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Scottish Mental Health Charter for Physical Activity and Sport

Progress Report 2020-2022

Sport for life

sportscotland
the national agency for sport

Introduction

Welcome to **sportscotland**'s second 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, with our first progress reporting being published in 2020.

We refreshed our associated action plan for 2020-2022 to 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 as we want everyone to feel welcome and involved in sport. It means we put people at the centre of our decision making because we value people as individuals.

We know from our work in communities across Scotland that sport and physical activity have a positive and sometimes life-changing impact on people's health and wellbeing. However, it is also clear that we must do more to encourage more people to take advantage of the opportunities available to them. By working in partnership, the sporting system across Scotland can help break down barriers to participation, challenge stigma, and help make a positive difference to the lives of people who are faced with mental health challenges.

I am therefore delighted to introduce our second Mental Health Charter progress report which highlights the Mental Health Charter for Physical Activity and Sport as a key contributor to our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion. It shows our commitment to an active Scotland where we will all find ways to be more physically active, get involved in ways that suit us while meeting fewer barriers and feeling more included.

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

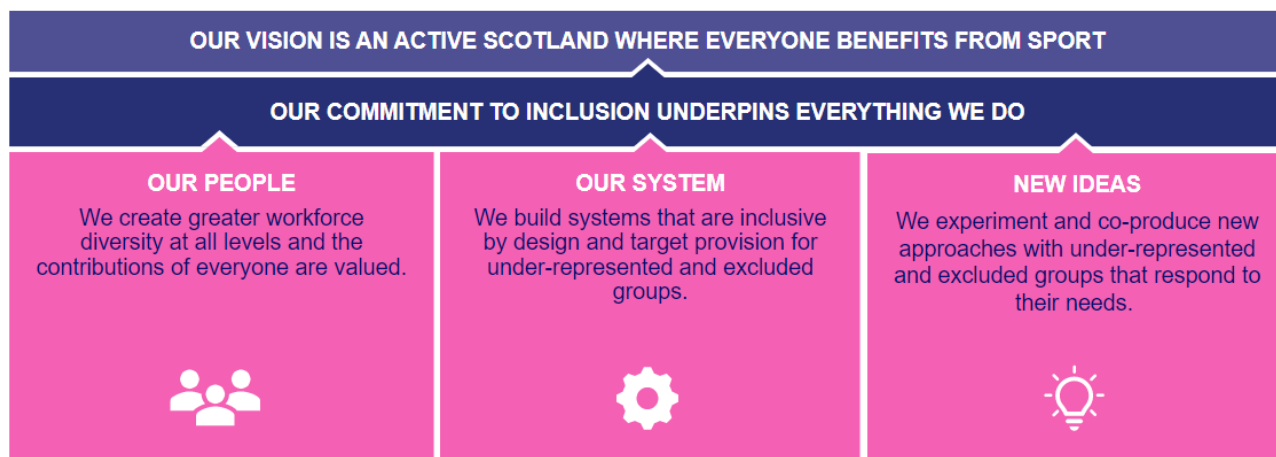
<p>1. Actively promote inclusive practice and ensure a positive and welcoming environment for all.</p>	<p>2. Develop inclusive policies and practices are informed by including mental health in strategic planning.</p>	<p>3. Actively encourage participation and promote messages focusing on the benefits of physical activity on mental health.</p>	<p>4. Establish a Scottish Mental Health Charter Network to support meaningful collaboration, share resources and best practice.</p>	<p>5. Routinely review performance and identify ways to improve working in relation to mental health.</p>
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Organisational Statement

Our corporate strategy, [Sport For Life](#), sets out the vision of an active Scotland where everyone benefits from sport. Our mission is to help the people of Scotland get the most from the sporting system.

Sport for Life sets out a commitment to inclusion underpinning everything we do. [Our approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) has three strands which brings this commitment to life (see figure1). Scotland’s Mental Health Charter for Physical Activity and Sport supports our EDI approach and helps us deliver against our vision.

Figure 1: Equality, diversity and inclusion approach



Sport supports health and enhances wellbeing

We all have mental health. Being active isn't just good for our physical health; it's also proven to have a positive effect on our mental health and wellbeing. Sport and physical activity can help us unwind and feel more relaxed. It can be a way of making friends, social connections and becoming involved in a community. It can give us energy and confidence to think clearly and get the most out of life. It can also help us develop a stronger body and combat health issues.

Yet, we know that people experiencing a mental health problem can find it difficult to engage, participate and achieve in physical activity and sport. We aim to improve equality and reduce discrimination for anyone with a mental health problem. Ensuring there is no barrier to taking part.

Our sporting system creates opportunities for people to take part in sport and physical activity across different environments: clubs and communities, schools and education and performance sport. We are focused on supporting the wellbeing and mental health of participants across all environments.

To support our work on mental health and wellbeing, we work closely with our strategic partners SAMH, Scotland's Mental Health Charity. We draw on the expertise and experience from within our own **sportscotland** Institute of Sport as they provide world class wellbeing and welfare support to Scottish athletes in the performance environment. We will also put people who experience mental health problems at the heart of the decision-making process as we design and deliver '[New Ideas](#)' to achieve our new person-centred 2021-25 equality outcomes.

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 promoting inclusive practice and ensuring a positive and welcoming environment for all

We used the Mental Health section on our website to publish our action plan and promote our commitment to the Mental Health Charter. We promoted our commitment and action plan to staff through our internal digital newsletter, Inside Track, and partners via our bi-monthly e-newsletter, On Track.

We continued to promote mental health resources to staff and signposted them to available support and resources. This included:

- Providing access to a newly developed Wellbeing Hub on our internal SharePoint site and signposting to wellbeing resources and e-learning from SAMH and our occupational health partner.
- Promoting our employee assistance programme which includes access to up to six free counselling sessions, where this is considered to be an effective treatment.
- Consistently promoting a health and wellbeing message, supported by messages from our Chief Executive.

We will continue to work with SAMH to review our current support for staff to ensure we are sector leading. We will implement any necessary changes and continue to review our support, including specific support to line managers to support staff wellbeing.

We established a **sportscotland** institute of sport (SIS) Mental Health Working Group to implement operational support and develop wellbeing and mental health shared resources for performance staff and athletes.

We launched an athlete health screening questionnaire to identify athletes who had a new or existing concern and their required support. 185 athletes were screened from across 15 sports. We used this information to establish connections and referral pathways with external agencies. We also identified and engaged external specialists from psychiatric medicine to join our SIS Mental Health Expert Panel (MHEP).

We supported the mental wellbeing and welfare of athletes receiving support from the SIS more generally through:

- One-to-one performance lifestyle support to athletes, with the approach to delivery being adapted throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Triage services with fast response times to provide support to athletes in need.
- Working with high performance managers, sports and athletes to respond to different requests for support.

We worked with SAMH to deliver a coordinated programme of wellbeing and mental health training to professional staff in the sport sector. This included a maintaining well-being workshop, a mental health awareness e-learning module, how to have a mental health conversation and finally a mental health awareness session. 118 workshops were held across all 32 local authorities, with 1548 attendees and 28 workshops were held with SGBs, with 473 attendees. We will continue with this roll out into 2023.

We worked with Plan4Sport to deliver mental health awareness training to SGB staff. This included:

- An Introduction to Mental Health workshop, with 10 attendees.
- A Mental Health Masterclass to six senior SGB senior staff. This aimed to support them to embed positive mental health and wellbeing practices within their organisational policies.

We developed and supported a range of e-learning resources for use across the sporting system. This included:

- supporting SAMH and Scottish Sporting Futures to deliver free online, interactive mental health workshops for both young people (16+) and adults. The sessions explore the signs of someone struggling with poor mental health. They provide practical tools to create a safe space in which to have mental health and wellbeing conversations.
- a free positive mental health during coronavirus e-learning designed to equip coaches with the knowledge to effectively support participants and their club members. This was developed in partnership with SAMH, the Scottish Football Association and the Scottish Rugby Union.
- positive mental health and wellbeing awareness in performance e-learning to athletes, parents, coaches, practitioners and SGB staff. This preceded a workshop and presentation delivered by SIS.

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

We included Mental Health as a standalone topic in our [Equality and Sport Research 2020](#). We commissioned this research to help us to update, refresh and grow our equality evidence. We wanted to understand how work is progressing in this area across the sector and ask what could help us all take action to reduce inequalities.

We developed a specific learning note for mental health and sport sitting within the technical report. We also used the research as core content in our newly launched [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Toolbox](#) which is live on the **sportscotland** website. These resources aim to support professionals working in the sector to understand barriers and make inclusive decisions.

As part of our wider EDI approach, we will look to co-produce new approaches with representative groups and people who have lived experience of mental health problems, to help them take part in sport and physical activity and experience the following outcomes:

- I see and hear people like me taking part
- I have a voice in the decisions that affect me
- I feel like taking part is for me

- I can find opportunities that meet my needs

We started work on our co production projects and are aiming for the mental health project to begin in towards the end of 2022.

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

Our Chief Executive was a key signatory at the launch event for the Club and Community Mental Health Charter at Oriam in May 2022.

We used our communication channels 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 February 2021, alongside the Minister for Mental Health and with SAMH in May 2022.

We used mental health as our monthly communication theme in February 2021 and May 2022 (mental health), in January 2022 (health and wellbeing) and May 2019 (being active). We shared 38 articles focusing on mental health through our digital content hub SportFirst.

We developed the Feel Your Personal Best campaign, in partnership with SAMH which ran from June to September 2021. We promoted the campaign's key messages through a range of digital channels, including social media and the **sportscotland** website, as well as our internal and external digital newsletters Inside Track and On Track. Case studies were used to highlight examples of physical activity supporting mental health, with resources developed to encourage our sport network to engage with the campaign:

[Feel your personal best - Colin \(sportscotland.org.uk\)](https://www.sportscotland.org.uk/feel-your-personal-best-colin)

Colin, from Orkney, started running due to mental health issues stemming from a gambling and alcohol addiction dating back to when he was just 17 years old. Now at 42, Colin is putting in the miles and getting his buzz from hitting the trails.

[Feel your personal best - Sean \(sportscotland.org.uk\)](https://www.sportscotland.org.uk/feel-your-personal-best-sean)

Sean really struggled with his mental health during lockdown, and found it difficult to get outside. However, when he started hillwalking with his friends, he began to open up to them. Last summer he climbed Ben Lomond to raise funds for SAMH, and although he it found it challenging, the experience made him feel great.

[Feel your personal best - Joanne \(sportscotland.org.uk\)](https://www.sportscotland.org.uk/feel-your-personal-best-joanne)

With a full-time job, a family to provide for including two young children with learning difficulties and struggling with stress, Joanne turned to a running group to help support her own wellbeing.

[Feel your personal best - Stephanie \(sportscotland.org.uk\)](https://www.sportscotland.org.uk/feel-your-personal-best-stephanie)

Stephanie is a member of the Young People's Sport Panel. Having struggled with depression and anxiety for many years, Stephanie shares her personal experience of the benefits of physical activity, and her passion for hillwalking and Munro bagging.

We promoted Mental Health Awareness Week and World Mental Health Day to staff and our networks.

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

We continue to work with SAMH to identify, plan and deliver shared priorities for mental health and sport and physical activity. We engaged with SAMH as a core steering group member, supporting the promotion of the Mental Health Charter to the sport sector. We helped develop a new Club and Community Charter launched in May 2022. This initiative urges community sports clubs and organisations to help break down barriers by encouraging people to connect with others in their local area through sports and physical activity. We will host resources on the 'Wellbeing' and 'Help for Clubs' section of the **sportscotland** website, and promote further information through SAMH website.

Routinely reviewing performance and identifying ways to improve working in relation to mental health.

We contributed to the UK Sport and English Institute of Sport (EIS) Mental Health Expert Panel. The panel is made-up of specialist clinical psychologists and sports psychiatrists who provide advice on complex cases and can call upon specialists with specific expertise to guide the treatment of particular conditions.

Our engagement in this forum enabled the introduction of a Mental Health Strategy for the British Olympic and Paralympic athletes for the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games that were held in 2021. This collaborative approach enabled the SIS Mental Health working group to influence the implementation of a Mental Health Strategy for Team Scotland ahead of the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham 2022.