

Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland Policy Update

13 October 2023

College Activity:

- On 1 September, the RCPsych in Scotland [submitted](#) a response to the first draft of **the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy's Delivery Plan**. The Delivery Plan provides a series of strategic actions which aim to realise the ten priorities set out in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The College in Scotland's response highlighted our serious concern at the Delivery Plan's lack of explicit consideration for the needs of people with mental illness and, in particular, people who live with a severe and enduring mental illness. The response also stated that, in its current format, more detail is required in terms of how the Scottish Government intends to realise the strategy's priorities.
- On 5 September, the First Minister [announced](#) his first **Programme for Government**. In advance of this announcement, the RCPsych in Scotland wrote to the First Minister, the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance, the Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care, and the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport. These letters called on the Scottish Government to give urgent consideration to the needs of mental health services in Scotland.
- The RCPsych in Scotland also wrote **policy briefings for the mental health spokespeople of Scotland's opposition political parties**. Subsequent meetings were then held with Scottish Labour and the Scottish Liberal Democrats to further influence their planned response to the Programme for Government announcement. Following this briefing exercise, Anas Sarwar MSP (Leader of the Scottish Labour Party) challenged the Scottish Government's decision to remove funding for the Mental Health in Primary Care programme and Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP (Scottish Liberal Democrat

Leader) called for more to be done to clear mental health waiting lists.

- To coincide with the Programme for the Government announcement, the RCPsych in Scotland Vice-Chair, Dr Pavan Srireddy, also wrote **an opinion piece which featured in the Scottish Sun**.
- On 13 September, the RCPsych in Scotland [published](#) a **response to Audit Scotland's Adult Mental Health report**, which found that accessing adult mental health services in Scotland remains slow and complicated for many people. The College in Scotland's response, calling for 'mental health services to receive the funding they deserve,' was featured in several national newspapers including the Scottish Sun and the National. During their review of services, the College in Scotland had met with Audit Scotland earlier this year to share members' experiences.
- On 14 September, the Chair of the RCPsych in Scotland Eating Disorders faculty held a **meeting with the Scottish Government to discuss the National Specification for Eating Disorders**. Members in Scotland will be given the opportunity to influence the development of this specification over the coming months.
- On 25 September, representatives of the College in Scotland attended a new **RCPsych four nations group which will be looking into mental health and capacity law**.
- On 28 September, the RCPsych in Scotland [published](#) the results of our **YouGov polling**. This found that 53% of people in Scotland are not confident that they or a family member could access mental health support, if needed, and that 58% of people in Scotland think that mental health services receive too little of the healthcare budget.
- This received extensive **media coverage**, with a total reach of 2.3m. It featured in 21 national media outlets including STV, the Scottish Express, the Sun and the Daily Mail, as well as in numerous radio clips including Kingdom FM and Original 106.
- The poll also received **attention in the Scottish Parliament**. The team in Scotland wrote a [First Minister's Question](#) for Paul Sweeney MSP, Scottish Labour's Spokesperson for Mental Health and Veterans, which led to the First Minister reaffirming the Scottish Government's commitment to their 10% mental health spending target. This exchange was then picked up on BBC News and Newsdirect.
- Following this First Minister's question, Paul Sweeney MSP then received a **letter from the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport regarding funding for mental health services**.

- On 28 September, the RCPsych in Scotland attended a **meeting of Scotland's Mental Health Partnership**. This featured a presentation from Citizens Advice Scotland on debt and mental health evidence forms, as well as a policy update from Gordon Johnston on the next steps for the Delivery Plan and Workforce Action Plan.
- The team in Scotland has sent an **invitation to the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport, Maree Todd MSP**, to invite her to the next meeting of Scotland's Mental Health Partnership on Thursday 18 January.
- On 2 October, the RCPsych in Scotland [published](#) a response to the **Core Standards for Mental Health Quality Standards**. Whilst the College in Scotland welcomed the ambition of these standards and a focus on improving quality rather than a continued emphasis on waiting time targets, members believe that the standards in their current form are incomplete and require the development of a Service Specification for Adult Mental Health Services. The College in Scotland has highlighted our views on this to Scottish Government in the strongest possible terms and will continue to push for this as a priority.
- On 5 October 2023, the RCPsych in Scotland [submitted](#) a **response to the Scottish Government's Human Rights Bill consultation**. This response was shaped by the College in Scotland's Legislative Oversight Forum and highlighted potential incompatibilities between the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and some aspects of the UN conventions which may be incorporated into domestic law in Scotland.

Looking Ahead:

- The RCPsych in Scotland will be publishing a statement in October about the challenges faced by members and services regarding the **ongoing implementation of ICD-11 diagnostic coding across Scotland**.
- The RCPsych in Scotland is expecting **the final version of the Delivery Plan and the next draft of the Workforce Action Plan** to be published in early November.
- The RCPsych in Scotland intend to respond to **the Scottish Government's Minimum Unit Pricing consultation**, with responses due by 22 November.
- The RCPsych in Scotland is in the process of organising **meetings with the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport and the Minister for Drugs and Alcohol Policy**, on behalf of the Scottish Intellectual Disability and Addictions faculties.

- Shona Robison MSP has written to the Finance and Public Administration Committee signalling her intention to confirm Tuesday 19 December as the date on which the **Scottish Budget 2024-25** will be published. The First Minister has recently reaffirmed the Scottish Government's commitment to 'ensure that, by the end of the parliament, 10% of our frontline NHS budget will be invested in mental health.' The RCPsych in Scotland will continue to campaign for this target to be met, citing the results of our recent YouGov poll which demonstrate public support for increased mental health spending. Research by the RCPsych in Scotland has shown that meeting this spending commitment will result in an extra £180m for mental health services every year.

Headlines:

Programme for Government

- The First Minister [announced](#) his Programme for Government on 5 September. The programme only outlined three commitments relating to mental health:
 - The publication of a new Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Plan and accompanying Workforce Action Plan.
 - The establishment of a new Mental Health and Capacity Reform Programme to begin the process of updating and modernising our mental health and capacity legislation
 - And a consultation on a Learning Disability, Autism and Neurodiversity Bill by the end of 2023.

Assisted Dying

- After talks with disability campaigners, Humza Yousaf has [confirmed](#) his opposition to assisted dying plans has hardened, saying disabled people were worried they would be the "thin end of the wedge" if the current proposal became law.
- Liam McArthur MSP has [said](#) the UK Government would need to approve his proposed bill on legalising assisted dying and he is confident that it would do so after "constructive talks."
- The Scottish Liberal Democrats have promoted statistics which demonstrate that the average cost of travelling abroad for an assisted death in Switzerland has increased by 50% in the last five years. The party highlighted a new report from Dignity in Dying Scotland revealing the average cost is now at £15,000, unaffordable for 68% of Scots. Eight out of ten Scots have [said](#) they would support

the introduction of a bill ending the current blanket ban on assisted dying.

Children and Young People

- Stage 2 consideration of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill is expected to be [completed](#) by Friday 15 December.
- Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP has [written](#) to the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee regarding the Reconsideration of the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill.
- The Scottish Parliament has now unanimously [voted](#) to consider amendments to legislation that will incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots law.
- Amendments have been [published](#) for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill at its Reconsideration Stage.
- Enable Scotland has [written](#) to the Education, Children and Young People Committee in relation to the Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood) Bill.
- The Scottish Government has [published](#) the final report summarising the work of the Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Joint Delivery Board.
- The Scottish Government has [published](#) a report on the Children, Young People and Families Outcomes Framework: Core Wellbeing Indicators for September.

Perinatal Mental Health

- The Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee has [published](#) a submission from the Scottish Government regarding PE2017: Extend the period that specialist perinatal mental health support is made available beyond one year.

National Performance Framework

- SPICe has [published](#) a blog on the National Performance Framework, analysing how Scotland is performing against the 11 outcomes and 81 National Indicators.

Suicide

- The National Records of Scotland has [reported](#) figures showing there were 762 probable suicides in 2022, a small increase of 9 from 2021. The figures also show the rate for men was almost 3 times higher than for women, and rates in the most deprived areas 2.6 times higher than the least deprived areas.

Poverty

- The chair and three commissioners of the Poverty and Inequality Commission have [resigned](#) from the Scottish Government's poverty body.
- Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP has now [written](#) to the Social Justice and Social Security Committee updating the committee on the arrangements for the new round of public appointments to the Poverty and Inequality Commission.
- The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) has [published](#) this year's State of the Nation report on poverty in Scotland. The report finds over one million people in Scotland still live in poverty and statutory child poverty reduction targets are unlikely to be met without significant changes from the Scottish Government.

Rural Health

- The Scottish Government has [highlighted](#) the National Centre for Remote and Rural Health and Care which is expected to launch next month, seeking to improve the capability of remote, rural and island primary care and enhance the delivery of community-based services.
- The Health, Social Care and Sport Committee has [launched](#) a call for views on its healthcare in remote and rural areas inquiry.

Workforce

- RCN Scotland has [warned](#) extreme pressures faced by Scotland's health and social care services are set to continue this winter with statistics showing nursing vacancies across NHS Scotland remain high.

- BMA Scotland has [responded](#) to official consultant workforce statistics, with the Chair of the BMA's Scottish Consultants Committee stating that "there is a serious workforce retention crisis."
- Caroline Lamb, Director General for Health and Social Care and Chief Executive of NHS Scotland, has [written](#) to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee to provide requested information about healthcare recruitment and workforce impact from her committee appearance on Tuesday 5 September.

Out of Area Care

- The Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland has [published](#) a report examining people with mental ill health or learning disabilities placed in facilities outside their NHS health board area.

Safe Consumption Facilities

- On 11 September, the Lord Advocate, Dorothy Bain KC, has [issued](#) a statement on a proposed safer drug consumption facility pilot, announcing she would be prepared to publish a prosecution policy that it would not be in the public interest to prosecute drug users for simple possession offences committed within a pilot safer drugs consumption facility.
- The Scottish Government [welcomed](#) the statement, noting it means Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership can take forward plans to establish the facility to the Glasgow City Integration Joint Board for approval.
- On 13 September, Alister Jack MP [said](#) there were no plans to devolved drugs policy to Scotland, noting the UK Government had committed £3bn to tackle drug supply and use through its own Drug Strategy. However, he said the UK Government would not intervene if the Scottish Government and Lord Advocate decided to proceed with a pilot scheme.
- Hunter Street Health Centre in the east end of Glasgow has been [proposed](#) as the location for a safer drugs consumption pilot.
- Glasgow City Integration Joint Board [ratified](#) the plans at a meeting on 27 September.

National Care Service

- The Scottish Government has [announced](#) that third sector organisations are being awarded new funding to help ensure as

many voices as possible are contributing to the design of the National Care Service.

Independent Healthcare

- The Scottish Government has [published](#) its response to the analysis report findings of the public consultation on amendments to the regulation of independent health care.

Alcohol and Drugs

- The Scottish Government has [published](#) a report on an annual survey of Alcohol and Drugs Partnerships (ADPs) for 2022-23.

Patient Safety

- The Scottish Government's Patient Safety Commissioner for Scotland Bill was [passed](#) unanimously by the Scottish Parliament yesterday on 27 September.

Value Based Health and Care

- The Scottish Government has [published](#) a Value Based Health and Care Action Plan. The plan outlines the actions required to deliver value based health and care, by focusing on outcomes which matter to people, optimising the use of health and care resources and contributing to a more sustainable health and care system.

Mental Health Appointments

- The Scottish Government has [appointed](#) Stephen Gallagher as the Director of Mental Health. He has worked for the Scottish Government since 2013 in a number of roles including Director for Local Government, for Vaccine Strategy, and for Digital Health and Care.

Winter Planning

- The Scottish Government has [launched](#) the Right Care Right Place awareness campaign earlier than in previous years to make sure people know the best place to go for healthcare over the winter.

Emergency Detentions

- Mental Welfare Commission figures have [shown](#) the number of detentions for compulsory mental health care and treatment in Scotland rose to 6,713 in 2022-23. 38% of emergency detentions related to people from the 20% of the most deprived areas of Scotland.

Parliamentary Monitoring:

FMQs – Thursday 7 September

- Emma Harper MSP asked for an update on the actions being taken to reduce drug deaths. She highlighted the need to reform the Misuse of Drugs Act.
 - The First Minister said the latest drug deaths statistics showed a 21% decrease in 2022 and said the national mission had received an additional £250m investment to improve services. He said a statement would be made in September to update parliament and highlighted the Scottish Government's paper outlining proposals for drug law reform.

FMQs – Thursday 21 September

- Anas Sarwar MSP discussed delayed discharge and said the Deputy First Minister had promised an end to delayed discharge eight years ago. He highlighted 4.5 million bed days had been lost, 2,300 people had died waiting to leave hospital, and £1.1bn had been wasted.
 - The Deputy First Minister said the Scottish Government remained committed to eradicating delayed discharge but acknowledged this was challenging to implement. She also noted that they remained committed to introducing a National Care Service.

FMQs – Thursday 28 September

- Sue Webber MSP questioned what assessment had been made of the use of antidepressants in Scotland.

- The First Minister noted many people benefited from the use of antidepressants and said the Scottish Government intended to publish a prescribing guide on antidepressants.
- On behalf of the RCPsych in Scotland, Paul Sweeney MSP asked if the Scottish Government was still committed to ensuring that by the end of the parliament, 10% of our frontline NHS budget will be invested in mental health.
 - The First Minister confirmed that the 10% mental health spending target is still 'our aim, our ambition and our target.'

Contact:

If you would like any further information, or a copy of any of the consultation responses, policy briefings or letters referenced in this update, then please contact Matthew James at matthew.james@rcpsych.ac.uk.