

SAMH'S VIEW:

SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

DATE ISSUED

JANUARY
2019

POLICY LEAD

DEBBIE
HORNE

FOR REVIEW BY:

JANUARY
2020

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.

Context

Being physically active has been proven to protect mental wellbeing, as well as improve a person's quality of life when experiencing a mental health problem.¹ But in Scotland, one in three people do not currently meet the World Health Organisation's guidelines for physical activity.²

People experiencing mental ill-health are less likely to be physically active than those experiencing a high level of mental wellbeing.³ Studies consistently show doing more physical activity reduces the likelihood of experiencing low mood, depression, tension and worry.⁴

Both the Scottish Government's Mental Health Strategy 2017-27⁵ and A More Active Scotland: Scotland's Physical Activity Delivery Plan⁶ have actions to increase physical activity to benefit Scotland's mental health.

Key points

- Doing any form of daily physical activity lowers the chance of experiencing emotional distress.⁷
- NICE and SIGN guidelines for the treatment of depression include physical activity programmes – however, there is a lot of variation in the type of exercise services that health professionals can refer to, from full coverage in some local authorities to none in others.^{8 9 10}
- One in four people say their GP prescribing an exercise referral scheme would help to increase their physical activity.¹¹
- Action 31 of the Mental Health Strategy 2017-27 commits to supporting the physical activity programme developed by SAMH. Government funding to date has allowed SAMH's ALBA programme to support people with mental health problems in increasing their physical activity
- In 2018, SAMH launched Scotland's Mental Health Charter for Physical



Activity & Sport. ¹² Scotland's Mental Health Charter for Physical Activity and Sport. Sporting organisations can sign up to demonstrate commitment to make their sport more accessible to people with mental health problems.

- SAMH's work on sport and physical activity includes: a partnership with jogscotland and a partnership project the 'Changing Rooms' supported by Movember UK and the SPFL Trust.
- Factors outwith the control of most people – including transport links, planning systems and affordability - affect physical activity levels. ¹³
- Having easy access to natural environments increases physical activity levels,¹⁴ promotes psychological restoration,¹⁵ improves attention¹⁶ and reduces stress and anxiety¹⁷ regardless of a person's age, gender and social class.¹⁸
- People who are active during their youth are more likely to remain active throughout adulthood;¹⁹ but half of adults say school PE did not help them become more active.²⁰
- When people are given choice and control over their physical activity they are more likely to participate and report greater benefits to their mental health.²¹

SAMH calls for:

- Exercise Referral Schemes for people experiencing mental ill-health to be available nationwide with sufficient provision of evidence-based services that are accessible without cost to the participant
- The expansion of the GP Link Worker Programme nationwide, helping improve knowledge of and access to Exercise Referral Schemes
- Continued Scottish Government funding and support for Action 31 of the Mental Health Strategy 2017-27
- Sporting organisations in receipt of Scottish Government funding to be required to sign up to Scotland's Mental Health Charter for Physical Activity & Sport
- All sporting organisations and physical activity clubs to sign up to the Scotland's Mental Health Charter for Physical Activity & Sport
- All local authority planning guidelines to include criteria on the impact of proposed plans on physical activity and mental health
-



Further detail:

GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

- [Mental Health Strategy 2017-27](#)
- [A More Active Scotland: Scotland's Physical Activity Delivery Plan](#)
- [Scotland's Public Health Priorities](#)

SAMH PUBLICATIONS

- [Scotland's Mental Health Charter for Physical Activity & Sport](#)

Notes

¹ Bauman, A., [Updating the evidence that physical activity is good for health: an epidemiological review 2000–2003](#), 2004

² Scottish Government, [Health of Scotland's population – Physical Activity](#)

³ Shor, R & Shalev, A, [Barriers to involvement in physical activities of person with mental illness](#), 2014

⁴ Royal College of Psychiatrists, [Physical Activity and Mental Health](#)

⁵ Scottish Government, [Mental Health Strategy 2017-27](#), 2017

⁶ Scottish Government, [A More Active Scotland: Scotland's Physical Activity Delivery Plan](#), 2018

⁷ Hamer, M. et al., [Dose-response relationship between physical activity and mental health: the Scottish Health Survey](#), 2008

⁸ [SIGN guidelines](#)

⁹ [NICE guidelines](#)

¹⁰ NHS Health Scotland, [Audit of Exercise Referral Schemes](#), 2010

¹¹ SAMH, [Get Active](#), 2009

¹² SAMH, [Launch of Scotland's Mental Health Charter](#), 2018

¹³ Scottish Government, [Public Health Priorities for Scotland](#), 2018

¹⁴ Richardson, E., et al., [Role of physical activity in the relationship between urban green space and health](#), 2013

¹⁵ R. Kaplan, S. Kaplan: [The experience of nature: A psychological perspective](#), 1989

¹⁶ T. Hartig et al., [Tracking restoration in natural and urban field settings](#), 2003

¹⁷ J. Maas, et al., [Morbidity is related to a green living environment](#), 2009

¹⁸ P. Grahn & U. Stigsdotter [Landscape planning and stress](#), 2003

¹⁹ Telama R. [Tracking of physical activity from childhood to adulthood: a review](#), 2009

²⁰ University of Birmingham, [The Big PE Conversation](#), 2016

²¹ Callaghan, P. et al., [Pragmatic randomised controlled trial of preferred intensity exercise in women living with depression](#), 2011