

STANDING UP
FOR SCOTLAND'S
**MENTAL
HEALTH**

**How local councillors can
improve the mental health
of their communities**

SCOTTISH LOCAL AUTHORITY ELECTIONS 2022

THERE HAVE BEEN TOO MANY PROMISES ON MENTAL HEALTH AND NOT ENOUGH ACTION.

For far too long, people with mental health problems have been struggling to cope without the right support. The pandemic only made the situation worse. Local authorities have the power to improve mental health support in their communities.

That's why SAMH (Scottish Association for Mental Health) is calling on every local election candidate to pledge that, if elected, they will stand up for Scotland's mental health by ensuring their local authority has a clear, well-evidenced mental health strategy in place that puts people with lived experience at its centre and delivers the vital changes outlined below.

1

Person-centred community-based support for everyone

We know people face challenges accessing care and treatment for their mental health every day. Many face long waiting times, while others struggle even to be referred for help or to find out about the support that is available locally. Councillors can help by ensuring their local authority:

- ◇ Expands psychological wellbeing support based within the third sector.
- ◇ Works with partners in Health and Social Care Partnerships to commission mental health peer support services.
- ◇ Works with integration authorities to take a longer-term strategic approach to commissioning, including offering five-year social care contracts as a minimum.
- ◇ Works with integration authorities to ensure every GP surgery has enough Community Link Workers to meet local needs.

2

Community-based mental health support for children and young people

Too many young people experience significant barriers to accessing support and treatment for their mental health. Many wait months or even years for treatment, while thousands get no support at all after having their referrals to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, rejected as they're not regarded as "ill enough". Councillors can help by ensuring their local authority:

- ◇ Expands support available in the community for children and young people which is easy to access, able to meet demand, and places children and young people's voices at the centre.
- ◇ Ensures school counselling services are resourced to meet demand.
- ◇ Includes sustainable funding for the delivery of community-based services for young people in their financial plans.

3

Suicide prevention plans & better support for people in distress or crisis

Two people die by suicide every day in Scotland. Too often, people in crisis don't receive the support they need. That's why we're calling on local authorities to tackle the stigma around suicide, support people in distress, and reduce deaths. We want models like the Distress Brief Intervention - where help from frontline emergency services is followed by personalised support from trained professionals - to be available to those who need it. Councillors can help by ensuring their local authority:

- ◇ Develops a fully-funded local suicide prevention plan with agencies involved in reducing suicide and people with lived experience of suicide.
- ◇ Develops a Distress Brief Intervention (DBI) service, in partnership with the NHS and third sector, in their area following the completion of the pilot in 2024.

4

Ensure the rights of those receiving compulsory mental health treatment

Under current mental health law, to detain someone in hospital for their mental health, doctors should seek the consent of a mental health officer, however this isn't happening in far too many cases. Councillors can help by ensuring their local authority:

- ◇ Supports an urgent increase in the number of Mental Health Officers to address workforce gaps.

5

Improve access to physical activity for people with mental health problems

Even small amounts of physical activity can help to reduce stress and symptoms of depression; yet we know that people with mental health problems face multiple barriers to getting active. This must change. Councillors can help by ensuring their local authority:


- ◇ Signs up to Scotland's Mental Health Charter for Physical Activity and Sport; and makes this a condition for local sporting organisations in receipt of funding and leasing local leisure facilities.

6

Increase mental health training opportunities available locally

Raising awareness around mental health and suicide through training is a key tool to tackling stigma and discrimination. Local authorities have a role to play in providing funding for training while also ensuring staff, including those who work in schools, receive mental health training. Councillors can help by ensuring their local authority:

- ◇ Provides funding for mental health and suicide prevention training, particularly in communities where people are most at risk, including areas of high deprivation.
- ◇ Ensures all local authority staff receive mental health training.



People with mental health problems aren't getting the treatment or support they need. They cannot wait any longer for change and should not have to. Will you stand up for mental health in your local area?

SAMH is Scotland's mental health charity and is dedicated to mental health and wellbeing for all. We are here to provide help, information and support to people affected by mental health problems.

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for Scotland's mental health

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