
Scottish Mental Health Charter for Physical Activity and Sport

sportscotland progress report 2018- 2020

Introduction

Welcome to **sportscotland**'s first Mental Health Charter progress report.

In 2018, we were delighted to be among the first organisations to become a full signatory of the Scottish Mental Health Charter for Physical Activity and Sport. Our associated action plan set out the specific actions we'd take to promote, educate and raise awareness of mental health in sport and physical activity.

In this report, we outline what progress we've made over the last two years. We also highlight some examples of our work in action.

Chief Executive foreword

Our vision is for an active Scotland where everyone benefits from sport. Our mission is to help the people of Scotland get the most from the sporting system. We have a commitment to inclusion underpinning everything we do.

This commitment means we want everyone to feel welcome and involved in sport. It means we value people as individuals. We know from the work we do in communities across the country the very positive and sometimes life-changing effects that physical activity and sport can have on mental health and wellbeing. By working together, the sporting community can help break down barriers to participation, challenge stigma, and help make a real difference to the lives of people experiencing mental health problems.

I am therefore delighted to introduce our first progress report. This highlights mental health as one of our key priorities for inclusion and shows our commitment to an active Scotland where everyone benefits from sport.

Stewart Harris, Chief Executive, **sportscotland**

Declaration of Support to the Scottish Mental Health Charter for Physical Activity and Sport

We are committed to supporting Scotland’s Mental Health Charter for Physical Activity and Sport. Developed by The Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH), the Charter encourages physical activity and sporting communities, from grassroots to performance level, to incorporate mental health into their strategies to make sport more accessible to people experiencing mental health problems. To achieve this, the Mental Health Charter outlines key areas of focus.

Table 1: Five key areas of focus highlighted by the Mental Health Charter for Physical Activity and Sport

1. Actively promote inclusive practice and ensure a positive and welcoming environment for all.	2. Develop inclusive policies and practices are informed by including mental health in strategic planning.	3. Actively encourage participation and promote messages focusing on the benefits of physical activity on mental health.	4. Establish a Scottish Mental Health Charter Network to support meaningful collaboration, share resources and best practice.	5. Routinely review performance and identify ways to improve working in relation to mental health
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We are committed to improving equality and reducing stigma so more people experiencing poor mental health can engage, participate and achieve more in sport and physical activity.

We also have a key role to play in encouraging the sporting community across Scotland to use the collective power of sport and physical activity to create positive lasting change in mental health and wellbeing.

Our progress so far

In this section, we highlight the progress we've made with our action plan, aligned to the five key areas of focus outlined in the Charter.

Actively promote inclusive practice and ensure a positive and welcoming environment for all.

We created an area on our [website](#) to publish our action plan and promote our commitment to the Mental Health Charter. You can access this

We promoted mental health resources to staff and signposted them to support available through the employee assistance programme.

We worked with experts in mental health to provide a suite of mental health training for staff across the sporting sector. This included:

- Working with SAMH to:
 - deliver mental health workshops at one national and six regional networking events. 433 people attended these workshops across the seven events. The audience included Active Schools coordinators, community sport hub officers, sport development officers, and regional managers for Scottish governing bodies of sports (SGBs).
 - deliver a mental health awareness session at our community sport hub officer away days. We encouraged hub officers to promote the key message that we all have mental health and that it is as important as physical health to their networks.
 - provide a mental health awareness e-learning to all members of the Young People's Sport Panel.
- Working with Plan4Sport to deliver four mental health awareness sessions to 41 SGB staff.
- Providing a range of internal support to staff including mental health first aid training, managing stress training and supporting positive wellbeing training.

- Ensuring all Performance Lifestyle practitioners working with SIS supported performance athletes completed the NHS Scotland Mental Health First Aid Training.

We delivered the Equality in Sport conference to over 120 delegates from SGBs and partner organisations. The conference included a session on mental health awareness in sport during which a range of partners including Jog Scotland, SAMH, Scottish Gymnastics and Plan4Sport showcased examples of good practice.

We supported and promoted the [Mental Health in Scottish Sport](#) event to discuss mental health issues throughout the performance environment. Around 160 people from across the health and sports sector attended.

Develop inclusive policies and practices which are informed by including mental health in strategic planning

Our Chief Executive was a key signatory at the Mental Health Charter launch event at Oriam in February 2018.

We used our internal inclusion group, which has senior representation from across **sportscotland**, to develop our Charter action plan and coordinate delivery.

We communicated our declaration of support and Charter action plan to our leadership group for feedback and support. This was reviewed and signed off by our senior management team.

We included the Mental Health Charter as a key driver for inclusion in our new corporate strategy, [Sport for Life](#). We invited the CEO of SAMH to be a panel member at our national networking event to launch Sport for Life.

We worked with Plan4Sport to deliver two mental health masterclass workshops to seven SGB CEOs and senior staff. This aimed to support them to embed mental health and wellbeing within their organisational policies.

Actively encourage participation and promote messages focusing on the benefits of physical activity on mental health

We promoted the Charter and our action plan to our staff through our internal digital newsletter, Inside Track.

We shared the Mental Health Charter and resources from SAMH with over 1,200 contacts in our network via our bi-monthly e-newsletter, On Track.

We used mental health as our monthly communication theme in May 2018 (health and wellbeing) and May 2019 (mental health in sport). We used this to raise the awareness of mental health and promote the benefits of sport and physical activity.

We positioned mental health as the topic for #SportHour, our monthly Twitter conversation for the network about sport in Scotland. We partnered with SAMH as co-host in 2018 and JogScotland in 2019, engaging 204 and 254 people respectively.

We supported Mental Health Awareness week and World Mental Health Day through social media. We also promoted a range of sport and physical activity and mental health stories to our networks throughout the year via our SportFirst digital hub. In total, we shared 18 stories with a connection to mental health, from grassroots to professional sport.

We promoted the **sportscotland** institute of sport's (SIS) mental health expertise to our networks via Cutting Edge, our high-performance blog:

- [Mental health in sport: Why it's always better to talk \(hyperlink\)](#)
- [More than medals: It's okay not to be okay \(hyperlink\)](#)

Our Young People's Sport Panel (YPSP) created a mental health working group to explore how sport and physical activity can support better mental wellbeing in young people. The YPSP developed a concept called "play and talk" which involves schools or universities running sport and physical activity sessions for young people with specific time set aside to talk in a safe environment about their mental wellbeing. The panel will look to pilot this idea during 2020-21.

Establish a Scottish Mental Health Charter Network to support meaningful collaboration, share resources and best practice

We continued to sit on the PACE network steering group to ensure we were up to date with latest information until it disbanded in 2019. We fed back to an external evaluation on the group's effectiveness.

We developed a partnership agreement with SAMH for 2020 to 2023. We have committed to working together to identify, plan and deliver shared priorities for mental health and sport and physical activity.

We invited SAMH to sit on the Changing Lives Advisory group to support the sporting and community sector to better address individual and community needs through sport and physical activity.

Routinely review performance and identify ways to improve working in relation to mental health

We reviewed our SIS best practice operating principles and reinforced athlete wellbeing as a priority theme within the annual operating plans for the sports we work with.

We provided direct one to one support to performance athletes across all **sportscotland** institute of sport disciplines. As part of this, we developed an emergency referral pathway for practitioners who are working with athletes in mental health distress to safeguard their wellbeing and welfare. This pathway includes our sports medicine team, external support agencies including Samaritans and Breathing Space, and external clinical care.

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