

# TAKING ACTION, CREATING CHANGE



Our plan  
2025-2029

Find out more at: [samh.org.uk/plan](https://samh.org.uk/plan)

**SAMH**  
Scottish Action for Mental Health



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# Taking Action, Creating Change

**Scotland is in a mental health crisis and has been for years. The time for waiting is over. We're taking action to create change.**

We're Scotland's national mental health charity and our ambitious new plan reflects the need for action in a time when mental health in Scotland is as bad as it has ever been. Things need to change.

Our plan is about **action** and **change**, which will underpin all our work for the next four years.

Our focus is on people, places and communities. We're expanding our reach to help more people with mental health problems and mental illness than ever before, introducing new services throughout the country and increasing the capacity of what we currently offer.

We're introducing a network of walk-in community-based mental health support hubs, that require no appointment and no referral, meaning – for the first time – people with mental health problems across the country really can ask once and get help fast.

And we're demanding that the mental health system in Scotland is changed, because it is no longer meeting the needs of the people it was set up to help.

This is our most ambitious, considered and informed plan, based on data, research, the lived experiences of people we support, and our significant expertise in mental health.

**It's time to take action. It's time to create change.**

*Billy Watson, Chief Executive, SAMH*

**“We're fed up waiting, so now we're acting.”**

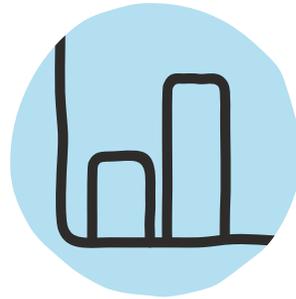


# SCOTLAND IN CRISIS



## ONE IN TEN

adults say they feel lonely all or most of the time – this includes one in five young adults



**4.4% → 11.3%**

the number of people reporting a mental health problem has doubled over 10 years



**ALMOST 120,000**

mental health hospital bed days were lost to delayed discharge – bed-blocking – in 2023/24



**20,434**

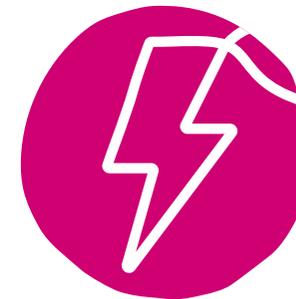
mental health calls to NHS 24 in 2019. In 2023 there were

**139,008**



**29.2%**

rejected referrals of young people to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services



Probable suicides increased by 30 in 2023

**792 IN TOTAL**



**ALMOST A QUARTER**

(23.8%) of people who had a psychiatric admission to hospital were re-admitted within four months in 2023/24



**OVER 50,000**

people were admitted to hospital with mental health related conditions in 2023/24



**92%**

of Scottish Mental Illness Stigma Study participants experienced stigma with family and friends in the last year

# We are in a mental health crisis

Our mental health wasn't great before the pandemic, but it's certainly much worse since. Across the piece, indicators are going in the wrong direction. According to the most recent census, more than one in 10 Scots now say they have a mental health condition – up from fewer than one in 20 in 2011.

This is not a surprise. As well as the pandemic, and everything that entailed, we continue to live through real economic challenges, with the cost of living still high. Public services are stretched often to near-breaking point, and sometimes they no longer exist at all. There are pressures on housing, in the workplace, and in our communities. All of these inevitably contribute to worse mental health.

A huge part of the crisis we face is that our mental health system cannot cope. The NHS does incredible work but it is struggling in the face of this massive and growing demand. We need more investment and capacity – more psychiatrists, more nurses, more beds – in the system.

But we also need to change the system itself to meet people's needs – including much more community and preventative support across the country, to stop small problems becoming big problems.



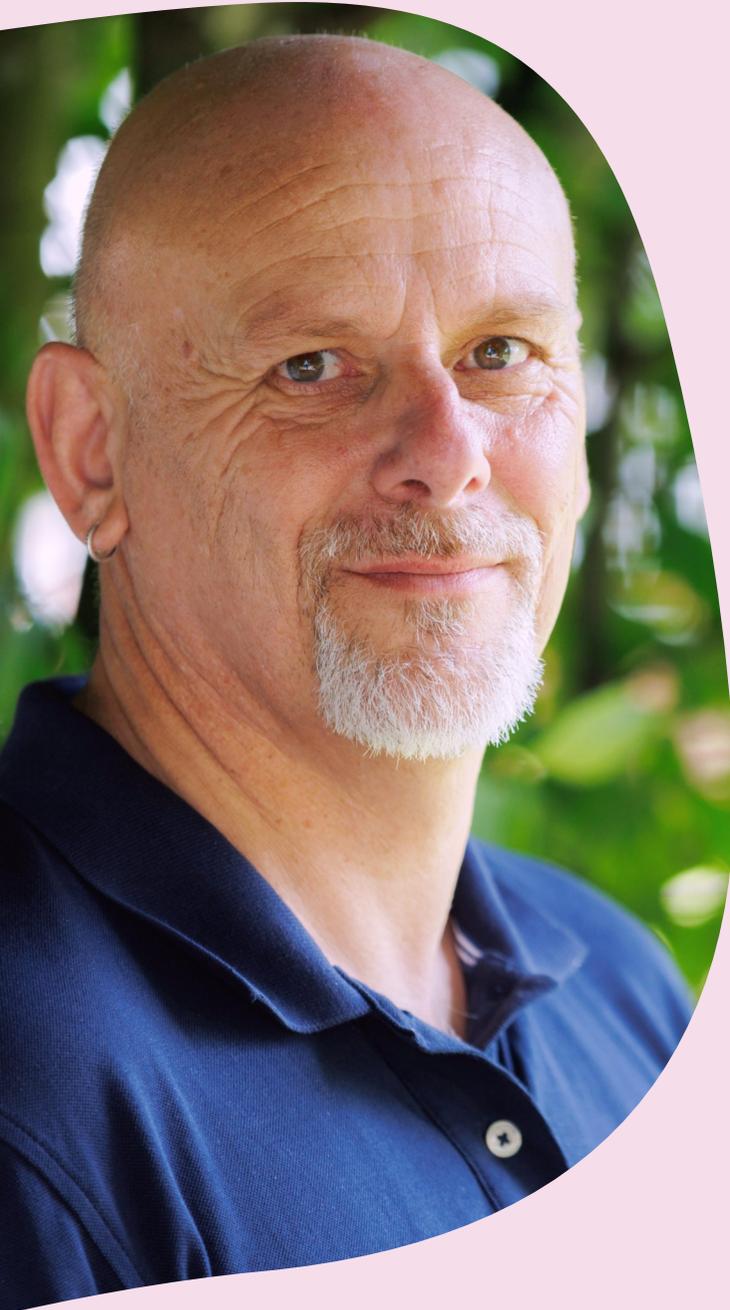
# Our strategic goals

We want to play our part in addressing the mental health crisis. We have four long-term strategic goals which we think will help us do that.

- 1 To be there for people** – by working tirelessly to support people with mental health problems
- 2 To promote good mental health and wellbeing** – helping everyone in Scotland to consider, value and look after their own mental health and wellbeing
- 3 To end stigma and discrimination** – because no one with a mental health problem should be treated worse than someone without
- 4 To challenge inequality** – removing barriers to support, regardless of background or identity, and promoting the rights of people with mental health problems.

These are big ambitions. We know that we won't be able to achieve them entirely in the four years of this plan. But, working with partners and with people experiencing mental health problems, we can make carefully designed, deliberate progress towards them.





## STEVE'S STORY

**Steve faced bullying at school and rejection from his family at an early age, leading to a struggle against depression for most of his adult life.**

The loneliness and isolation he experienced came to a head during the Covid lockdown, when he began having thoughts of suicide.

“I was in such a dark place, a place I thought I couldn't return from. I was in so much pain, but whenever anyone asked how I was, I'd reply: 'I'm fine, absolutely fine.' Even my wife didn't know.”

Steve slept as little as three hours a night for several decades, until one day he learned about our programme The Changing Room at his local football club.

“A friend let me know about SAMH and it's a miracle really. If that hadn't happened, I really don't know where I'd be now.”

Steve now uses his experiences to advocate for men's mental health in the national media, particularly middle-aged men – who may find it more difficult to speak up.

“I spent 50 years not talking about suicide. Best believe I won't miss any opportunity now.”

**“A friend let me know about SAMH and it's a miracle really. If that hadn't happened, I really don't know where I'd be now.”**

# Taking Action

Mental health is a spectrum. We can have better and worse mental health, and that can change over time. Getting from worse mental health to better mental health is not a straight line. Recovery often includes steps back as well as forward.

Some mental health problems are bigger. They need medical or psychiatric treatment and the kind of hospital care we can't offer. We can't fix the bigger problems alone. We're not the NHS. But we can definitely help with the smaller problems. And we can relieve the pressure on the NHS, by helping more people get the mental health support they need, where they need it, when they need it.



To do this, we will deliver these five actions during this four-year plan.

## OUR 5 ACTIONS

### We will:

- 1** Reach more people with mental health problems, offering them the support and information they need to help their recovery
- 2** Show that change in the mental health system is possible, through our own work, including our campaigning, and by influencing the work and practice of others
- 3** Build a better evidence base to demonstrate our contribution to better mental health outcomes for people – helping to fill long-standing national gaps in data and demonstrating our impact
- 4** Play our part in reducing the suicide rate in Scotland, including crucial work in specific areas and sectors
- 5** Reduce the number of people that need NHS and formal support and treatment by improving access to early intervention and preventative support.

# Creating Change

We need to know that the work we do has an impact – that it changes people's lives for the better – so we are developing an outcomes and evaluation framework that will allow us to track that change during the next four years.

In the meantime, we've identified three measures which we know will help us to see the scope and scale of what we do during this plan.

## OUR 3 MEASURES

1

**Reach:** we will increase the number of people that we support annually, from 28,000 people in 2024/25 to 78,000 by 2028/29

2

**Investment:** we will significantly increase our own charitable investment into the work we do, to around £1.5 million annually. At the same time, we will fully fund our first ever major appeal, to the tune of £10 million

3

**Outcomes:** none of this matters if we do not improve mental health outcomes for the people we support. We will track this across a range of credible and widely-accepted health and wellbeing measures.





## MORGAN'S STORY

**Morgan, an actor and creative, faced a mix of industry, economic, and personal pressures that led to a period of low mood and feeling lost.**

She struggled with the pressure to have everything “sorted out” – which led to a period of low mood and feeling lost.

“I initially tried to solve my problems alone, thinking I wasn't ‘bad enough’ to need help, I could just ‘rally on’.

“Encouraged by a close friend, when the problems persisted, I reached out to one of the SAMH psychological wellbeing services. Through these sessions, I learned to identify and process my emotions healthily, becoming more self-aware and setting boundaries.

“This early intervention helped me catch my mental health issues before they worsened, significantly improving my wellbeing.”

With her creative energy restored, Morgan is now thriving in the creative industries, feeling more productive than ever.

**“I learned to identify and process my emotions healthily, becoming more self-aware and setting boundaries.”**

# People, places and communities

People are at the heart of everything we do – whether it's the people we support, or through the design and delivery of our services, our wider work in communities throughout the country, or in our campaigning and activism.

Our plan is no different.

We will continue to be here for everyone in Scotland. But we know that there are communities and groups of people more likely to develop mental health problems or have worse mental health outcomes because of societal and structural barriers and gaps.

That's why over the next four years we will be looking out in particular for seven communities and groups of people that we think need more support and for whom we want to see better outcomes.

## People with severe and/or enduring mental illness

Our history began with supporting people experiencing mental illness and we are going back to our roots. Mental illness has been sidelined and ignored – in the public discourse and, too often, by the mental health system – and we're determined to change that.

We will expand our reach by increasing the availability of services we currently offer and introducing new programmes to help more people with severe and/or enduring illness.

We will look at how we can do more to support people – and their families and carers – when they receive a diagnosis of severe and/or enduring mental illness.

And we'll do more to fight stigma and discrimination, so that people with mental illness are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

We will also become a sector leader in digital care – diversifying our offers and increasing choice for those we support.



## People with mild to moderate mental health problems

Opening The Nook – Scotland’s first ever network of walk-in mental health support hubs – will transform what we can offer to people experiencing mild to moderate mental health problems.

We will open at least five Nooks across Scotland during this plan and, combined with a significant outreach and digital support offer, our capacity to help more people will rapidly grow across the country.

We will scale up our psychological wellbeing offers and grow our Distress Brief Intervention (DBI) service to help more people to access the support they need, at an earlier stage.

And we will continue to make the connection between physical and mental health through our nationwide physical activity and sport work.

## People at risk of, or affected by, suicide

We will build on the successful and life-saving work we have done throughout Scotland to prevent suicide, including by developing our practice and doing more in partnership with others.

Taking a place-based and community approach to suicide prevention, targeted towards the places and communities where greatest need exists, we will grow our services and help even more people.

## Young people

We introduced several successful programmes and established our Young People’s Panel during our previous plan.

With this work now firmly established, the Panel and our Youth Activists will drive forward our efforts to improve young people’s mental health, and we will support and enable them to prioritise and make decisions about both their work and our work in this space: by young people, for young people.

## Under-served communities

We have long recognised that some communities experience barriers to accessing mental health support and worse mental health outcomes, for structural and socio-economic reasons.

We will be focusing on improving access to support for, and reaching more people within, diverse communities, including LGBTQ+ and ethnic and religious minority communities, as well as older and neurodivergent people.

We believe that many people across these groups and communities have been under-served by mental health organisations in the past – and we want to change that.



# Introducing **THE NOOK** from **SAMH**

Scotland's first  
ever network of  
walk-in mental  
health support  
hubs.



Scotland is in a mental health crisis, and we have waited long enough for investment in better community mental health support.

Better community mental health support is good for people, communities and society. It will help individual recovery, create new social connections, and relieve pressure on the NHS and other services.

We believe everyone should be able to easily access mental health support when they need it.

We know that isn't the case in Scotland right now and that's why, in the face of a mental health emergency, we are introducing The Nook – first in Glasgow and then across the country.

The Nook will be a walk-in mental health support hub anyone can visit to talk about their mental health, get information for themselves or those they love and support, and find out about programmes and services that can help make things better.

That's what The Nook is all about: a place to ask once and get help fast.

- **No need for referrals**
- **No long waiting times**
- **No confusing or difficult pathways**
- **No rejection**
- **No stigma.**



Instead, The Nook will provide drop-in mental health and wellbeing support that offers choice and flexibility in a safe, stigma-free and non-clinical environment – without the need for an appointment, seven days a week.

We will be investing heavily in The Nook ourselves. But we need public support to help make this happen – which is why we are launching our biggest ever public appeal. We will be aiming to raise £10 million over the next three years to pay for setting up and running The Nooks.

Our first Nook will open in Glasgow in late 2025. We will create four more across Scotland by the end of 2028, prioritising communities experiencing poverty, unemployment and social exclusion, and ensuring support reaches those who need it most.

**Our plan is about action and change, and The Nooks demonstrate our commitment to bringing about that change.**





## BAILEY'S STORY

**Since the age of eight, Bailey has struggled to get the support he needed.**

"I struggled really badly with anxiety and was also struggling to eat. I was pretty much told I was a difficult child and wasn't offered much in the way of support."

After being bullied at high school, causing his mental health to deteriorate further, he again didn't feel he received adequate support.

When we told Bailey about our plans for The Nook, he felt it could have really helped him.

"The last few years would have been different if I got the support I needed. Having someone to speak to there and then would have been so important. Being able to come into The Nook with no waiting times would have been a huge help."

**"I was pretty much told I was a difficult child and wasn't offered much in the way of support."**

# Why SAMH?

## We are Scotland's national mental health charity.

From nation-wide services, like our Information Service and online wellbeing support Time for You, to our 70 services based in communities across Scotland, we work every day to support better mental health and wellbeing.

With 550 staff, we're well-placed across the country to see what's happening in mental health and to be informed. We are a service provider and a campaigner. We're proud of this.

We listen to what matters locally and we campaign nationally – for the changes, big and small, that can make all the difference in life. Because now, more than ever, we need to make change happen. We take action for Scotland's mental health.

Our work is informed by our frontline workers – who make up 80% of our staff and who tell us what it's like for people with mental health problems in communities across Scotland – and by the people they support. We're working hard to make sure that people with mental health problems can genuinely participate in our planning and decision-making.

This is our most informed and considered plan yet. In some ways, it's not that we wrote it – it's what people with mental health problems have told us they need.

We've been supporting people with mental health problems since 1923 and we'll continue to make sure that we can be there for everyone who needs us throughout this new plan and beyond.



# SAMH IN NUMBERS



**38,706**

downloaded  
website  
resources



**272**

suicide  
interventions  
by SAMH staff



**17,907**

people  
accessing our  
online training  
resources



**133,444**

website  
visits



**28,467**

people we  
supported through  
community-based  
services



**57**

active  
corporate  
partnerships



**550**

people on  
our staff  
team



**28,250**

people completed  
our wellbeing  
self-assessment  
tool



**278**

workplace  
wellbeing training  
sessions, engaging

**5,163**

participants

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[National Records of Scotland, Probable suicides 2023](#)

[Public Health Scotland, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services \(CAMHS\) waiting times, 2024](#)

[Public Health Scotland, Mental health inpatient activity, 2024](#)

[Public Health Scotland, Psychological therapies waiting times, 2024](#)

[Scotland's Census 2022](#)

[Scottish Government, Scottish Health Survey 2023](#)

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SAMHscotland



SAMH



SAMHtweets



SAMHmentalhealth



[samh.org.uk](https://samh.org.uk)

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**SAMH**

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