

SAMH'S VIEW:

GENERAL PRACTICE

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ABOUT THE SAMH'S VIEW SERIES

SAMH's View statements set out SAMH's position on a particular policy topic. They are produced by the Public Affairs team.

In developing SAMH's position, the issues of equalities, diversity and human rights are investigated.

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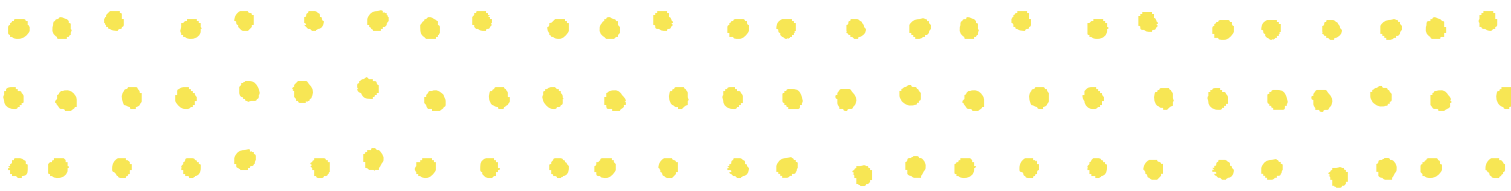
Context

Going to the GP is the first step for many people with mental health problems to get support and treatment. In Scotland, one in three GP appointments is related to stress, anxiety or depression.¹ A significant number (94%) of Scottish GPs also say that the number of patients presenting with mental health problems has increased since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.²

GP practices provide healthcare services for NHS boards; funding for these services is made available to practices through the General Medical Services (GMS) contract. A new GMS contract came into effect in 2018, which aims to reduce the workloads of GPs while increasing the role of wider multi-disciplinary teams.³ As part of this, the Scottish Government has committed to recruiting at least 800 more GPs by 2027 and 250 Community Link Workers (CLW) by 2021.⁴ The contract also uses a new funding model – the GP Workload Formula – which aims to better recognise the impact of deprivation and frailty on the workload of GPs.

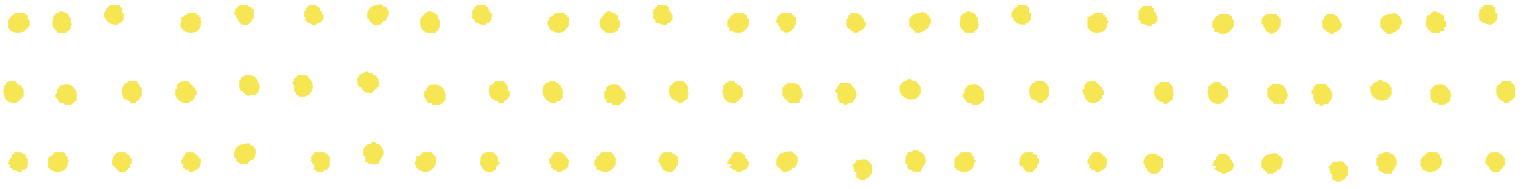
Key points

- People in Scotland generally rate the care they receive from their GP practice positively; however, one in 20 people don't feel they get enough time with their GP.⁵
- One in five people with a mental health problem has experienced stigma in GP practices.⁶
- Nearly two thirds of respondents to a SAMH survey of people with pre-existing mental health problems said they had tried to speak to a GP about their mental health since the start of the pandemic; over one in ten (13%) had been unable to.⁷
- In a SAMH survey of 464 GPs, 84.6% of respondents thought there were gaps in service provision for patients with mental health problems in their area.⁸
- Between the age of 16 and 60 women are significantly more likely to go to the GP than men. Men who take antidepressant medication are also 8% less likely to visit their GP than women who receive this medication.⁹
- In the UK, Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic people are less likely to access support for their mental health through primary care and are also more likely to end up in crisis care. Barriers to primary care include different cultural attitudes about mental health as well as a lack of knowledge about mental health care available.¹⁰
- Mental health problems and GP appointments related to them are more than twice as prevalent in deprived areas.¹¹
- Social prescribing can reduce the prevalence of mental health problems, social exclusion and demand on health services. However, 87.3% of GPs surveyed said there was a need for more information on local services, including social prescribing opportunities^{12,13}
- As of March 2020, there were 217 Community Link Workers in post in Scotland.¹⁴

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- SAMH provides Link Workers across Aberdeen.
 - In a survey of GPs in Scotland, over half of respondents (54%) reported feeling so stressed that they cannot cope at least once a month or more often.¹⁵

SAMH calls for:

- The implementation of 15 minute GP appointments as a standard, this should be a priority in areas of socio-economic deprivation.
- The expansion of the Community Link Worker programme to ensure a Community Link Worker is embedded in every GP surgery in Scotland who can improve people's access to community-based services and social prescribing opportunities.
- An increase in the proportion of funding for community-based health and social care in each year of the next parliamentary term, to help increase and diversify psychological wellbeing and social care support.
- An increase in the amount of protected time for general practice teams to meet and discuss workload issues and team wellbeing, as called for by the Royal College of General Practitioners
- NHS Education for Scotland to develop mental health training for GPs which covers how mental health problems can present differently in people and empowers GPs to ask about mental health even in physical health consultations.
- On-going cultural awareness training for GPs which improves understanding of different cultural attitudes to mental health and seeking treatment as well as the impact of discrimination on mental health.
- The Scottish Government to continue to fund and support the See Me programme to tackle stigma and discrimination so it can continue to promote mental health inclusion in the health and social care sector.
- The Scottish Government to continue to fund and promote Scotland's National Wellbeing Hub for people working in Health and Social Care.



Further detail:

SUPPORT FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE STAFF

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FURTHER READING

- [Royal College of General Practitioners \(Scotland\)](#)
- [Scottish General Medical Services Contract 2018](#)

Notes

¹ NHS Inform, [Struggling with Stress?](#), 2020

² Royal College of General Practitioners, [RCGP Scotland calls on political parties to revolutionise mental health support for patients and frontline healthcare workers](#), 2021

³ Scottish Government and British Medical Association, [The 2018 General Medical Services Contract in Scotland](#), 2017

⁴ Scottish Government, [National health and social care workforce plan: part three](#), 2018

⁵ Scottish Government, [Health and Care Experience Survey: results 2019/20](#), 2020

⁶ See Me, [Health and Social Care](#), n.d

⁷ SAMH, [Forgotten? Mental health Care and Treatment during the Coronavirus Pandemic](#), 2021

⁸ SAMH, [Know Where to Go A SAMH Survey of General Practitioners in Scotland](#), 2014

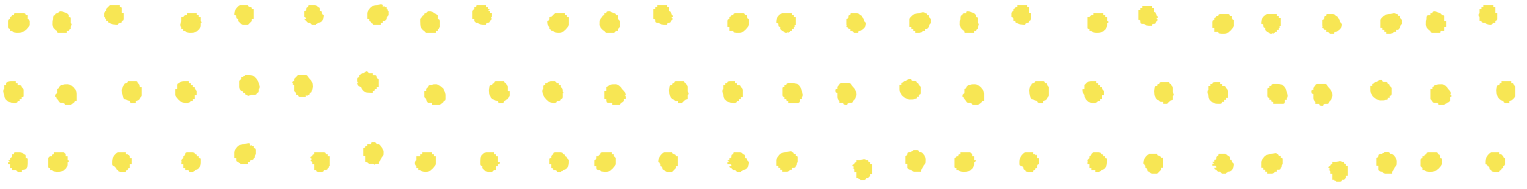
⁹ Wang Y, Hunt K, Nazareth I, et al., [Do men consult less than women? AN analysis of routinely collected UK general practice data](#), 2013

¹⁰ Race Equality Foundation, [Racial disparities in mental health: Literature and evidence review](#), 2019

¹¹ The Scottish Deep End Project, [Deep End Report 22 Mental health issues in the Deep End](#), 2014 ,

¹² British Journal of General Practice, Social prescribing in General Practice: Adding meaning to medicine, 2009

¹³ SAMH, [Know Where to Go A SAMH Survey of General Practitioners in Scotland](#), 2014



¹⁴ Jeane Freeman, [Question S5W-35318](#), 2021

¹⁵ Royal College of General Practitioners, RCGP Tracker Survey, 2021

