Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation:

Seven years of changing culture



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Introduction

This report aims to review the impact of the Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation over the last seven years, and highlight the expanding mental health support available to sport and recreation organisations. The report has been developed by the Charter's steering group consisting of the Professional Players Federation (PPF), Sport and Recreation Alliance and Mind.

A selection of case studies are included throughout the report to showcase what has been achieved by signatories. There are too many examples of good practice to include in this report, but you can find a wider selection on the Charter's case studies webpage.

Forewords

"I am delighted with the impact that the Mental Health Charter has had on professional sport and I pay tribute to the role of the Player Associations and our Charter partners in helping to drive this change. There is now so much more focus on players' mental wellbeing combined with improved support networks for players. However, there is still work to do to ensure that mental health is given just as much priority as the physical health of players, especially as sport recovers from the long-term effects of the pandemic."

Brendon Batson OBE, Chairman of the Professional Players Federation

"The Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation has been instrumental in changing how mental health is discussed and prioritised within the sector. The Alliance is incredibly proud to have partnered with Mind and the Professional Players Federation to drive the development of the Charter and the number and diversity of signatories demonstrates the phenomenal commitment of the sector to make improvements in this area. Further support will be required to cement change, especially because of the mental health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Charter has had a galvanising effect in ensuring mental health forms an integral part of the work undertaken by organisations across the sport and recreation sector."

Lisa Wainwright MBE, CEO of the Sport and Recreation Alliance

"Since its introduction in 2015, the Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation has set out how organisations can adopt good mental health practice to make activities inclusive, positive and open to everyone. But it is only through the collaborative efforts of the 470 signatories, that we have seen improvements in the mental health culture for people working, volunteering and taking part in sport and physical activity.

The achievements of the last seven years should not be underestimated but our work is far from finished. The Charter has stimulated an abundance of mental health support for sport and physical activity organisations that will drive this work going forward. And it's only with this support and the commitment of organisations that we can truly embed mental health across the sport and recreation sector."

Paul Farmer CBE, Chief Executive of Mind



Contents

| Introduction | 2 |
|-----------------------|---|
| Forewords | 2 |
| Contents | 3 |
| Current state of play | 4 |
| Impact and progress | |
| Support available | 8 |
| Looking forward | |





Current state of play

The Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation was launched on the 25 March 2015 by the then Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg and mental health advocate and then Minister of State for Care and Support Sir Norman Lamb. It came from a shared desire across the sport and recreation sector to do more around mental health.

On the day, 20 of the country's leading sport organisations, including Player Associations and national governing bodies of sport, signed up to the Charter and its ambitious vision:

to embed mental health within sport and recreation to create a culture shift that removes the stigma around mental health.

As of 1 March 2022, 470 organisations have signed up and committed to the Charter. Signatories range from large national organisations such as Sport England and The FA to community-based groups like Accrington Stanley Community Trust and York City Gymnastics Foundation.

We have been overwhelmed with the number of organisations who have signed up to the Charter. And it was only in 2020 that the number of new signatories began to slow. This is in part due to there being very few regional to national based sport and recreation organisations who have not signed up to the Charter.

Case study: Mental Health and Elite Sport Action Plan

The Mental Health and Elite Sport Action Plan was created by the Government in 2018 to improve mental health support to elite sports people. The Action Plan led to UK Sport developing a Mental Health Strategy for the High-Performance System, Expert Mental Health Panel and a Mental Health team within the English Institute of Sport.

Although there is still more work to be done, progress has been made in reducing mental health stigma in elite sport, improving access to support for elite sports people, and recognising the importance of athletes' wellbeing alongside medals. This has been aided by elite sports people speaking more openly about their mental health and some taking time off to protect their mental wellbeing.

Read more in the Mental Health in Elite Sport report – seven years on.

Impact and progress

The sport and recreation sector has made real progress towards creating a supportive and inclusive environment for people with mental health problems to be active. One of the major driving forces and catalysts for this has been the Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation.

When the Charter was launched, six outcomes were created to monitor impact. The table below lists these outcomes alongside updates on progress.



| sport and recreation to promote wellbeing, with a special focus on encouraging physical activity and social interaction for their contribution to good mental health. 2) Publicly promoting and adopting good mental health policies and best practice within our sports and recreational activities. 3) Promoting positive 2015 Sporting Fut physical activity powers and sectivity powers and the physical activity powers and physical activity powers and the physical activity powers and physical activity powers and the physical activity powers and physical activity powers and the physical activity powers and physical activity powers and the physical activity powers and physical activity powers and physical activity powers and physical activity powers and the physical activity powers and physical activity powers and physical activity powers and physical activity powers and the physical activity powers and physical activity powers and physical activity powers and the physical activity powers and physical activity | s been a key component of major sport strategies including the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) tures and Sport England's 2021 Uniting the Movement. This has led to the prioritisation of mental health as an outcome of projects and programmes. In grammes such as England Athletics' #RunAndTalk, Rugby League Cares' Offload and Active Oxfordshire's Active Body, as on how physical activity can support people with or at risk of developing mental health problems. In World Cup 2021 became the first major international sporting event to launch a Mental Fitness Charter. As part of this, two made the commitment that by the final game of the tournament, every player, team official, match official, teammate of the problems. In have received training to look after their own mental health and of those around them. In the sport sector was produced to help sport and physical activity organisations to support their staff's mental health at nocludes tools and good practice examples to help organisations adopt good mental health policies. |
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| and adopting good mental health policies and best practice within our sports and recreational activities. Mental health is a health of their particular work. Thriving at Work f work. The guide in the last seven years. In the last seven years. | a pillar of <u>UK Coaching's Duty to Care</u> ensuring coaches are equipped with the knowledge and skills to support the mental rticipants and their own. for the sport sector was produced to help sport and physical activity organisations to support their staff's mental health at |
| | |
| using diverse role models and ambassadors to reduce • Examples of sector Your Side, Heads • The sector has pro- | years, elite sports people have spoken more openly about their mental health including reasonable adjustments and taking and competitions to look after their mental health. or led campaigns include #21by21, #LiftTheWeight (see Rugby Players' Association case study), #GoRacingGreen, On the sup, #RunAndTalk and It Takes Balls to Talk. To vided more opportunities for people with lived experience of mental health problems to share their stories and to compete their stories and programmes (for example, Mind's Developing a healthy relationship with physical activity campaign). |
| 4) Actively tackling discrimination on the grounds of mental health The Charter's stee study). | ering group fed into the <u>Duty of Care in Sport Review</u> in 2017 and sits on UK Coaching's Duty to Care Steering Group. ering group played a fundamental role in the Government's <u>Mental Health and Elite Sport Action Plan</u> (see earlier case together to develop the <u>Moving for Mental Health policy brief and research report</u> identifying five recommendations to not practice. |
| Supporting the establishment of a network to work closely with the mental health sector to develop Sector led network Mental Health and Signatories have (SAMH), CALM, C Through Mind's S | rks include the Heads Up Mentally Healthy Football steering group, Rugby's Professional Game Board (PGB), PFA annual defenctional Wellbeing Conference 'Injured' and the PPF's Mental Wellbeing Group. partnered with a wide range of mental health organisations including Mind, the Scottish Association for Mental Health Chasing the Stigma, Young Minds, Sporting Chance, Cognacity, Changing Minds and many more. Sector Support programme, Regional Networks have been established in England. They bring together physical activity and panisations at a local to regional level to improve collaboration and share learning between the two sectors together. |
| 6) Regularly monitoring our performance, • A wide range of m surveys to partner | nonitoring systems have been adopted by signatories to measure mental health outcomes from pulse checks and staff rships with academic and research organisations and completion of the Workplace Wellbeing Index. been asked to complete three surveys since 2015 (findings below) and have shaped the future direction of the Charter in |



Although it is impossible to fully measure the Charter's impact, signatories have completed surveys over the last seven years to help us understand any culture change that has taken place. The findings include:









Case study: Grantham Tennis Club

Grantham Tennis Club established their Feeling Good tennis sessions to promote the mental health benefits of playing tennis and socialising. For two hours every week, players of all abilities can join in fun and supportive sessions designed to boost mental health.

As part of the sessions, participants are provided with refreshments and a chance to socialise. Professional support is also on-hand as the local authority provide a community support worker who joins the session to support any participants who may need additional help.

Jak, who regularly attends the sessions, said "it has certainly helped meeting new people and gave me a sense of purpose that I was missing in my life. It has done wonders for my mental health. I now feel a lot more confident in myself to go forward in life."

The Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation has also influenced the mental health sector to use physical activity as a tool to support people's mental health. This includes Mind's <u>Get Set to Go programme</u> which has supported over 10,000 people with mental health problems to be active with many participants reporting increased quality of life scores. Mind have also established their <u>Sector Support programme</u> which provides mental health support to sport and physical activity organisations. It has been found to be "effective in promoting parity of esteem between physical and mental health in the sector".

Rethink have helped their local Peer Support Groups to offer physical activity to support people severely affected by mental illness to be active. Sport in Mind have grown their Berkshire based programme to have a footprint across the South East. And many community-based organisations such as Mental Health Swims and Run Talk Run use physical activity to help people access peer support and mental health services.

Case study: Rugby Players' Association

The Rugby Players' Association (RPA) established their <u>#LiftTheWeight campaign</u> to promote discussions about mental health in rugby whilst also raising awareness of the support available to professional rugby players.

To do this, they put players' voices at the heart of the campaign through case study videos. In the videos, players talk about everything from dealing with long term injury to coping with stress and depression.

Accompanying the videos is information on mental health, organisations that offer support, and videos from doctors on effective strategies players can use. The RPA also offer players a confidential counselling service which is now accessed by more people since the campaign launched.

"As soon as I had the conversation [about mental health] I felt I had a little bit of weight off my shoulders. It was only when I had these conversations that I saw other people had exactly the same experiences. I began to realise it's not as shameful, as isolating or abnormal as I thought it was. That in itself brought hope." **Scrum half Jono Kitto**

¹ Kinnafick, F.E., Rogers, E., Adams, E.J., Tweed, L., Coates, J. (2021) Evaluation of Mind's Sector Support programme (2018-2021), National Centre for Sport and Exercise Medicine, School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences, Loughborough University, Loughborough, UK

Support available

The Charter has been instrumental in advancing mental health in the sport and recreation sector. On the back of the Charter, there is abundance of mental health support and resources to help organisations. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Mind's Sector Support programme which includes training, resources, events, webinars, networking opportunities, partnerships, campaigns and bespoke consultancy support on a range of topics from developing mental health strategies and policies to establishing physical activity programmes to support mental health outcomes. To access this support, visit www.mind.org.uk/sport or contact Mind's Physical Activity team via sport@mind.org.uk.
- English Institute for Sport's mental health team and expert panel provides advice and guidance on all matters relating to mental health and sports within the UK Sport-funded high-performance system, particularly supporting complex cases and development of strategies, processes, or policies. To access this support, email mentalhealth@eis2win.co.uk.
- Professional Players Federation's (PPF) mental health support the PPF have collated mental health support available to professional sports people provided by Player Associations on their mental health webpage. The PPF also convene regular mental health working groups to develop new initiatives and share good practice amongst Player Associations.
- Workplace wellbeing support for staff mental health there are a range of resources available including Mind's Workplace wellbeing training, resources and consultancy, Thriving at Work a guide for the sport sector and the Mental Health at Work sport toolkit.

There is an increasing number of good practice examples of sport and recreation organisations supporting people's mental health through physical activity. These examples can be found on the <u>Charter's case studies page</u>, <u>Mind's website</u> and the <u>Professional</u> Players Federations' mental health page.

Case study: Mentally Health Football Declaration

As a legacy of the <u>Heads Up campaign</u>, the UK football family united to sign the <u>Mentally Health Football Declaration</u>. Signatories representing clubs, leagues, and organisations, including The FA, the Premier League, the English Football League, the Barclays FA Women's Super League, Professional Footballers Association and the League Managers Association, have committed to building a mentally healthy culture at all levels of football.

The declaration will see football recognising mental health is just as important as physical health. Football is a team game, and for the first time there is a collective 'game plan' to ensure the mental health of players, staff, managers, coaches, and officials is prioritised.



Looking forward

We thank all organisations who have signed up to the Charter and have committed to removing the mental health stigma in the sport and recreation sector. You have contributed to the sector making real progress towards creating a supportive and inclusive environment for people with mental health problems to be active.

But there is still more to do to achieve the Charter's vision of embedding mental health within sport and recreation to create a culture shift. Although we will no longer actively seek new Charter signatories from March 2022, we strongly believe the support developed on the back of the Charter, and listed in this report, is best placed to meet the evolving needs of organisations to truly achieve the vision of embedding mental health across the sector. Relevant resources and links to this support will continue to be accessible on the Sport and Recreation Alliance's Charter webpages.

"I think the Charter has centred people's minds. It allowed us to assess what we're doing and what we can do more of. We've used it to spot gaps and improve what we offer." **Lindsay Gordon, League Managers Association**

"We know how sport can use its collective power to tackle mental health and the stigma which still surrounds it, which is why we're proud to be a signatory of the Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation. As the recognised National Governing Body for aquatics, ensuing the mental wellbeing of our athletes, volunteers and team members is extremely important to us.

Through the Charter, we have been able to draw on support for implementing a positive mental health agenda within all our sports. We have set out our ambitions and measured our progress as we demonstrate commitment to raising awareness of mental health. We will continue to encourage open and honest conversations about mental wellbeing and offer the necessary support and guidance when it is required."

Jane Nickerson MBE, Swim England





