

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 21 May 2025
9th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

PE2148: Improve Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services to Adult Mental Health Services transition

Introduction

Petitioner Heather Stitt

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to improve the transition from CAMHS to Adult Mental Health Services by ensuring national referral guidelines and criteria are adhered to.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2148>

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 24 March 2025.
2. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.
4. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 88 signatures have been received on this petition.
5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered.
6. The Committee has received submissions from the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport and Sarah Boyack MSP, which are set out in **Annexe C** of this paper.

Action

7. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
May 2025

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2148: Improve Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services to Adult Mental Health Services transition

Petitioner

Heather Stitt

Date Lodged

24 March 2025

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to improve the transition from CAMHS to Adult Mental Health Services by ensuring national referral guidelines and criteria are adhered to.

Background information

There is a crisis in lack of support for CAMHS patients when they turn 18. CAMHS referrals to Adult Mental Health Services have declined. Young vulnerable people are instead inappropriately signposted to the voluntary sector, which cannot provide the specialist support they need. Families are left in limbo when they are incorrectly signposted and turned away from the voluntary sector. This does not follow the clinical process guidance for young people moving between Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Adult Mental Health Services (Transition Care Planning action 21: principles of transition).

Annexe B: SPICe briefing on PE2148



Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

[PE2148](#) calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to improve the transition for young people moving from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to Adult Mental Health Services. It highlights current issues with a lack of adherence to national clinical process guidance as outlined in the Scottish Government's [Transition Care Planning action 21: principles of transition](#) and inappropriate signposting to the voluntary sector which may be unable to provide the specialist support required.

Background

Adolescence and young adulthood are a time of significant physiological, social, and psychological transformation. For young people with mental health service and care needs, this phase often requires transitioning from child to adult mental health services. This process can be very stressful for both young people and their carers and families. Those with complex needs may face even greater challenges, as they may need to navigate multiple service transitions.

[This transition period can be especially difficult for two vulnerable groups of young people](#). The first includes young people with profound support needs, including those with severe disabilities or life limiting conditions. The second includes young people whose service or care needs are less apparent. These young people face increased risk of falling through the cracks as they transition to adult services, particularly when support is not appropriately signposted or effectively coordinated.

[Previous research with young people, their carers, and families has highlighted several barriers](#) that prevent smooth transitions from child to adult mental health services. Key barriers include:

- unclear transition pathways and poor coordination between services,
- inadequate planning and a lack of clarity about accountability for planning and implementing transition processes,
- insufficient accessible information about available options,
- limited support from adult services, and
- organisational processes taking priority over young people's voices and individual needs.

Scottish Government actions

- In 2010, the Scottish Government commissioned the [Doran Review](#) to evaluate learning provisions in Scotland for children and young people with

complex additional support needs. The 2012 report identified major challenges faced by young people and their carers and families in transitioning to adult services and provided recommendations. In response, the Scottish Government committed to making transitions the focus of its [2014 report to Scottish Parliament](#), tasked a subgroup of the Advisory Group for Additional Support for Learning in 2013 to assess transitional arrangements and examine existing legislation. It also committed to revising the code of practice for additional support and learning and develop practice guidance in connection with the Children and Young People's Bill. The Advisory Group for Additional Support for Learning was also directed to continue reviewing the need for additional guidance as part of its ongoing work programme.

- [The Scottish Government commissioned qualitative research focusing on transitions](#) to adult years and services, completed by the Health and Social Care Alliance between July 2016 and March 2017. This made several recommendations, including the use of Wellbeing Indicators and the adoption of the Principles of Good Transitions as the standard approach to transitions across all services. This research also highlighted the need for improvements in access to local information about available resources and local pathways and processes, better training resources, more proactive outreach to reach vulnerable individuals with additional support needs and those who may be unknown to services, better coordination of services and an established point of contact, and the implementation of Family Group Decision Making.
- In 2017, the Scottish Government published its [2017-2027 Mental Health Strategy](#) with specific actions for children and young people's services. Action 21 of this strategy states the Scottish Government will: "Improve quality of anticipatory care planning approaches for children and young people leaving the mental health system entirely, and for children and young people transitioning from CAMHS to Adult Mental Health Services."
- In 2017, the [Association for Real Change \(ARC Scotland\)](#) published the [Principles of Good Transitions](#) on behalf of the Scottish Transitions Forum. This established seven key principles designed to inform and guide professionals across all sectors involved in supporting young people transitioning to adult services. The Principles of Good Transitions have been endorsed by the Scottish Government.
- In 2020, the Scottish Government published the [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services \(CAMHS\) Service Specification](#). This outlines the provisions that young people and their families expect from the NHS. It emphasises that all children and families should receive support and services that are appropriate to their needs and sets an expectation that the Scottish Government's Transition Care Planning Guidance is implemented. It recommends that, wherever possible, services work collaboratively with the child or young person and their family to proactively plan transitions to adult

mental health services, primary care or other services, including those provided by voluntary or third sector organisations. Additionally, the specification ensures that children, young people, and their families should be able to access additional support for emotional distress through the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Supports and Services. Community supports and services are expected to work closely with CAMHS, relevant health and social care partners, children's services, and educational establishments to establish clear and streamlined pathways that support children and young people during transitions.

- In 2024, the Scottish Government allocated £120 million to NHS boards and Integration Joint Boards (IJBs) for the [Enhanced Mental Health Outcomes Framework in 2024-25](#). The Framework focuses on increasing capacity around CAMHS, the delivery of psychological therapies, eating disorder care, and neurodevelopmental services, in addition to ongoing innovation and service reform. The Scottish Government also allocated [£65 million since 2020](#) to fund community-based support services.

Scottish Parliament actions

- In 2018, the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) collaborated with the Scottish Government and CAMHS in Edinburgh to develop the [transition care plan \(TCP\)](#), including a TCP [template](#). The TCP is a document designed to assist young people in navigating the transition to adult services. According to the [guidance](#), the TCP should be completed once a young person and their CAMHS team decide that they should begin this transition. It captures the young person's views, opinions, and concerns information about their needs to help adult mental health services determine the appropriate treatment. The guidance recommends that TCPs should be regularly reviewed, updated, and amended by the young person and key health practitioners throughout the transition process. This approach also allows flexibility for those aged 18-25 to continue their care and treatment with CAMHS where this is in their best interests, rather than automatic transfer to adult services.
- During the 77th National Sitting of the SYP, members of SYP (MSYP) put forward a motion for a further review of the support provided to young people undergoing transitions. This was passed by MSYP with 98% support.
- The Scottish Parliament reviewed the Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood) (Scotland) Bill, which fell on 23rd November 2023 at Stage 1. The Bill would have required a Scottish Government minister to be in charge of improving opportunities for disabled children and young people moving into adulthood and for local authorities to have plans for each disabled child and young person as they move into adulthood.

Annamae Burrows

Trainee SPICe Researcher

29/04/2025

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in petition briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

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Annexe C: Written submissions

Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport written submission, 23 April 2025

PE2148/A: Improve Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services to Adult Mental Health Services transition

Thank you for writing to the Scottish Government, seeking its view of PE2148 - Improve Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to Adult Mental Health Services transition. I understand that this petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to improve the transition from CAMHS to Adult Mental Health Services by ensuring national referral guidelines and criteria are adhered to.

As the Committee will know, the Scottish Government is responsible for setting the overall policy direction of mental health services, and for working with and funding NHS Health Boards to ensure they plan and deliver appropriate local services. It is for local NHS Boards to decide how they implement these policies to ensure that their local population have the highest quality of care and treatment at the right time and in the right place.

In doing so, we expect Health Boards to consider and plan for transitions in services and care, including child to adult transitions in mental health care. The Scottish Government recognises that transitions between services can increase risks, especially for the most vulnerable. To support good transitions the Scottish Government has published guidance and service standards that support services to plan for transitions in care, and help young people and their families navigate transitions between services.

This includes the [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services \(CAMHS\) Service Specification](#), published by the Scottish Government in February 2020, which outlines provisions young people and their families can expect from the NHS. The specification sets out that all children and families should receive support and services that are appropriate to their needs.

The specification sets out an expectation that the Scottish Government's Transition Care Planning Guidance is implemented, and that CAMHS will have protocols in place to ensure that transitions between CAMHS and other services are robust. It recommends that, wherever possible, services work together with the child or young person and their family to plan in advance for transition, which is especially critical in the transfer from CAMHS to adult mental health services and primary care or other services, e.g. voluntary or third sector.

The specification also ensures that children, young people and their families will be able to access additional support which targets emotional distress through Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Supports and Services. Community supports and services should work closely with CAMHS and relevant health and social care partners, children's services and educational establishments to ensure

that there are clear and streamlined pathways to support where that is more appropriately delivered by these services.

The supporting [Transition Care Plan \(TCP\) Guidance](#) and [Transition Care Plan Template](#) were developed with the Scottish Youth Parliament for young people, their families and clinicians to use to support transitions between child and adult services. They describe the standards required in the planning of good transitions for young people moving from CAMHS to Adult Mental Health Services, and ensure that the young person is involved in those discussions.

This approach also allows flexibility for those aged 18-25 to continue their care and treatment with CAMHS where this is in their best interests rather than automatic transfer to adult services. The National CAMHS Service Specification requires a robust TCP for those children and young people who are more at risk of adversity during transitions which should allow for flexibility for those aged 18-25 to continue their care and treatment with CAMHS where this is in their best interests.

To support and ensure ongoing improvement in the system, we have directly allocated £123.5 million to NHS Boards and IJBs for a new Enhanced Mental Health Outcomes Framework in 2024-25. The Framework provides a single, flexible funding stream to support continued improvements and better outcomes across a range of mental health and psychological services, including CAMHS and neurodevelopmental services, in line with the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

It is also important to stress that CAMHS is a specialist service and will only be the right support for a small proportion of children and young people. Many will find more suitable support in their local community. This is why we have provided councils with over £65m since 2020 to fund these services. Local authorities report that, between July 2023 and March 2024, nearly 83,000 children, young people and family members accessed the community-based supports we funded. This investment will continue with the baselining of this funding into local authority General Revenue Grants from 2025-26. This investment will provide another opportunity to ensure that CAMHS to adults transitions can be supported in the people's local communities.

I appreciate that transitions for children in to adult services is an important matter that impacts many young people in Scotland and the committee may wish to note that more broadly, the Scottish Government are undertaking a review of various transition strategies which may have an effect on transitions from CAMHS to Adult Mental health Services. This includes the National Transitions to Adulthood Strategy for young disabled people, and Moving On from care in to Adulthood work which forms part of our vital commitment to "Keep the Promise" for care experienced children and young people.

I hope this letter provides reassurances that we continue to review our transitions between CAMHS and Adult Mental health services, as well as the support available to children, young people and their families in their communities.

With best wishes,

MAREE TODD MSP

Sarah Boyack MSP written submission, 14 May 2025

PE2148/B: Improve Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services to Adult Mental Health Services transition

One of my constituents submitted this petition after a poor experience with the local Health Board which left their child uncertain about their future, and with deteriorating mental and physical health, when Adult Mental Health Services declined to accept a referral from CAMHS. That experience is currently the subject of a complaint with the health board and the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

The petition calls on the Scottish Government to ‘improve transitions by ensuring national referral guidelines and criteria are adhered to.’ In her submission to the committee, the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport, Maree Todd MSP mentions the published guidance and service standards that ‘support services to plan for transitions in care, and help young people and their families navigate transitions between services.’

Reading the guidance and service standards, along with the Transition Care Plan Guidance, developed with the Scottish Youth Parliament, it is clear that young people should know what to expect, should be involved in the process and that it should be managed in a way that is appropriate to each individual. Words such as ‘holistic’, ‘continuity’ and ‘flexibility’ are used.

But how does the Scottish Government monitor adherence to the guidelines and service standards? How do they know if there are issues within Health Boards that impact on smooth transitions? My constituents have spoken to me about their experience; how many others throughout Scotland are in a similar position? This is the key aim of this petition – to ensure that the guidelines are followed, and every young person gets the support they need.

My constituent also raises the prospect of a ‘lost generation’.

At an age when young people are experiencing lots of transitions – to adulthood – and perhaps wrestling with their sense of identity, leaving school, moving into further education, training or employment, it’s critical that where ongoing support is required, it is managed well. Without appropriate support or treatment, there is a risk that some young people will be unable to work or contribute to their communities. Young people and their families must not feel abandoned or ‘in limbo’.