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Audrey Nicol MSP
Convenor
Criminal Justice Committee
Room T2.60
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

1st March 2024

BY EMAIL

Dear Convenor,

Thank you for the invitation to respond to the Criminal Justice Committee with our views on the actions that have been taken and are planned by the Scottish Police Authority and Police Service of Scotland on mental health in policing.

Psychological disorders remain the largest reason for absence in police staff month on month according to the reports to the Corporate Finance and People Board. I have seen an increase in our member's average absence to around 15 days.

While I can acknowledge the plans laid out by the SPA and Police Scotland and the intent to improve this it has not been borne out in action or measurable in statistics.

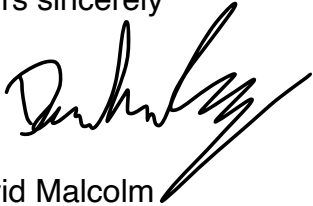
My members continue to be frustrated and let down with the services they access. EAP has been reported as being ineffectual, most members contacting the Employee Assistance Programme report they are directed to other, already obvious services such as their GP. Optima's long-reported slow time ability to return needed reports and assessments often prolongs absence periods unnecessarily.

Our member's experiences are continual delays to receiving reasonable adjustments, if they are even received at all, delays in much-needed reports, managers as points of contact who are only interested in when you return to work and a prolonged application process for ill health retirement.

Through casework experience, I have yet to see the change that is needed for staff – to access more cognitive behaviour therapy sessions, the new Optima contract which I have been assured addresses issues we have had with the provider in the past, and disappointingly I must comment that the commitments and actions undertaken by SPA seem to focus on the officer side of the workforce.

As the recent HMICS report on culture outlines staff feel secondary to officer considerations and the working groups undertaken seem to enforce that view and lack provision for staff and their largest trade union in UNISON.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Malcolm', with a long, sweeping flourish extending from the end of the name.

David Malcolm
Branch Secretary