

Partnership streamlines how patients receive mental health support in Scotland.

A partnership between NHS 24, Police Scotland, and the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) is streamlining how patients receive mental health support in Scotland.

The Mental Health Pathway is a collaboration between the three services which ensures that people seeking urgent mental health support are directed to the most appropriate service for their needs.

The NHS 24 [Mental Health Hub](#) is available 24/7 by calling 111 and selecting the Mental Health Option.

The Mental Health Pathway ensures patients contacting 999 with non-emergency mental health concerns are now routinely referred to the Mental Health Hub.

Dr. Ron Cook, NHS 24's Medical Director, said: "It is imperative that anyone in mental health crisis or distress can quickly and easily connect with professionals who are experts in that field. Within office hours, patients seeking help with their mental health should contact their own GP.

"However, during the out of hours period, such as evenings and weekends, it is common for patients to be unsure of where to access mental health support. Many will often reach out for help by dialling 999, which may not be the most appropriate

care route for them.

“The Mental Health Pathway was set up to streamline the process for anyone needing urgent assistance with their mental health, and aims to make all callers feel supported, understood, and cared for.

“This project has led to a better experience for individuals experiencing mental illness or distress, but also has the added impact of reducing the deployment of frontline services in non-emergencies and easing the demand on emergency services.”

The collaboration not only benefits patients but also allows police and ambulance staff to focus on their core roles. Police Scotland data shows officer hours were able to be redirected to core policing and 99% of their staff confirmed they felt confident making referrals and using the Mental Health Pathway following their training.

Chief Superintendent Matt Paden, who leads Police Scotland’s Mental Health Taskforce, adds,

“We support NHS 24’s message that those seeking help for mental health distress should contact their own GP during office hours and call 111 out of hours.

“Where people call 999 with non-emergency mental health concerns, we’ve worked with health colleagues to give police staff the training, confidence and ability to refer them to the NHS’s Mental Health Hub to get the care and support they need from those best able to provide it.

“Delivering better outcomes for people in mental health crisis while achieving whole system efficiencies, is a key element of delivering on policing’s vision for safer communities, less crime, supported victims and a thriving workforce.

“The Mental Health Pathway can provide better outcomes for

individuals and communities, better value to the public and enable officers to tackle threat, harm and risk and prevent crime.”

Catherine Totten, Head of Service for Mental Health and Dementia at the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) said: “SAS supports people in mental health crisis and distress 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year, and we are committed to improving the outcomes and experience for these service users.

“The Mental Health Pathway allows us to directly transfer non-emergency callers to mental health trained clinicians in the NHS 24 mental health hub, ensuring those in crisis receive the right care at the right time.

“It’s a welcome addition to existing services, such as local care pathways and the Mental Health Paramedic Response Units in Glasgow, Dundee and Inverness, and we look forward to further developing this important resource with NHS 24 and Police Scotland.”