

# Designing a police service for those in mental health crisis



## Mental Health Pathway

Right care, right time





As a member of the public  
I need to get help and reassurance  
So that I can cope with my day better  
But I don't know where to go, or who can help me

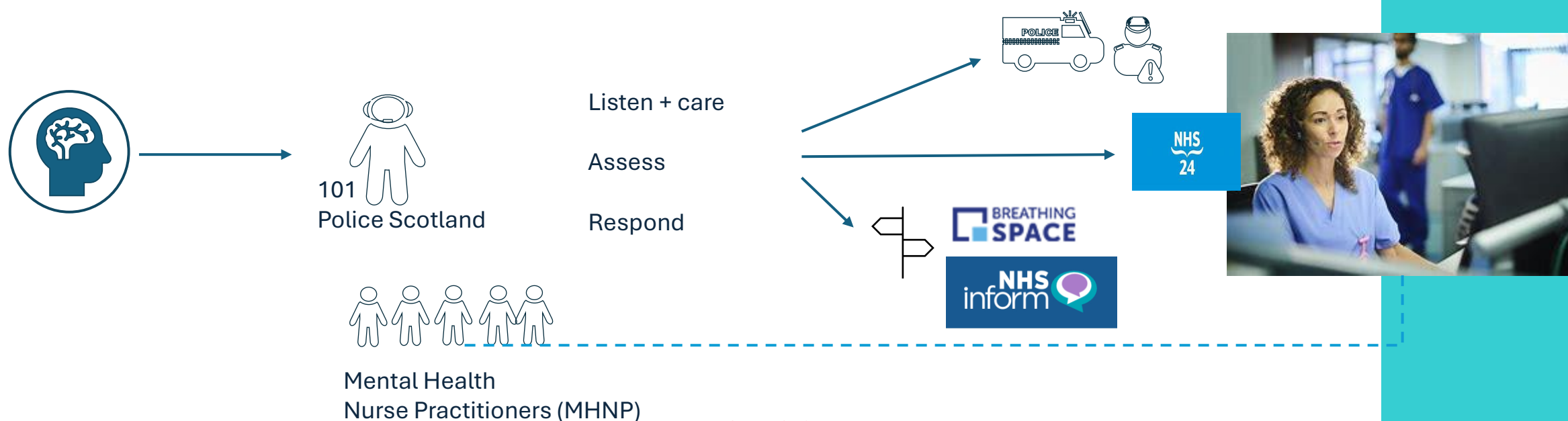
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# Mental Health Pathway

The Mental Health Pathway is a collaboration of services between Police Scotland and NHS 24.

It connects people who phone the police demonstrating the need for mental health support, who would be better supported by mental health professionals, out with emergency policing situations.

On identifying the need, and gaining a positive view from the user, Police Scotland make referrals to NHS 24 Mental Health Wellbeing Hub



# The problem space

The initial service (Phase 2 Aug 2022) was working well, but referrals to NHS 24 were lower than expected, on average **158** per month.

This was making a difference in reaching the right help for our users, but something wasn't right.

## What can we see

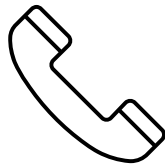


Increasing rates of mental health concern in Scotland

Increasing demand on Mental health services across all sectors

Increasing volumes of officer deployment to MH calls

Increasing officer time spent at A&E for MH



**3.2m** contacts per year

**93%** by voice call

**248,000** voice calls per month



**Low referral rates** than expected for Mental Health Pathway

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# Why?

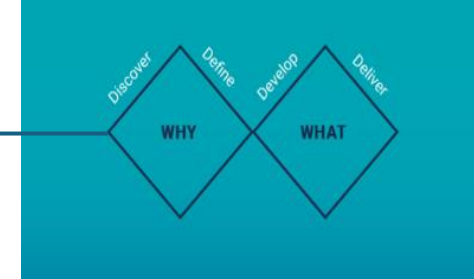
# Designing the thing right



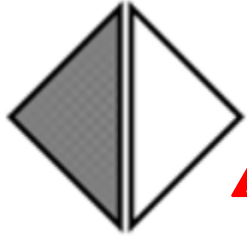
**Service Design objective (Sept 2022 to March 2023).**

**Objective... Gain a shared understanding of what wasn't working as well as expected**

- Hosted joint evaluation workshop with Police Scotland and NHS 24 MH Hub exploring what had and hadn't worked with the initial service. Developed a shared understanding of the known problems.
- Evaluated research on user outcomes (Progressive)
- Led user research with Police Scotland's Contact, Control and Command (C3 Division) and NHS 24's Mental Health Hub to understand experiences of the people delivering the service
- Facilitated a collaboration session with Police Scotland and NHS 24 representatives to explore opportunities to address the problems.



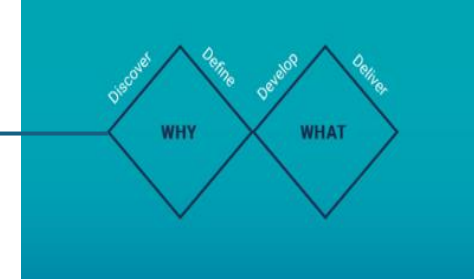
# Designing the thing right



Discover

## What did we find

- ⚠ Many officers and staff in C3 were unaware of the Mental Health hub and how to make referral
- ⚠ For those that did know, low confidence in making referrals due to lack of knowledge in indicators of MH illness
- ⚠ Little awareness of what service NHS 24 could offer the caller and how to identify mental health illness
- ⚠ Officers and staff frightened of making the wrong decision, default was to send an officer to the scene
- ⚠ Mental Health Nurse Practitioners were frustrated at not being able to make the difference they wanted to
- ⚠ 'Cold transfer' of call to NHS 24 (telephony capabilities) reduced impact
- ✓ Service advisers felt they had made a difference to a person's life when they had referred them on to NHS 24
- ✓ Research by external agency confirmed the users were positive about the service



# Verifying the problem

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The original service had been created for the external users but not for the people providing it.

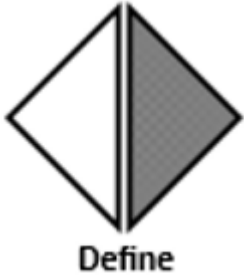
Officers and staff needed to know the service, who it was for and what was on offer.

Support needed for advisers to feel confident about making the right decisions .

Mental Health Nurse Practitioners needed to reach more officers and staff to help grow knowledge and support decisions.



# Service Design input



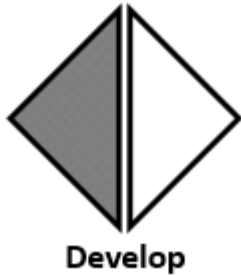
- Trained and supported the project team in capturing
  - user journeys,
  - writing user stories
  - creating blueprints
  - identifying pain points

This allowed the project team to understand what the people delivering and using the service needed.

- Facilitated thematic analysis sessions with the project team to make sense of their findings and prioritise areas for change.
- Supported the project team as they focused on training opportunities to develop the needs of the people delivering the service.



# Designing the thing right



- Hosted final synthesis and prototype session with **How Might We** outcomes

‘How might we recognise and understand mental health conditions?’

‘How might we help the public get the right support?’

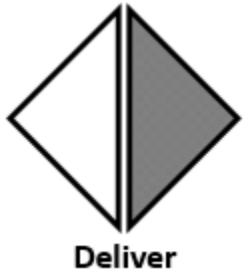
‘How might we tell people about the Mental Health Hub?’

- Prototyped, designed and tested using real life scenarios to make sure they met users' needs

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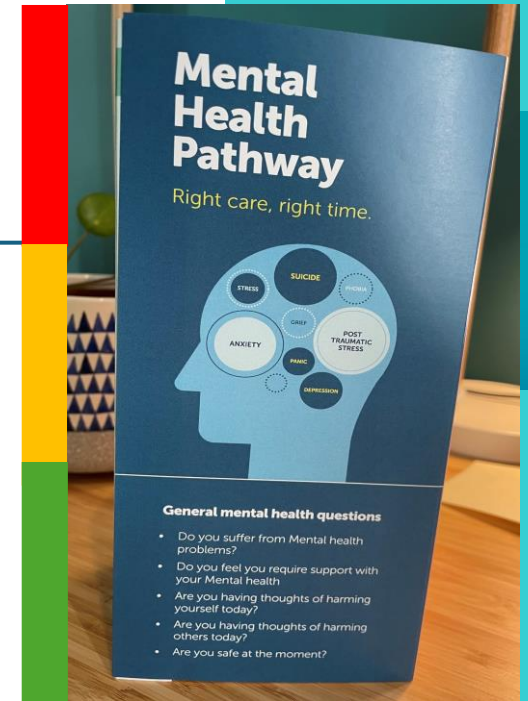
# The outcome



Following continuous engagement from service design the project team were confident in the redesign of the service.


Informed by the insight from the design process, the project team:

- ✓ • Produced an enhanced Red Amber Green (RAG) mental health framework, to assess the need of the user and decide on the suitable response.
- ✓ • Created questions to ask, criteria to follow, indicators of concern. These are all in addition to the normal policing THRIVE assessment guidelines
- ✓ • Created a robust model to support service adviser's decisions giving them the confidence on providing the most suitable service for the user's needs



 Immediate Risk



 No immediate Risk



 No identifiable risk

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# The outcome



Deliver

Delivered: **Mental Health Pathways training**

14-month delivery schedule

In person training over multiple locations by officers and MH nurses

- ✓ • **1550** C3 Division staff and officers across Police Scotland's Service Centres, Resolution Teams and Area Control Rooms trained on the Mental Health Pathway and THRIVE refresher.
- ✓ • Understanding of mental health illnesses and their Identifiable markers

Delivered: **Others**

- ✓ • 'Hot transfer' of calls directly to NHS 24 (live 2025)



## The results

Confident and supported staff and officers making good decisions, backed by a strong service model

Average referrals to NHS 24 MH Hub per month now at **360** (128% increase)

Over 25,000 officer hours deployed to other policing duties since training commenced in Sept 2023

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Mental Health Pathway (MHP)

Winner 'Care for Mental Health Award'

Scottish Health Awards 2024



# What is next?

Right care, right time services for officers in communities to assist mental health needs on the streets (MH Index + explore more)

Online informational sign posting to NHS 24 services within Police Scotland's digital services

High Intensity use – Emergency calls (those that present to emergency services regularly seeking support)



**Need help now? Call free on**

**0800 83 85 87**

## **Opening hours**

**Weekdays:** Monday-Thursday 6pm to 2am

**Weekend:** Friday 6pm-Monday 6am

**This service is for people in Scotland**

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## **NHS 24 Mental Health Hub**



When you phone 111 and choose the mental health option, you'll be connected to our team of psychological wellbeing practitioners (PWP's).

### **Phone 111 if you're**

- feeling distressed
- in a state of despair
- feeling suicidal
- in need of emotional support

PWPs can offer advice on coping with mental health symptoms. They can also recommend and connect you with other services if needed.

Remember, for an emergency ambulance, call 999.

Need more info?  
**[nhsinform.scot](https://nhsinform.scot)**

