

## SAMH'S VIEW: SPORT & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



### 1. Context

Sport and physical activity are good for your mental health and wellbeing.<sup>1</sup> The less physical activity a person does, the more likely they are to experience low mood, depression, tension and worry.<sup>2</sup>

### 2. Key Points

- The level of physical activity in the UK ranks poorly behind other European countries, with 44% of the population engaging in no moderate exercise.<sup>3</sup>
- SAMH's Get Active interim evaluation highlighted the benefits of regular physical activity in promoting good mental health, preventing mental ill-health and improving the quality of life of people who experience mental health problems.<sup>4</sup>
- People with mental health problems face stigma about their illness which may prevent them from engaging in sport and physical activity.<sup>5</sup>
- In some areas, GPs can refer patients with mild to moderate mental health problems to physical activity as a treatment for their illness. Edinburgh's 'Healthy Active Minds' is a successful example of this, with 99% of participants saying they enjoyed taking part in the programme,<sup>6</sup> and 87% noting that the programme helped them to achieve their goals.
- Research has shown that the most positive impact on people's mood came from low-intensity aerobic exercise for 30-35 minutes, 3-5 days a week over a 10-12 weeks period.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Scottish Government, The Scottish Health Survey: Mental Health and Wellbeing, Jan 2015 at p 48  
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0046/00469088.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The Royal College of Psychiatrists, Physical Activity and Mental Health, 2012  
<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/treatmentwellbeing/physicalactivity.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> The British Heart Foundation, Physical Activity Statistics, 2015 <https://www.bhf.org.uk/publications/statistics/physical-activity-statistics-2015>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.samh.org.uk/media/348932/get\\_active\\_evaluation\\_summary\\_report.pdf](https://www.samh.org.uk/media/348932/get_active_evaluation_summary_report.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> The Scottish Government, Attitudes to Mental Health in Scotland: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2013  
<http://www.scotcen.org.uk/media/563039/ssa-mental-health.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Edinburgh Leisure, Healthy Active Minds Performance Report, July 2013  
[http://about.edinburghleisure.co.uk/images/downloads/Healthy\\_Active\\_Minds\\_Performance\\_29.07.13.pdf](http://about.edinburghleisure.co.uk/images/downloads/Healthy_Active_Minds_Performance_29.07.13.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Reed, J. & Buck, S. (2009). The effect of regular aerobic exercise on positive-activated affect: A meta-analysis. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 10 (6), 581-594.

- Elite sportspeople face high and unique pressure in their day to day lives due to the nature of their employment.<sup>8</sup> Despite this high risk, it has only recently been recognised and requires much development.<sup>9</sup>

### **3. SAMH calls for:**

- Employers to adopt greater responsibility in promoting physical and regular movement amongst their staff.
- The roll out of the 'Daily Mile' programme in all schools across Scotland.
- Mental health training to be provided to all staff at leisure facilities, and subsequently the implementation of specific programmes for people with severe and enduring mental health problems.

### **4. Further detail**

[Sport and Physical Activity guidelines](#)

[English Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation](#)

[The Daily Mile Programme](#)

[Mental Health and Elite Sport](#)

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<sup>8</sup> Mind, Performance Matters: Mental Health and Elite Sport, 2014 <http://www.mind.org.uk/media/1085139/Mental-Health-and-Elite-Sport.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> PFA Scotland, 'PFA Scotland Launch Wellbeing Fund' 2014 <http://pfascotland.co.uk/2014/news/pfa-scotland-launch-wellbeing-fund/>