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14.05.20

We're here for you

Supporting mental health through physical activity

During the challenging times presented by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, our wellbeing is becoming more important than ever.

A distinction is often made between your mind and your body, but when considering mental and physical health, the two can support each other.

It is well documented that poor physical health can lead to an increased risk of mental health issues, and poor mental health can impact on your physical health.

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The 'We're Here' campaign is helping to promote the benefits of physical activity to support mental health.

We're here

In partnership with SAMH (Scottish Association for Mental Health), **sportscotland** is linking physical activity and mental health in a bid to encourage people to continue to reap the benefits of exercise as well as reassure the Scottish sporting network to stay connected during the pandemic.



Mental health is becoming a significant issue during the stay-at-home phase of COVID-19, so it's imperative that we support and protect our mental wellbeing. The [Scottish Government](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others/pages/exercise/) (as of Monday 11 May 2020) has eased restrictions on exercise, allowing people to go outside to walk, run or cycle as often as they would like, if they keep to the social distancing and travel guidance. Physical activity can play a crucial role in aiding your wellbeing by reducing stress, improving your mood and lowering your risk of depression.

Stewart Harris, **sportscotland** chief executive, said:

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“Being physically and mentally active is one of the best things we can do for our physical and mental health.

“During what is a very difficult time for people across Scotland and beyond, it is more important than ever that we all do what we can to look after ourselves.

“SAMH’s work helps to change lives and we are proud to be working with them again on the ‘We’re here’ campaign. It is vital that everyone works together to make sure we overcome the challenges faced across the sporting system and we are here to help throughout this difficult time.”

Robert Nesbitt, SAMH head of physical activity and sport, added: “At SAMH we know the positive impact that physical activity can have on improving your mental health and wellbeing. The ‘We’re here’ campaign will further emphasise the need to stay physically active and we look forward to driving this campaign alongside our partner **sportscotland**.

“Real change can come from understanding that physical and mental health are equally important, and physical activity and sport can help us to look after them.

“If we all stay connected and support each other we will be stronger once this is all over.”

I’m here



‘We’re here’ was developed from ‘I’m here’, a collaborative initiative between **jogscotland** and SAMH designed to equip jog leaders with tools to let their joggers know that they’re open to talking about mental health.

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With more than 700 jog leaders taking the online mental health awareness training, many of the leaders have felt more confident in providing support or someone to talk to.

Colin Hutchison, **scottishathletics** head of development, said: "The 'I'm here' movement created by **jogscotland** and SAMH has had an incredible impact on our jogging groups. Over the last three years we've seen first-hand the significant impact physical activity can have on mental health through our partnership with SAMH.

"Their knowledge and experience has been invaluable to help us understand how we can best work with our networks to support people at all levels in athletics and running.

"On the back of the incredible success we've had with 'I'm here', we have always been keen to support SAMH to encourage other governing bodies and sports organisations to get involved. We are delighted to now be supporting the #WeAreHere campaign promoted by **sportscotland** and SAMH.

"The #WeAreHere message is more powerful now than ever before and helps promote the positive impact physical activity can have in helping people manage their mental health.

"We would encourage all governing bodies to get involved to promote #WeAreHere to their networks and share the great work that SAMH do."

Responding to lockdown

jogscotland has responded positively to the lockdown by making its Learn to Run and Walk for Fitness programmes available to all.

The recreational running arm of **scottishathletics** usually only offers up its programmes to members, who run in supportive, sociable jogging groups around the country. But since 6 April, it has published both programmes in full online, supporting people to experience the physical and mental health benefits of exercising in a safe and structured way.

The **jogscotland** programmes are particularly suitable for people who are generally inactive, or who are increasing their level of physical activity during their daily exercise. They are designed to make sure participants progress gradually, avoiding injuries that can result from going too fast, too far, too soon.

Sue Gyford, **jogscotland** spokesperson, added: "It's been brilliant to see so many people finding the positive in the current situation by making the most of their daily exercise.

"Our programmes have been designed to make physical activity enjoyable, especially for people who are new to it, and to give people the positive encouragement that comes from seeing clear week-on-week progress.

"It's good to know we're helping people enjoy the physical and mental health benefits of being active, at a time when both are more important than ever."

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Get involved

sportscotland and SAMH are working hard to support the sporting system and are looking for more Scottish governing bodies of sport (SGBs), clubs, community organisations, local authorities and athletes to spread the message and promote the benefits of physical activity on mental health.

Spread the message on social media using the #WeAreHere hashtag and tagging @sportscotland in any of your posts.

Find out more

- [Download the We're here logos \(https://sportscotland.org.uk/covid-19/support-for-clubs-and-community-sport-organisations/communications-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/\)](https://sportscotland.org.uk/covid-19/support-for-clubs-and-community-sport-organisations/communications-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/) and suggested social media posts
- Visit the [SAMH Coronavirus hub \(https://www.samh.org.uk/about-mental-health/self-help-and-wellbeing/coronavirus-information-hub\)](https://www.samh.org.uk/about-mental-health/self-help-and-wellbeing/coronavirus-information-hub) for more resources on your mental health.
- Get started with the [jogScotland learn to run or walk for fitness programmes \(https://jogscotland.org.uk/learn-to-run-or-walk-for-fitness/\)](https://jogscotland.org.uk/learn-to-run-or-walk-for-fitness/).

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“I don’t think I would be here today if it wasn’t for running.”

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How trying a new sport can benefit your physical, mental and social health

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“Sport made my mental health better, my home life better and saved me from losing my family.”

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