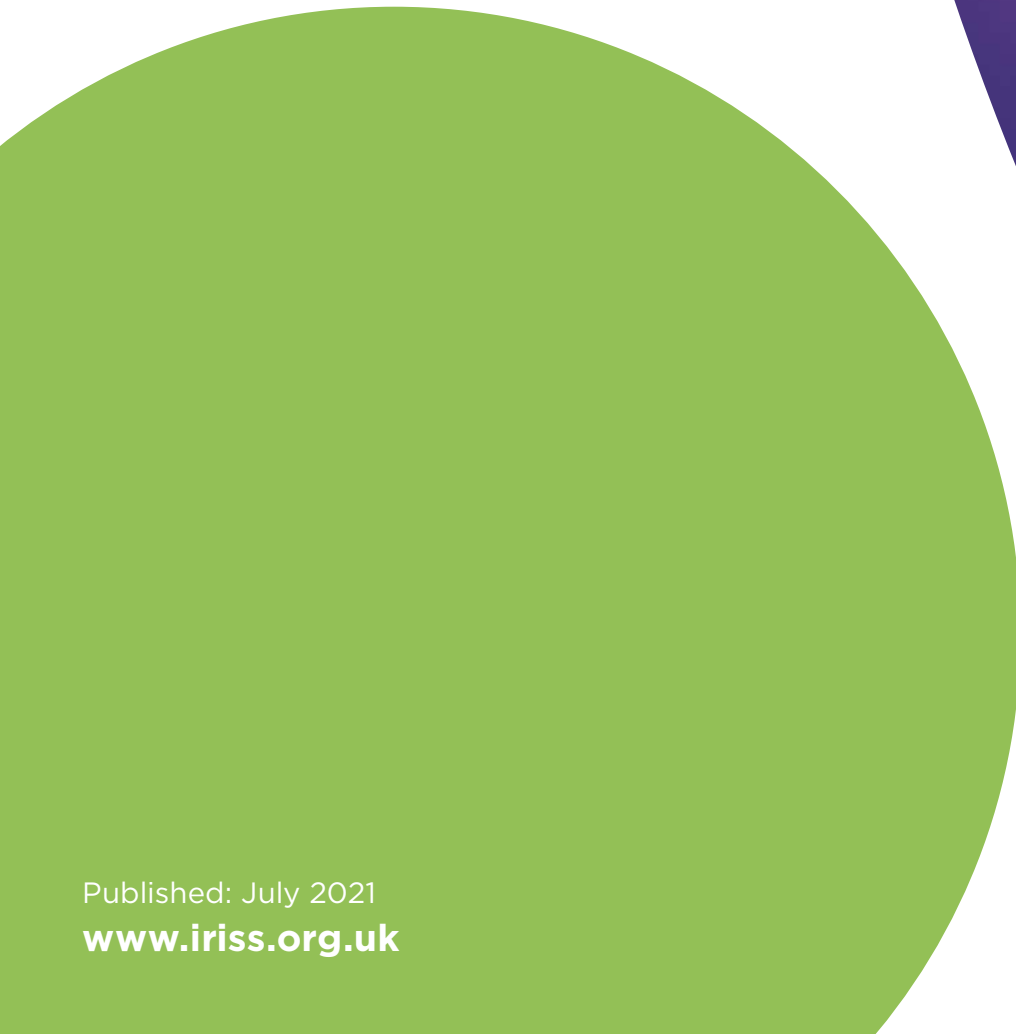




STRATEGY 2021-24

# Better lives for people, workers & communities



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# Introduction

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Developing a strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic is an uncomfortable lesson in the limitations of prediction and planning. The environment and context Iriss is working in is characterised by significant volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity and this is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

The temptation in such an environment is to plunge into detailed planning in an attempt to control the situation. A competent strategy instead needs to do four things:

- Set out the **way we will work, and who we will work with** to help Iriss respond consistently reliable in **volatile** contexts
- Set out a **clear vision, purpose and direction** to help Iriss navigate **uncertainty**
- Assume (and plan for) the need to **pivot and change** to help Iriss deal with **complexity**
- Include a **clear** way to make decisions to help Iriss manage **ambiguity**

Our strategy aims to address these four things by setting out our vision and purpose, the need for our work, how we work, the difference we make and the areas we aim to focus on for the next three years.

Our strategy is supported by a regularly reviewed annual organisational **work plan**. This includes **regular review points** to help us to detect changes in our environment and respond to the changing ask from the social work and social care sector. Our workplan is in turn supported by a set of **operational guides and criteria** to support rapid decision making, quality products and a thoughtful approach to funding and partnership.

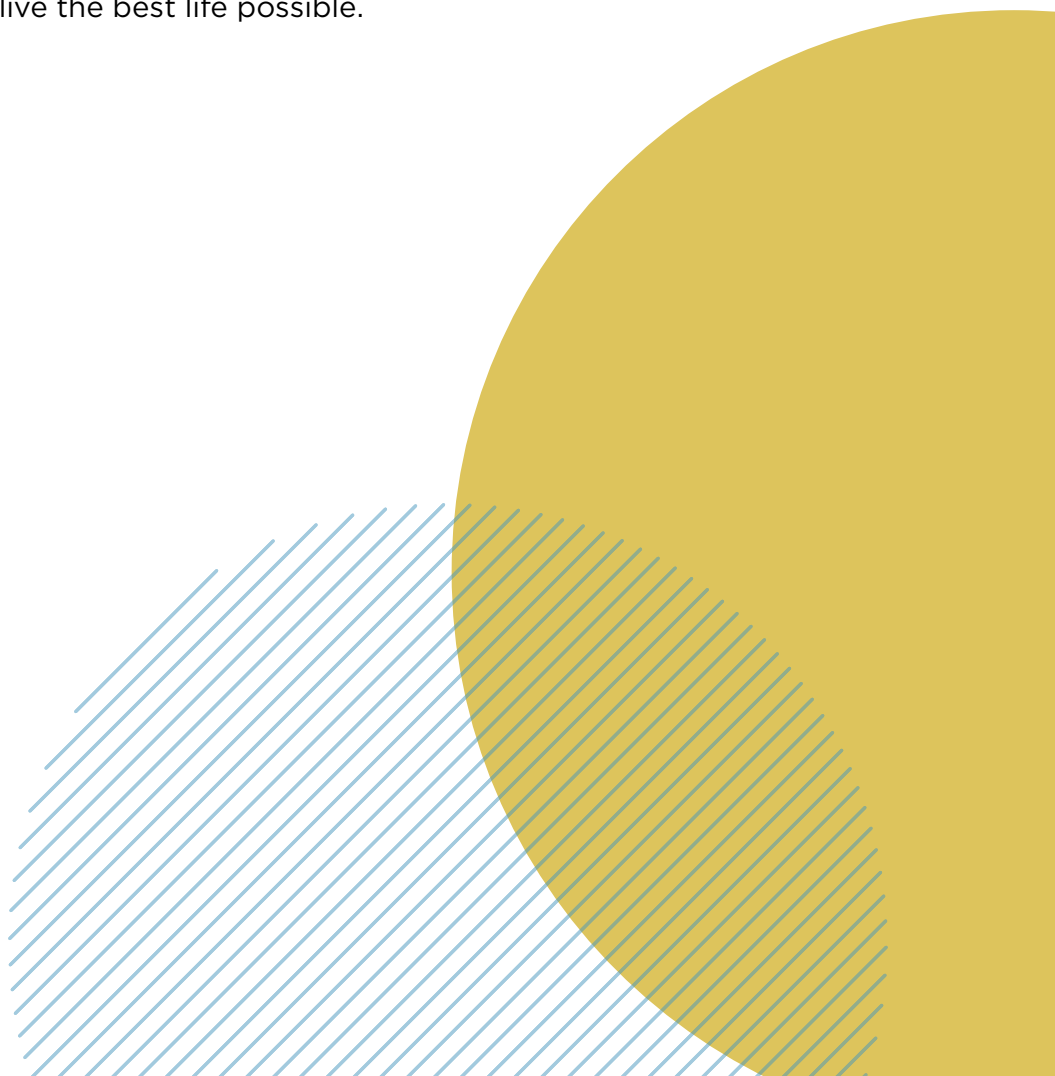
# Our purpose and vision

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Iriss works with people, workers and organisations in social work and social care to help them use knowledge and innovation to make positive change happen.

Support to explore new ways of working and use knowledge better leads to better outcomes for people, workers and communities.

This in turn contributes to our vision: a Scotland where people and communities are supported to live the best life possible.



# Why our work is needed

<b>People</b>	People who use social work and social care tell us they don't feel sufficiently involved in leading the changes they want to see in their care and support at an individual, local and national level. We need to think radically differently to build support that is flexible, personalised, easy to access, relevant and sustainable.
<b>Organisations</b>	Organisations in social work and support are under pressure due to increasing demand. This means that learning and development often becomes a secondary priority. This challenge is compounded by a risk averse culture that struggles to support systems change and innovation, again a result of pressure and demand.
<b>Workers</b>	Workers tell us they don't feel sufficiently involved in the changes they want to see in how they work. They also say that they don't feel valued, and that the public don't really understand the contribution their work makes to society.
<b>The policy - practice gap</b>	Both groups feel their voice is not heard in how policy is developed and influenced and describe a widening gap between positive policy intention and actual practice.
<b>The system</b>	The way that social work and support is funded and planned also drives short term responses to complex problems and there simply isn't enough time and space to do the difficult work of getting to the root cause of systemic difficulties and resolving them.

These problems are not new, they have been highlighted across social policy and strategy from the **2011 Christie Commission** to the **2015-2020 Social Services Strategy** and most recently the 2021 **Independent Review of Adult Social Care**.

It is important to note that the problems lie in the way that all the parts of social care and support work (or don't work) together, not in the individual.

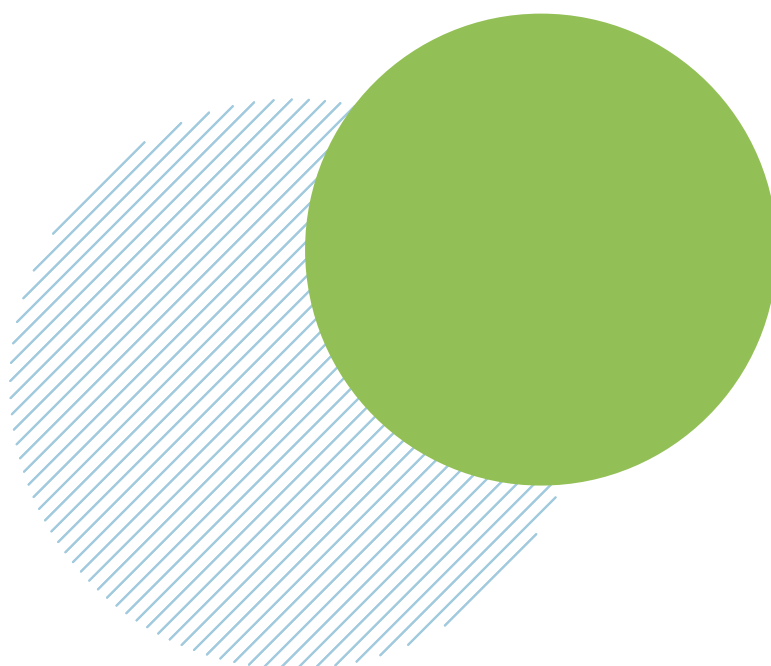
Iriss's role is to help create an environment where innovation, change and better practice can flourish.

# Who we are and who we work with

Iriss is a charity that works with social work and social care to create positive change in Scotland. We are a small team of facilitators, researchers, project leads, designers and digital professionals.

We work primarily with people, workers and organisations in social work and social care. Better outcomes for people can only be supported by all parts of the system working effectively together so we also work with other organisations and sectors where our work:

- Makes positive change for supported people (our 'north star')
- Aligns with our strategic outcomes (the difference we make)
- Meets our criteria for partnership working
- Is an area or specialism that is not already covered effectively by a partner organisation



# How we work

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## **We work with and alongside people and workers**

We build on their strengths and draw out their expertise, perspectives and experience. We know this is the most effective way to lead change that works.

## **We understand that one size fits nobody**

When it comes to supporting innovation and change. We work with people and organisations to find the tools and approaches they need to solve the problems they face.

## **We are flexible and adaptive**

Our operating context is always changing, ambiguous and unpredictable. We plan in a way that is adaptive and flexible while staying true to our vision and purpose.

## **We are innovative**

We look for different and imaginative ways to do things and support others to do the same.

## **We connect people together**

We know that change happens when changemakers are linked together to share expertise, experience and knowledge. We support networks that help people to learn.

## **We believe in knowledge for a purpose**

We define knowledge in the widest sense, building on existing knowledge and listening to the people we work with as to what solutions are practical and workable for them.

## **We know our stuff**

Our team keep their skills up to date, and stay curious about, and connected to, research, knowledge and practice.

## **We make things clear**

The things we make, write and do are clear, accessible and high quality. If they aren't, we fix it.



# What we do



## Illuminate

We work with people, organisations and groups of organisations to make better use of the data and information they collect through our **information insight programmes**.



## Spark

We support people, workers and organisations to innovate and explore different ways of working through our **innovation and systems change support programmes**.



## Kindle

We bring different types of knowledge together, making it accessible and useable for workers through our **knowledge summaries, knowledge translation work, insights and research service**.



## Stream

We work with people, workers and organisations to **make use of digital** for learning, development and innovation.



## Reflect

We create the conditions for knowledge-based practice and decision making through our **practice support programmes**.

# The difference we make

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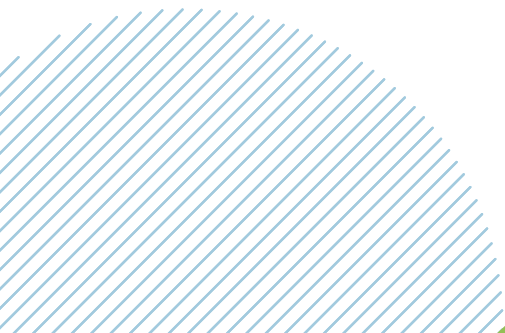


Our core programmes are designed to assist people, workers and organisations to:

- Have increased access to quality and accessible knowledge
- Make better use of knowledge for learning and change
- Are more able to understand the information they collect; why they collect it and how to make better use of it
- Have the knowledge, confidence and support they need to change and innovate
- Have the knowledge and support to build collaborations, solve complex problems and change their system
- Make better use of digital to learn, develop and innovate

This in turn contributes to:

- An increase in thoughtful innovation in social work and social care
- Improvement in the way that social work and social care is planned, designed and delivered
- Digital solutions are thoughtfully and ethically adopted in social work and social care
- A more knowledge informed social work and social care practice and policy environment
- Better decision making and use of information in social work and social care
- The different parts of the social work and social care subsystem working more effectively together with the wider system (including health, education, justice and communities etc)



# How Iriss adds value

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We think that social work and social care needs to fundamentally change if it is to meet the needs and aspirations of people.

Iriss is grounded and experienced in social work and social care in Scotland. We work across the public, private and voluntary sectors focussed on the use of knowledge and innovation to make social work and social care better for people.

The evidence, and our experience shows us that bespoke support is the best way to help workers and organisations do the difficult work of change and innovation. We draw on our core skills of research, facilitation, innovation, design, digital and systems change as required depending on the situation.

Where we add value is asking the question ‘are we doing the right thing?’ in areas of social work and social care where ‘the right thing’ is unknown, unclear or not yet developed, or where the situation is highly complex.

This means that Iriss is an organisation that does what is needed, drawing on our skills, to help people, workers and organisations do their best work.

Iriss currently focuses on knowledge use and innovation in social work and social care with links to the wider system, health and improvement. Over the period of our strategy, we will shift to innovation and systems change in our offer as we see this as both the most effective lever for change and the biggest gap in support to the sector.

# Our focus for 2021-2024

- 1** **We will continue** our core offer (Kindle) synthesising, developing and sharing knowledge for practice and policy making in social work and social care including:
  - a. ESSS: A free service supporting those working in social work and social care to find and use evidence and knowledge to inform practice, service improvement and learning. We produce tailored evidence reviews, key paper summaries and reading lists, covering any topic related to social work and social care.
  - b. Iriss Insights: Evidence summaries on topics that support social work and social care in Scotland. These summaries are reviewed by people with research, policy and practice expertise to ensure they meet the needs of the sector.
  - c. Iriss.fm: A social work and social care podcast, presenting research, projects and events on current topics of interest to practice.
  - d. Knowledge sharing: Working with academics, students and researchers to help them bridge the research-practice gap.
- 2** **We will review** the useability, effectiveness, branding and reach of our core work by the end of 21-22.
- 3** **We will develop** clear offers based on recent successful work to support workers and organisations to make better use of their data and information; and develop their practice.
- 4** **We will build on** our existing digital work to help organisations make better use of digital for learning, practice improvement and innovation.
- 5** **We will build** medium to long term strategic relationships with a range of partners within social work and social care and beyond. We want to:
  - a. Make links with different organisations to bring in new thinking and approaches to our work.
  - b. Develop thoughtful partnerships and alliances where our work complements that of other organisations.
  - c. Develop strategic funding relationships with a number of partners to drive organisational sustainability.

- 6 We will start** offering innovation and systems change support to people, workers and organisations working in social work and social care. Our approach will be a unique offer within the improvement and support landscape covering bespoke end-to-end support for change and innovation.
- a. Forming, gathering and synthesising knowledge in a useable and relevant way.
  - b. Facilitating and supporting workers, organisations and communities to identify and make thoughtful, practical plans for change and innovation.
  - c. Coaching and getting alongside the changemakers in the system to support them to lead and maintain change.
  - d. Rapid learning and review – capturing process and practice learning to share across networks.
  - e. Understanding what can be generalised and used at scale and what is embedded in the individual context of the work.
  - f. Sharing and using accessible digital presentation of outputs and learning from the process plus learning network support.

This new offer will allow us to develop our innovation offer to help implement the **Independent Review of Adult Social Care** where we play a key role in supporting the sector to innovate and do things differently.

- 7 We will focus on our organisational sustainability** through income diversification. This will be supported both by our development work on our new offers, a focus on building partnership and the conclusions from our current work on commercialisation of aspects of Iriss’s offer.

- 8 We will tell our story** through revising how we capture our learning and impact and how we communicate this well.



# Path changes and pivot points

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In 2021-24 Iriss will respond flexibly to what will continue to be a rapidly changing environment. As a small organisation we move quickly and responsively to opportunities and threats and will ensure that our culture and internal structures support this.

Our focus will be on:

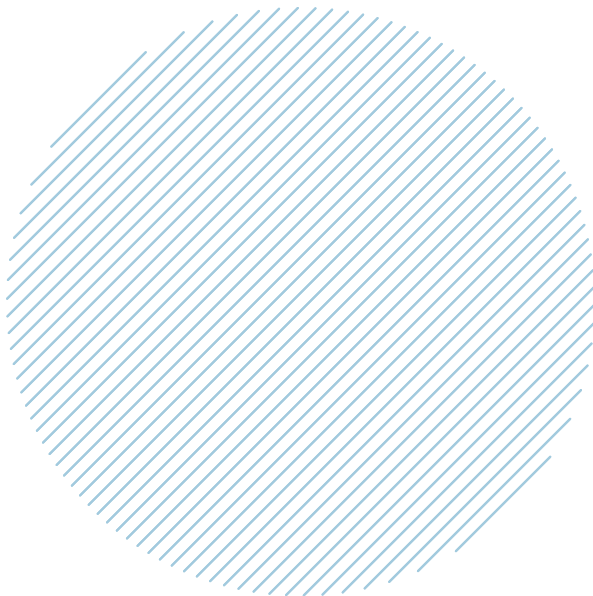
- Structured engagement with the people, workers and organisations we support to understand the changing practice context
- Purposeful quarterly horizon and intelligence scanning to understand the changing policy context and operating environment
- A culture that supports all team members to identify opportunities and threats and to develop good responses to these



# Resourcing our plan

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All of our activities are dependent on sufficient financing to do the work. Financial sustainability is therefore a priority area for our strategy.



# Telling our story of impact

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As an organisation working with knowledge, we understand the importance of telling a clear story of our own impact (the change or difference we make) while recognising that we are **one contributor within a complex system** of people, organisations, processes and cultures with the common goal of making social work and support better for people.

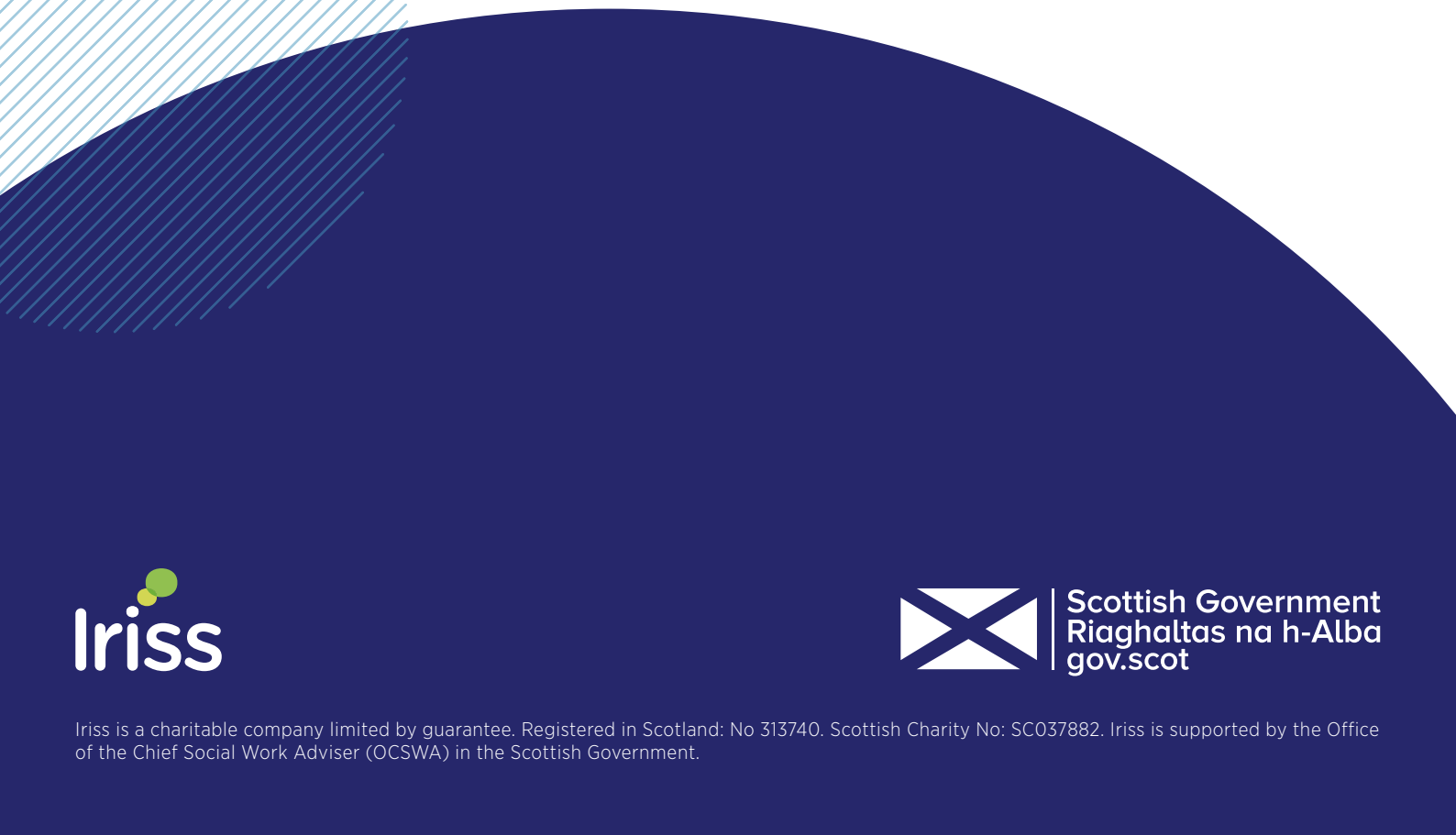
Telling our story of impact, as well as improving the way we capture and share our own learning is another priority area for us.







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