



THE
MENTAL
HEALTH
CHARTER
FOR
BASKET-
BALL

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FORE- WORD

It is my pleasure to introduce the Mental Health Charter for Basketball - a first of its kind campaign to make put the duty of care that basketball authorities have for their players under the spotlight, and the mental wellbeing of all involved in basketball is valued as it should.

This is personal for me.

Growing up in inner-city Birmingham I witnessed a number of detrimental things in my environment that were unhealthy, but seemed normal at the time.

During the pandemic, even, I became a support worker for the NHS assisting those with an array of mental health issues. Both chronic difficulties and acute bouts, with ailments such as dementia, autism, body dysmorphia, learning difficulties and much more.

Throughout my life, I have seen so many in my communities were struggling with poor mental health, which drew me to studying for a BSc Psychology at Fort Lewis University in Denver, USA. Now, I want to make real change, and have created a business, WhyNot!, which empowers and aids in being the change I want to see in the world when it comes to mental health.

I myself have struggled, requiring me to stop playing basketball professionally and pushing me towards suicide at one point. But this is all the more reason to support this work.

With this Charter, we can start to change the world's perception of mental health and to break down the stigma and taboo of mental health in basketball.

With this we can enable people to change their mindsets, become open to themselves, open to the world and help them understand the strategies they need to be their best self.

This is for everyone. From young children who are still framing their perceptions of the world to adults seeking a change of approach to meeting their goals, the Mental Health Charter for Basketball is here to improve the lives of all.

Kofi Josephs

INTRO- DUCTION

There are many initiatives that recognise the power of sport in improving mental health outcomes for its participants. This is reflective of a wider societal change in attitude towards the importance of mental health. There is, however, still work to be done in the sporting environment, especially in fringe sports which lack cultural legitimacy and oftentimes struggle for funding.

Basketball is no exception to this, and is in crisis. Basketball players in the UK do not enjoy the wealth and riches of other professional athletes, and are yet to enjoy the same support around mental wellbeing from their powers that be.

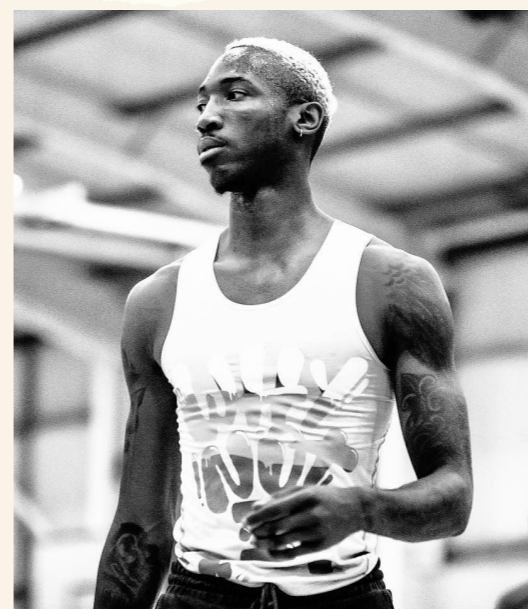
There is no singular cause which explains the lived experience of professional basketball players in the UK. Systemic underfunding of basketball means that keeping a club financially viable is the ultimate priority, even if that is at the expense of mental health provision.

The demographics involved with basketball - 21% of which come from a low socioeconomic background - also experience systemic health inequalities, making them more susceptible to mental illness, and less likely to receive treatment.

We hope this applies pressure to the authorities to change their ways in a constructive manner. Accountability for past failure is essential, but our priority is offering constructive solutions to better the lived experiences of those on the ground.

There is no silver bullet for solving mental health problems in basketball. This Charter is a framework which will be revised and updated, and acknowledging its imperfections, aims to improve outcomes without being perfect.

If you have any questions, want to get involved, or are looking for a media opportunity, do not hesitate to contact the authors.



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We would also like to thank Mind for their assistance in defining the language in this document.



DEFINING OUR TERMS

We do not intend to offer absolute definitions for the often confusing language that surrounds mental health. However, it is vital we state clearly what we mean by the terms used in the Charter. We recognise that alternative definitions exist, and in many cases may be more appropriate, helpful or accurate than what we are using here. For all intents and purposes, however, these definitions are accurate enough to form a sound basis for defining how to improve mental health provision in basketball and society more widely. For maximum transparency, our definitions were based on those from MIND, the leading UK mental health charity, and the NHS. These are readily available via their websites.

Mental health refers to the full spectrum of emotional and psychological, rather than physical, wellbeing as defined by a person's experiences.

Good mental health refers to more than the absence of illness. It will refer to being generally able to think, feel and react in the ways that you need and want to live their life, to respond appropriately to normal negative emotions and situations and be able to make a positive contribution to their community.

Mental illness refers to a condition and experience, involving thoughts, feelings, symptoms and/or behaviours, that causes distress and reduces functioning, impacting negatively on an individual's day to day experience. A list of illnesses that come under this term is available on the NHS website.

Wellbeing encompasses the state of being comfortable health and happy of which mental health is an integral part, even though physical and social health are also vital contributors to wellbeing.

Player wellbeing will adopt the general definition of wellbeing above, but we recognise that basketball professionals and athletes have individual challenges and opportunities that can't be applied to other industries.

ARTICLE ONE:

RECOGNISING THE STATE OF PLAY

STAKEHOLDERS WILL OFFICIALLY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT:

- i. As is the case in society at large, members of the basketball community are experiencing a mental health crisis, accepting the lived experiences of members from the basketball community as legitimate evidence for this.
- ii. For a variety of complex reasons, they have not afforded their players (and community members more widely) a suitable duty of care regarding mental health provision in basketball.
- iii. They have a duty of care to proactively promote good mental health and wellbeing in their staff, extending to all those involved in any capacity within their organisations.
- iv. The community's concerns with regard to historic and present mental health provision are valid, and should feature in their process of responding to the mental health crisis.
- v. Systemic inequalities relating to demographics who play basketball contribute to exacerbating the mental health crisis in basketball and only emphasise the need for change.

ARTICLE TWO:

EDUCATION

STAKEHOLDERS WILL COMMIT TO:

- i. Acknowledging the importance of open and available mental health education for members involved in any capacity.
- ii. Offering education on mental health for members involved in any capacity, to the best of their capacity, broadly addressing the following points but in consultation with mental health professionals:
 - a. What is mental health, and why is it so important to look after it?
 - b. How does poor mental health manifest itself?
 - c. What steps can be taken to combat poor mental health, in terms of self confidence, belief and recognising your self worth.
 - d. What role does social media play in exacerbating poor mental health outcomes, and what steps can be taken to limit this?
- iii. Playing a fundamental to their young people's mental health growth, regardless of their specific mental health experiences.

ARTICLE THREE:

PROVISION

STAKEHOLDERS WILL COMMIT TO PROVIDING AND IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH PROVISION FOR THEIR MEMBERS INVOLVED IN ANY CAPACITY, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO:

- i. Prioritising the creation of safe spaces for those with mental health problems to seek help by providing weekly mental health check-in sessions.
- ii. Ringfencing funds to be spent exclusively on mental health provision.
- iii. Discussing mental health status, goals and outcomes, with the input of members, at their AGM.
- iv. Facilitating access to therapy and counselling which is free at the point of use.
- v. Ensuring players/members face no penalty as a direct result of voicing their mental health problems.
- vi. Ensuring mental health services are available for former professionals, in recognition of their contribution to building the foundations of today's British basketball.
- vii. Being prepared to, without breaching confidentiality, share their experiences, schemes, successes and failures with other organisations for the benefit of other organisations.
- viii. Being prepared for those associated with the Charter to speak to players/staff to assess their progress in following their commitment to the Charter.

ARTICLE FOUR:

ACTIVISM

STAKEHOLDERS WILL COMMIT TO:

- i. Treating the mental health as a complex and ongoing challenge, the solution for which will require constant revisiting and reworking.
- ii. Using the framework as outlined in the Charter to compare and contrast the work of others, to learn from one another, offering reasonable allowance for differing circumstances.
- iii. Seeking inspiration from other organisation's work, celebrating those who make progress and calling out those who are not adhering to the Charter.
- iv. Reviewing their progress, and outlining their future plans, at their AGM.

CONCLUSION

Basketball as a sport is vital to the prosperity of many communities in the UK, and this hopes to shine a light on the shadow that inadequate mental health provision has cast over basketball for so long. This Charter was never intended to be a final solution to the problem of mental health in basketball.

Instead, this was intended to provide an initial platform for progress in a field which has been neglected up until now.

There is no silver bullet, and while accountability for prior failings is important, this serves to stimulate debate and progress, recognising progress of any kind in this area is a success.

We recognise this Charter will not be entirely comprehensive - and therefore will be updated accordingly - but we know that, should suggestions from this Charter are taken on board by clubs, we'll be one step closer to making British basketball a safe space for those with mental health problems.

To those who engage with the Charter, thank you. You are playing a role in ensuring that the cycle of mental health failure is broken - not just in basketball, but in sport and society more widely.

The authors are always happy to be contacted. Do not hesitate to reach out to us by any means.

Whatever you're going through, there are people you can talk to any time.

Samaritans provides a free, 24-hour, confidential listening service on **116 123**.

For other sources of support see **mind.org.uk**



**THANK
YOU**