

Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport submission of 12 March 2024

PE2008/E: Provide Funding for a Separate Mental Health A&E for Children

The Scottish Government would like to thank the Committee for the renewed opportunity to provide information on the questions raised in the petitioner's submission of 29 August 2023. We hope that the information included in this response will provide some reassurance to the Committee and Ms Solman that mental health remains an absolute priority for the Scottish Government, and that we continue to work on ensuring that everyone in need of emergency mental health care receives that support quickly and, wherever possible, close to home.

Training and Resources for Police Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service

The Scottish Government published, jointly with COSLA, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Action Plan on 7 November 2023, setting out the actions to ensure we have a resilient and sustainable workforce who feel valued and supported, and who have the right skills to deliver the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

An Education and Training Advisory Group, chaired by NHS Education for Scotland (NES), was established to bring together senior leaders from key sectors and organisations to develop a shared understanding of the critical areas where education and training can support the delivery of improved unscheduled care.

The Group will work to increase awareness, uptake and accessibility of existing, reliable mental health training resources and support decision-making on what further resources might be required to best meet the training needs of the wider workforce. This includes the development of an induction training framework for the wider mental health and wellbeing workforce, volunteers and carers. The mental health induction training framework will include promotion of informed level mental health and wellbeing training and resources and will be accessible across sectors.

As noted in the Scottish Government's submission of 29 June 2023, the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) and Police Scotland are key partners in improving the Mental Health Unscheduled Care (MHUC) pathway. The Scottish Government has enabled Police Scotland and SAS to access mental health professionals in NHS 24 through the Enhanced Mental Health Pathway. Since 2020-21, we have provided over £6 million to Police Scotland, SAS and NHS 24 to support the pathway which enables Police Scotland and SAS to direct callers who are identified as requiring mental health advice to the Mental Health Hub within the NHS 24 111 service.

In May 2022, SAS launched their [Mental Health Strategy](#) which was developed in consultation with Children's organisations, sets out their coordinated approach to how SAS will provide care for people in crisis, those who are experiencing mental ill-health, and those experiencing mental health distress. The strategy recognises that in order to achieve this, staff at all levels need to be provided with the appropriate knowledge and skills to confidently recognise poor mental health and the associated risk factors.

Through the NES National Training Programme, SAS also aims to educate all frontline staff with the appropriate knowledge, skills, and confidence to identify psychological trauma by the third year of the strategy's implementation. Furthermore, SAS will provide its staff with better tools to assess mental health using a biological, psychological, social, emotional, and spiritual approach, including on scene assessment tools and professional-to-professional support. The Scottish Government allocated SAS £180,000 in 2023-24 to support the delivery of this mental health training and education.

With regards to Police Scotland, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland's (HMICS) report on mental health and policing, published in October 2023, highlighted a gap in training relating to mental health. HMICS have made two recommendations on improving the training available to officers and staff: "Police Scotland should provide clear guidance and effective training for officers and staff, in, to help address the culture of risk aversion evident in the policing of mental health-related incidents and to improve outcomes for people experiencing poor mental health" (recommendation 5); and "Police

Scotland should conduct a full training needs analysis for policing mental health, reflecting its published strategy, to include (but not necessarily limited to) all public-facing roles across the service” (recommendation 7). The Scottish Government, Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland have established a Partnership Delivery Group to drive activity relating to the recommendations. We are happy to provide the Committee with updates on this as the work progresses.

Data on Psychiatric Teams

Concerning the request for information on the number of psychiatric teams in Scotland, broken down by health board, the Scottish Government does not currently hold this information. Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) workforce data is publicly available in NHS Education for Scotland (NES) Turas Data Intelligence at: [NHS Scotland Workforce Data](#). This also provides data on staff joining and leaving rates by each Health Board.

On Ms Solman’s comment about having mental health teams based within acute hospitals, the Scottish Government would like to highlight that Action 15 of the Mental Health Strategy 2017-27 outlined our commitment to fund 800 additional mental health workers within 5 years to key settings, including A&Es, GP practices, police station custody suite and prisons – ensuring local provision and support is at the heart of our plans.

At the end of the commitment on 1st April 2022, an additional 179.2 whole-time equivalent mental health posts had been recruited to A&E settings. We have allocated over £107 million since 2018-19 to enable recruitment through Action 15 and will continue to provide the necessary funding to ensure that posts are protected in future. Workforce and service planning will continue to be conducted by Integration Authorities according to the needs of their populations.

Children Under 12 Accessing the Mental Health Hub

On the request for information on the number of people who have attempted to access support through NHS 24’s Mental Health Hub, NHS 24 informed us that they responded to 87,409 calls during the period of February 2023 and January 2024. Of these, 287 concerned children under 12 years old. NHS 24 were also able to provide some information on the outcomes for calls concerning children under 12:

- Over 52% of calls for under 12s resulted in a referral for a telephone follow-up from a local out of hours GP service.
- 28% of calls were signposted back to their own GP.
- 1.7% were referred to A&E.

Services available for children under 12 years old

Ms Solman enquires about the services and supports available for children under 12 years old who are significantly struggling with their mental health, out with those mentioned in previous correspondence such as local CAMHS services.

Where appropriate, community-based mental health supports for children, young people and their families can be offered as an alternative to CAMHS, focused on early intervention and prevention, and including support for emotional distress delivered in a community setting. We are providing local authorities with £15 million per annum to fund these supports – it is for local authorities to decide how the money is best invested according to local need. In the first half of 2023, more than 58,000 children, young people and their family members accessed these community-based mental health support.

Examples of supports that are available to children 12 and under include: Educational Psychologist in Aberdeenshire, Parent to Parent Ltd in Dundee, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Service in East Lothian, Tier 2 CAMHS support team in Glasgow and Crisis Counselling in North Ayrshire. Digital services such as Shout and Togetherall are also available in many local authority areas to support those in distress or crisis.

The Scottish Government have also ensured counsellors are available in schools for pupils aged 10 and over, backed by £16 million in funding, which means that children are able to have their mental health needs met earlier.

We have supported school staff to understand and recognise the range of mental health and wellbeing concerns that young people may experience in a new professional learning resource introduced in June 2021. We have also introduced new guidance to support whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing, complementing the work

that education authorities and schools already do to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

The Scottish Government would like to thank the Committee again for the opportunity to provide further information based on the points raised in Ms Solman's submission. As noted in our previous submissions, we are aware that more work needs to be done and we will continue to work with key professionals and stakeholders to develop safe, meaningful, and sustainable mental health unscheduled care pathways and associated services across Scotland for everyone.

Yours sincerely,

Maree Todd MSP