ACCESS to dedicated information on mental health issues is now available through a range of digital channels provided by Scotland’s telehealth organisation NHS 24.

A new zone dedicated to information on Mental Health and Wellbeing for the people of Scotland has been launched on the national health information website NHS inform. In addition, the mental health helpline Breathing Space has also just launched information through a digital TV channel dedicated to helping people improve their mental health.

Mental health and wellbeing is an important part of overall health and can be influenced by different factors, including life events such as relationship breakdowns, bereavement and work stress as well as conditions such as depression or anxiety.

The zone, which is accessed through www.nhsinform.co.uk, is divided into four sections - Mental Health Conditions, Accessing Help, Mental Wellbeing and Worried about Someone.

Each area features a range easy to read advice and pointers to help us get through times of change and difficulty in our lives. Money worries, homelessness, sexuality, relationships, anger management and dealing with terminal illness are just some of the many topics dealt with and the zone also signposts to quality-assured external resources such as partner websites and downloadable information leaflets.

In addition, there is useful information to get help for family, friends or colleagues with details of local support groups and handy easy-to-access contact details if immediate or long term help is required.

NHS 24 worked closely with several organisations including Breathing Space, the Scottish Association of Mental Health, Action on Depression Scotland, Scottish Recovery Network, Long Term Conditions Alliance and Choose Life to get the best possible information for the website.

Commenting on the new Mental Health and Wellbeing zone, Billy Watson, Chief Executive at the Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH) said: "Access to reliable and easily understood information about mental health is vital, to help people both stay well and find out how to get help when they experience problems. SAMH was very happy to be asked to help develop NHS Inform's new mental health web pages: this is an excellent new resource which will help many people".
Information is also now available at the touch of a button through NHS Scotland's digital television service. The channel was launched by NHS 24 last summer to allow access to web-based health information services through the TV using Sky, Freesat for Sky (both channel 539) and Virgin (channel 233 or interactive channel).

Tony McLaren, Breathing Space/ Living Life National Coordinator explained "Many people do not have the internet at home so to be able to use digital TV to access information about mental health services now is great news. Hopefully it will encourage more people to open up when they are feeling down; whether that's speaking to friends, family or phoning Breathing Space or Living Life."

Professor George Crooks, OBE, Medical Director of NHS 24 said: “People living with mental health problems are an increasing challenge for our society. A recent Scottish Health Survey reported depression and other affective disorders were one of the most common group of conditions reported in GP consultations and one in four people in the UK experience a mental health problem in any given year.

"NHS 24 is opening up a range of digital channels through the web and digital television that bring together a range of information on different aspects of mental health and wellbeing with the aim of making it easier for people to access quality-assured information from a single trusted health resource. There is no reason for anyone to be ashamed, embarrassed or to hide away from mental health issues and we are bringing the people of Scotland the most up-to-date information through trusted sources including NHS inform and the NHS Scotland digital TV channel."

NHS 24’s mental health helpline Breathing Space is to bring issues of mental health and wellbeing to the fore early next month during a national event.

Breathing Space day will take place on 1st February and this year is themed Well Wednesday, encouraging everyone to take a few moments out of their day to leave their worries behind and get some breathing space of their own.

Ends

For further information, please contact NHS 24 Communications on 0141 337 4501.

Editor's notes

- **NHS 24 provides high quality, national telehealth services to people across Scotland through telephone, web, and other digital channels.**
- **NHS 24 employs a range of specialist clinical staff including call handlers, nurse advisors, pharmacists, mental health advisors, dental nurses and special phoneline advisors within Breathing Space.**
- **NHS 24 provides access to trusted health information through a range of different services, including NHS inform, Care Information Scotland and Life Begins at 40. These services are available to the public via a range of different delivery channels, including the web, telephone and digital TV.**
- **The Scottish Centre for Telehealth and Telecare is part of NHS 24 and leads the way in delivering innovative new technology-based services to the people of Scotland.**
- **Follow NHS 24 and NHS inform on Facebook and Twitter.**