

**Policy Group:** Clinical  
**Version no.:** 1.1  
**Date of issue:** September 2024  
**Approved by:** Physical Healthcare Group

# Physical Healthcare Policy

## 1. Policy Statement

The increased mortality gap for people living with serious mental illness (SMI) is stark with life expectancy reduced by 15-20 years compared to the general population. This disparity in health outcomes is partly due to poorly identified and managed physical health needs. Smoking is the largest avoidable cause of premature death, with more than 40% of adults with SMI smoking. Individuals with SMI also have double the risk of obesity and diabetes, three times the risk of hypertension and metabolic syndrome, and five times the risk of dyslipidaemia than the general population. Individuals living with SMI are not consistently being offered appropriate or timely physical health assessments despite their higher risk of poor physical health. They are not being supported to use available health information and advice or to take up tests and interventions that reduce the risk of preventable health conditions (NHS England, 2018).

People with learning disabilities or cognitive impairment are also far more likely than the general population to have poor health outcomes. The impact is significant, as well as having a poorer quality of life these groups die at a younger age. (PHE, 2017).

This policy aims to help address the physical health needs of all patients at St Andrew's Healthcare (SAH) and ensure their physical health and wellbeing is appropriately managed as part of their in-patient mental health care support.

### Aims & Objectives

- To improve the detection, assessment, treatment and ongoing management of the physical healthcare needs and wellbeing of patients accessing mental-health inpatient care at SAH.
- To ensure that all patients accessing in-patient mental health services have a baseline physical assessment on admission in-line with national standards.
- To improve the prevention, detection, assessment and management of cardio-metabolic syndrome for all patients at SAH.
- To ensure that all patients who are diagnosed with a Long-Term Condition (LTC) will be managed as per the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) outlined within the General Medical Services contract (NHS England, 2019).
- To improve patients' access to national screening programmes.

- To facilitate access of patients into secondary and tertiary health care services.

## Physical Health Assessment

All patients on admission will receive an initial physical health assessment and a minimum of an annual physical health assessment following this. Long-term conditions will be managed in line with community primary care service standards and all patients will be screened for cardio-metabolic disease with appropriate intervention pathways put in place. Patients will be offered, or signposted to resources for smoking cessation, weight management and physical activity opportunities and all eligible patients will be enrolled on national cancer screening programmes. In addition, all patients aged 65 or over will be screened for frailty using a frailty assessment tool with a view to improve recognition and management of frailty. The outcome of this assessment should lead to incorporating the presence or level of frailty into all care planning and management. Sexual health needs will also be assessed as part of the physical health assessment on admission.

The full requirements for physical healthcare assessment on admission and thereafter can be found in the *Assessment and Management of Physical Health Procedure*.

## 2. Links to Procedures

Assessment and Management of Physical Health Procedure

Policies and procedures available via the Policy A-Z:  
[Policies - Policies - A-Z \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

## 3. Monitoring and Oversight

### Medical Director

The Medical Director is responsible for medical practice within the Charity and for agreeing standards of practice in line with GMC requirements and national best practice.

### Director of Nursing

The Director of Nursing is responsible for nursing practice within the Charity and for agreeing standards of practice in line with NMC requirements and national best practice.

### Associate Director of Physical Healthcare

The Associate Director of Physical Healthcare is responsible for this policy and associated procedure, ensuring they are reviewed at least once every three years or sooner if national or local policy or procedure changes.

## 4. Diversity and Inclusion

St Andrew's Healthcare is committed to 'inclusive healthcare'. This means providing patient outcomes and employment opportunities that embrace diversity and promote equality of opportunity, and not tolerating discrimination for any reason

Our goal is to ensure that inclusive healthcare is reinforced by our values and is embedded in our day-to-day working practices. All our policies and procedures are aligned with these principles to ensure fairness and consistency for all those who use them. If you have any questions on inclusion and diversity, please email the inclusion team at [DiversityAndInclusion@stah.org](mailto:DiversityAndInclusion@stah.org).

## 5. Training

All clinical staff will attend intermediate life support and physical healthcare observation training on induction or as soon as possible following commencement of employment. Physical healthcare practitioners will receive local training around completion of annual health assessments and long-term condition reviews.

## 6. References to Legislation and Best Practice

Royal College of Psychiatrists. 2019. *Standards for Inpatient Mental Health Services*. [online] Available at: [https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/docs/default-source/improving-care/ccqi/ccqi-resources/rcpsych\\_standards\\_in\\_2019\\_lr.pdf?sfvrsn=edd5f8d5\\_2&msclkid=01230586b4ea11ec93cae653b07ad698](https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/docs/default-source/improving-care/ccqi/ccqi-resources/rcpsych_standards_in_2019_lr.pdf?sfvrsn=edd5f8d5_2&msclkid=01230586b4ea11ec93cae653b07ad698) [Accessed 5 April 2022].

NHSE. 2019. *Standard General Medical Services Contract 2018/19*. [online] Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/general-medical-services-contract-19-20.pdf> [Accessed 5 April 2022].

PHE 2017. *Improving the Health and Wellbeing of People with Learning Disabilities*. *Public Health England*. [online] Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/656700/Health\\_charter\\_2017\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/656700/Health_charter_2017_guidance.pdf) [Accessed 5 April 2022].

NHSE. 2018. *Statistics » Physical Health Checks for people with Severe Mental Illness*. [online] Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/serious-mental-illness-smi/?msclkid=3bea0c28b4ed11ecb55b0757c87dc55c> [Accessed 5 April 2022].

## 7. Exception process

Please refer to the exception process [Policy and Procedure Exception Application Link](#).

## 8. Key changes – please state key changes from the previous version of the policy

Version Number	Date	Revisions from previous issue
1.0	Jun 2022	New overarching Policy
1.1	Sep 2024	Inclusion of sexual health needs assessment; update email address to stah.org, updated job titles and update to the exception process link