

# Safeguarding Mental Health and Promoting Positive Mental Fitness



**T.A.M.H.I**

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<http://tamhi.btck.co.uk>

## Introduction

The following document is a guide to how sport clubs can promote mental health within the club. This resource has been created by TAMHI (Tackling Awareness of Mental Health Issues) to put measures in place to safeguard club member's mental wellbeing.

## About TAMHI

TAMHI is a charity that has been set up to help sports club raise awareness of mental fitness and to support clubs to put measurements in place to tackle issues that may have an impact on mental wellbeing.

## TAMHI Vision

All sports groups in Northern Ireland have the structures and support mechanisms in place to support positive mental health.

## TAMHI Mission

To make mental health a top priority for all sports groups in Northern Ireland.

## TAMHI Sports Develop-mental approach

**Promote.....** Positive Mental Fitness

**Raise Awareness....**of issues that affect Mental Health

**Tackle Stigma....** and break down barriers through Sport

## What do we mean by Mental Fitness/Wellbeing

Mental Fitness/Wellbeing can be described as a combination of **how we feel** (our emotions and life satisfaction) and **how we function**, (relationships with others, personal control, purpose in life and independence). It is something that affects everyone, old and young, and anyone can experience good or poor mental wellbeing. We know that the following factors can influence our mental wellbeing positively and negatively.



## Risk and Protective Factors that impact on Mental Wellbeing/Fitness

Over time, experiencing poor mental wellbeing can contribute to the development of mental health problems such as depression or anxiety. Actions which address the risk factors and support the development of the protective factors highlighted below can make mental health problems less likely to occur.

Risk Factors	Protective Factors
Poverty	Economic security
Discrimination	Empowerment *
Violence, abuse, neglect	Feelings of security and control *
Peer Rejection and Isolation	Positive Interactions with others*
Stressful Life events	Physical Activity *
Lack of Family Support	Stable Family Life
Poor Physical Health/long term conditions	Healthy Diet & lifestyle*

### \*Sports can promote these Protective Factors



## Why Sport?

Sport is reflective of our society as a whole and therefore it is important that sport addresses the importance of promoting a positive mental fitness for all. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that one in four of us will experience a mental illness at some point in their lives.

Participating in sport has a positive contribution to make to a person's welfare if their experience is one that reflects the positive values of sport;

- Fun
- Friendship
- Commitment
- Honesty
- Teamwork
- Fair competition
- Inclusion
- Sense of achievement

So sport has a positive contribution to make in regards to tackling risk factors which can contribute to poor mental health.



Sports Clubs are often more acceptable and accessible to young people than traditional health services

Sports Clubs often reach vulnerable young people and adult males who could be "at risk"

Early Intervention in mental health problems among young people results in better outcomes in adult life

All interactions with young people and adult males offer the opportunity to promote mental wellbeing

Many of the activities sports clubs undertake are, by their nature already improving mental wellbeing

## "Signs to look out for?"

Encourage Club Members to look for non-verbal signs of emotional distress such as lack of eye contact, poor concentration, closed body posture or unusual energy levels (either very low or very high).

Symptoms look out for:

- Change in appetite or weight
- Disrupted sleep
- Self-Harm
- Lack of energy
- Lack of concentration
- Lack of Confidence and self esteem
- Use of Drink and Drugs
- Feeling isolated
- Dwelling on problems
- Outbursts of anger
- Feeling a failure
- Appearing withdrawn
- Drop in performance
- Low mood, sadness
- Not enjoying the sport anymore

## Key Recommendations

Find out about available mental health and youth counselling services for young people and link with them. Have a list of other services you can directly refer to or signpost to if further support is needed.

Know who to contact if support needs are urgent – for example, if you believe the young person might be at risk of immediate harm.

Undertake some form of needs assessment of all young people/ adult members when they start, so that you know what their needs are and can help them access additional support if required.

Recognise that there may be times when hearing the experiences of young people will affect you or other volunteers emotionally – be self-aware.



## Advice about starting a conversation with somebody if you are concerned about them:

Have these conversations in a quiet space and set aside a bit of time for them if possible. Agree on a time to come back to this issue and talk about it some more if this is appropriate.

7 Questions you can ask to engage with someone who may be having a problem;

1. How are things?
2. What's going well? (Start with a positive – this is your "Hook" to make them realise the good things they have and can focus on)
3. What's not going well?
4. Is there anything you need to do?
5. Is there support you need?
6. What's one step you may take?
7. What difference might it make?

Implement the following Ideas to develop a supportive Mental Fitness Environment

## Policies

Ensure club policies clearly show the commitment to safeguarding mental wellbeing.

## People

Ensure coaches, volunteers and members are aware of the clubs commitment to mental health, the resources available on the clubs website, responsible use of social media to raise awareness and ensure that those that wish to avail of training can do so.

Encourage a **Talk About Mental Health Issues** ethos at the club - Always talk openly about issues in the community – suicide, drink & drug abuse, anti-social behaviour – if you do not talk about it you cannot deal with it. The role of mentors and roles models is vital.

## Programmes

Invest in Young Leadership Programmes and promote Peer to Peer support.

Run annual mental wellbeing events combining sport with education/learning and health – run sport festivals in partnership with community groups and mental health charities.

Run programmes that educate members about fitness, healthy eating and mental wellbeing – encourage them to stay active when they are not training at the club.

Design and deliver an Active learning Programme that relates sport scenarios to real life scenarios e.g. Problem Solving, Communication/Reflection, Supporting Teammates/Club members.

## Partnerships

Work with Mental Health Partner to design club resources and ensure key information is distributed and available online.

Make members aware of the relationships in place and involve partners in activity – familiarity breaks down barriers.



## Further Information



<http://tamhi.btck.co.uk>



[www.lifelinehelpline.info](http://www.lifelinehelpline.info)



[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)



[www.lighthousecharity.com](http://www.lighthousecharity.com)

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