

Development Plan: NHS Scotland Mental Health Workforce Statistics

In June 2026, NHS Education for Scotland (NES) will publish new [Official Statistics in Development](#) (OSID) about the mental health workforce in NHS Scotland. These statistics use a new method that helps us count, for the first time, staff working in NHS Scotland mental health services for all age groups.

We have created this development plan to meet the Office for Statistics Regulation's (OSR) requirements for OSID. It explains what the statistics will cover, why we are producing them, when future updates will happen, and who is likely to use them. We also include information on how to contact us if you want to give feedback on this plan or on the statistics once they are published.

Why are we producing these statistics?

Mental health services support people of all ages through many different specialist teams across inpatient, community and care settings. Care is delivered by many professions, including psychiatrists, nurses, psychologists, pharmacists, occupational therapists and support workers. To make sure there is a well-trained pool of people ready to work in mental health care, we need to understand the workforce and the different skills it requires.

There is currently no single national source of data about all the staff who work in mental health services in Scotland. The Scottish Government has commissioned NES to produce a report on the NHS Scotland mental health services workforce as part of its [Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Action Plan \(2023–2025\)](#). As well as supporting national workforce planning, this is important for public sector transparency and understanding how NHS Scotland contributes to mental health support in Scotland as part of a wider network of organisations.

We are working in several stages to improve the data we hold and the systems we use. Our goal is to create one reliable source of information about the mental health workforce across all NHS Scotland services.

In the first stage, we developed a new method that allows us to count all NHS Scotland staff working in mental health services—across all age groups, care settings and specialist areas—for the first time. We created this method by working closely with NHS boards, professional leads and workforce data experts.

We are now getting ready to publish our first report on the NHS Scotland mental health workforce using this new approach. Many organisations and professional groups have shown strong interest in having a single source of mental health workforce data for Scotland, and we believe the public will also find these statistics useful.

We are publishing this first report as OSID because this is our first time publishing statistics using the new method. While the numbers may change, our testing shows the method gives a useful picture of the NHS Scotland mental health workforce. Releasing the statistics will help us keep improving them by learning directly from users what would make the information more useful.

What statistics will be published?

The report will show the number of staff in post on 31 March 2026 who work in NHS Scotland mental health services. It will include:

- Headcount and whole-time equivalent (WTE)
- Breakdowns by NHS board, staff group, grade/band, contract type, age group and sex

This will be a worked example of a new methodology for counting staff who are providing frontline mental health services and treatments and who are specifically employed by NHS Scotland to do so within a funded mental health service, team or role. We include NHS Scotland employees who meet at least one of the following:

1. Their post is funded or described as specific to a mental health service or team.
2. They work in CAMHS.
3. They work in clinical psychology roles in mental health care.
4. They are medical staff working in psychiatry or psychotherapy.

This is the first time we are publishing these statistics. Although we will test them before they are released, they may still change over time, so please interpret the numbers with that in mind. We will clearly explain any known limitations of the new method and highlight any concerns about the quality of the data.

How do they compare to existing statistics?

We will publish the new mental health workforce statistics in addition to [the statistics we already release](#) about the national NHS Scotland workforce, the CAMHS workforce and the psychology workforce.

The new mental health workforce statistics combine the data sources used in existing publications and count only NHS Scotland staff working specifically in mental health services. This means the reported workforce will be smaller than the overall NHS Scotland workforce and will not include any non-NHS staff. The statistics may also miss a small proportion of mental health nursing staff reported in the NHS Scotland workforce statistics due to methodological differences, although testing shows we capture over 95% of this group.

The statistics will include most, but not all, staff counted in the CAMHS and psychology workforce publications. Some staff are excluded because:

- CAMHS data includes people employed by other organisations (e.g., local authorities), and we are only including staff directly employed by NHS Scotland in this report.
- Some clinical psychology staff work in areas other than mental health, and these staff will not be included unless included through another method (for example, they work in CAMHS or are funded as part of a mental health team).
- The way we identify staff working in CAMHS and/or whether psychology staff are working in mental health relies on matching their CAMHS or psychology employment records to NHS Scotland workforce data. A small number of records cannot be matched, so these staff can only be included if they meet other criteria—for example, if their role is funded as part of a mental health team.

Because these statistics count only NHS Scotland employments and use a specific methodology, they may not be directly comparable with other mental health workforce sources.

Who will develop these statistics?

The NES Data Group will continue to actively develop these statistics. The Data Group has been publishing official statistics since 2019. This will be our fourth release of OSID, following releases on National Treatment Centre (NTC) staffing, the general practice workforce, and postgraduate medical education and training.

During the development period, we plan to work with stakeholders who are interested in this data. We think these would include:

- The Scottish Government, including those working in the mental health and health workforce directorates
- Public sector organisations delivering health and social care, including NHS Scotland boards, local authorities and Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs)
- Third sector organisations delivering, supporting and advocating for mental health services, including the Mental Health Foundation, Mind, Penumbra, Scottish Action for Mental Health (SAMH) and Scottish Recovery Network
- Professional bodies including the Royal College of Nursing, Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland, Royal College of GPs and British Psychological Society
- Producers of similar or otherwise related statistics, including the NHS Benchmarking Network, NHS England, Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) and the Department of Health in Northern Ireland
- Members of the public

We will seek the views of all users through our website. We will also work closely with the producers of the source data to develop and communicate the appropriate levels of assurance within the OSR's [Quality Assurance of Administrative Data \(QAAD\)](#) framework.

When will the statistics be available?

In June 2026, we will release the first publication reporting staff in post as at 31 March 2026.

After the first publication, we will continue improving trustworthiness, quality and value through user engagement and further testing. In the first instance, we have resources available to support this work through until 31 March 2027.

We aim to decide within two years from the first publication whether the statistics should become Official Statistics: we aim to be confident they are useful and we can produce them to a suitably high quality over repeated timepoints. This decision will be made under the guidance of the Head of Profession and communicated to users.

Subject to user feedback, we plan for this to be an annual publication. We anticipate we would publish at least one more OSID publication before they become official statistics.

How to give feedback

If you would like to help shape these statistics or give feedback, you can contact the NES Data Group at Datagroup@nes.scot.nhs.uk.