

Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation:

Seven years of changing culture

SPORT+
RECREATION
ALLIANCE



PPF
Professional
Players Federation



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.



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 [Charter's case studies page](#), [Mind's website](#) and the [Professional Players Federations' mental health page](#).

Case study: Mentally Health Football Declaration

As a legacy of the [Heads Up campaign](#), the UK football family united to sign the [Mentally Health Football Declaration](#). 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.



