

Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland – Briefing on funding for mental health services: response to Scottish Budget for 2025-26

January 2025

Mental health: a national crisis

Mental health services in Scotland are under unprecedented pressure, with demand vastly surpassing resourcing. The 2022 Scottish Census found that the number of people reporting a mental health condition in Scotland has [more than doubled](#) since 2011, rising from 4.4% to 11.3% of the population (2022). This upsurge was the largest increase across all health condition types in the Census. Young people are particularly affected, with reports of mental health conditions among respondents aged 16-24 increasing sixfold between 2011 and 2022.

Adequate funding is critical in addressing this rising demand, alongside tackling workforce shortages and ensuring timely, equitable access to high quality treatment and care.

Funding shortfalls

In response to the Scottish Budget 2025-26, the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland is calling for increased funding to address Scotland's national crisis with mental health.

In their [2021 election manifesto](#), the SNP committed to 'ensure that, by the end of the parliament, 10% of our frontline NHS budget will be invested in mental health.' This commitment was then reiterated in the Scottish Government and Scottish Green Party's [shared policy programme](#).

Unfortunately, every year since the 10% budget allocation commitment was made (2021), NHS frontline spend has moved away, not toward, the Government's spending commitments. In 2011/2012, 9.12% of NHS spending went towards mental health, over a decade later (and since the commitment to 10% has been made), the share of overall **NHS funding has decreased to 8.53%** in 2022/23 (the latest available data).

Although 8.53% may not seem far from the Scottish Government's 10% target, in cash terms, this means that the Scottish Government was £224,702,220 short of meeting their own spending commitment last year. Adjusting both the total NHS spend and the mental health spend for inflation ([2023/24 prices](#)), there would **need to have been £238.5m more invested into mental health in 2022/23 in order for the 10% pledge to have been fulfilled**. We are anecdotally hearing from our members that this trajectory is set to get worse.

In 2022/23, **no health board achieved the 10% spending target** set by the Scottish Government to achieve over this parliamentary term (Image 1).

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Funding needed to hit 10% in 2022/23
NHS Scotland	9.12%	9.22%	8.98%	8.75%	8.61%	8.33%	8.36%	8.45%	8.41%	8.63%	8.66%	8.53%	£224,702,220
NHS Ayrshire & Arran	8.87%	9.03%	8.98%	8.76%	8.40%	8.55%	8.40%	8.09%	8.05%	7.59%	8.66%	8.45%	£15,351,936
NHS Borders	9.08%	8.65%	8.55%	8.96%	8.18%	7.43%	8.59%	8.74%	7.60%	7.20%	7.03%	6.87%	£8,903,765
NHS Dumfries & Galloway	9.08%	8.22%	7.69%	7.38%	7.00%	7.13%	7.15%	6.66%	6.88%	7.08%		7.12%	£12,537,134
NHS Fife	8.39%	8.33%	7.90%	7.73%	7.85%	7.73%	8.06%	7.73%	7.65%	7.76%	7.90%	7.68%	£20,629,539
NHS Forth Valley	8.93%	9.00%	8.64%	8.64%	8.65%	8.61%	8.63%	8.50%	8.41%	8.10%	8.09%	8.17%	£13,543,199
NHS Grampian	8.04%	8.08%	7.55%	7.33%	6.99%	6.44%	6.68%	7.02%	7.14%	6.98%	6.69%	7.03%	£44,128,862
NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde	10.04%	10.08%	9.98%	10.02%	9.95%	9.50%	9.39%	9.56%	9.58%	10.77%	10.95%	9.94%	£2,566,760
NHS Highland	9.02%	8.58%	7.45%	7.66%	7.35%	7.14%	7.62%	7.95%	7.94%	8.01%	7.48%	7.32%	£23,827,309
NHS Lanarkshire	7.71%	7.92%	7.61%	7.08%	6.95%	6.58%	6.53%	6.91%	6.77%	6.57%	6.98%	6.84%	£48,139,994
NHS Lothian	8.12%	7.73%	7.78%	7.49%	7.60%	7.69%	7.67%	7.72%	7.91%	7.85%	7.52%	8.50%	£35,951,287
NHS Orkney	3.12%	3.09%	2.65%	2.56%	2.06%	2.21%	2.86%	2.87%	3.08%	2.86%	1.95%	2.31%	£5,611,607
NHS Shetland	2.01%	2.35%	2.25%	2.55%	2.95%	3.19%	3.41%	4.16%	4.16%	4.64%	4.50%	4.78%	£3,915,085
NHS Tayside	9.82%	11.81%	11.73%	10.61%	10.68%	10.24%	10.11%	10.12%	9.68%	9.63%	9.65%	9.57%	£5,297,571
NHS Western Isles	7.18%	6.10%	7.40%	7.67%	6.75%	4.79%	3.67%	4.12%	5.19%	4.28%	4.95%	6.45%	£3,394,636

Image 1: percentage of total net NHS expenditure invested in mental health, 2011/12 to 2022/23

These board-level statistics demonstrate significant regional variation in budget allocation to mental health, with some boards spending as much as 7% more of their frontline budgets on mental health. The lowest proportion of spending on mental health was as low as 2.31%.

Only one board – NHS Lothian – hit the target to invest at least 1% of its funding into CAMHS services in 2022/23 (Image 2). However, overall NHS Scotland investment in CAMHS has increased since the CAMHS waiting times target was introduced in 2014.

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
NHS Scotland	0.46%	0.47%	0.48%	0.48%	0.52%	0.50%	0.56%	0.56%	0.61%	0.62%	0.66%	0.75%
NHS Ayrshire & Arran	0.39%	0.49%	0.49%	0.48%	0.52%	0.47%	0.49%	0.46%	0.50%	0.46%	0.66%	0.45%
NHS Borders	0.44%	0.51%	0.44%	0.42%	0.36%	0.26%	0.46%	0.47%	0.46%	0.62%	0.56%	0.65%
NHS Dumfries & Galloway	0.57%	0.36%	0.31%	0.37%	0.42%	0.53%	0.50%	0.51%	0.52%	0.52%		0.62%
NHS Fife	0.09%	0.10%	0.08%	0.08%	0.03%	0.04%	0.43%	0.47%	0.44%	0.47%	0.45%	0.62%
NHS Forth Valley	0.38%	0.43%	0.40%	0.45%	0.51%	0.54%	0.55%	0.58%	0.57%	0.53%	0.62%	0.51%
NHS Grampian	0.50%	0.37%	0.34%	0.25%	0.47%	0.28%	0.34%	0.52%	0.53%	0.57%	0.62%	0.63%
NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde	0.58%	0.57%	0.61%	0.54%	0.62%	0.64%	0.59%	0.57%	0.60%	0.66%	0.74%	0.79%
NHS Highland	0.03%	0.03%	0.13%	0.02%	0.06%	0.01%	0.40%	0.43%	0.40%	0.42%	0.37%	0.47%
NHS Lanarkshire	0.40%	0.43%	0.45%	0.44%	0.44%	0.53%	0.52%	0.52%	0.56%	0.57%	0.50%	0.75%
NHS Lothian	0.57%	0.63%	0.70%	0.75%	0.71%	0.72%	0.77%	0.74%	0.88%	0.83%	0.90%	1.15%
NHS Orkney	0.01%	0.11%	0.10%	0.11%	0.19%	0.06%	0.16%	0.08%	0.13%	0.65%	0.33%	0.52%
NHS Shetland	0.46%	0.44%	0.51%	0.48%	0.57%	0.65%	0.62%	0.59%	0.65%	0.66%	0.77%	0.91%
NHS Tayside	0.57%	0.69%	0.63%	0.88%	0.81%	0.72%	0.77%	0.75%	0.80%	0.80%	0.81%	0.89%
NHS Western Isles	0.25%	0.23%	0.24%	0.59%	0.40%	0.42%	0.38%	0.58%	0.68%	0.29%	0.37%	0.56%

Image 2: percentage of total net NHS expenditure invested in CAMHS services, 2011/12 to 2022/23

Scottish Budget 2025-26

The Scottish mental health public sector receives funding through the Scottish Budget in two ways: 1) direct funding allocated to mental health services and 2) the majority of funding goes to NHS territorial health boards - where health boards then allocate their own spending to mental health as they choose.

Despite a record investment of £21.7bn in Health and Social Care, **the budget allocation to mental health services for 2025-26 decreased** from the £290.2m commitment of the past 4 years (despite this being cut in-year each year), to just £270.5m. RCPsych data analysis indicates that this is a **£54m cut** when adjusting for inflation. There is also no guarantee that this will not be cut further, as has happened in recent years (the 2024-25 allocation was cut by £18.8m).

NHS Territorial Boards were allocated £14.387bn in the Budget. Despite the Scottish Government commitment to dedicate 10% of this spend to mental health, there is still no mechanism in place to ensure that this target is met.

Government representatives have explained to us that the onus is on individual Boards to enact the division of NHS funding, but our own Managers in the Boards tell us they have no basis to insist on their share of funding, and are often expected to enact disproportionate cuts to mental health services. We require a mechanism to cut this cycle. RCPsych is calling for the implementation of a **legislative mechanism to ringfence this budget** – recognising the importance of protecting and delivering investment in mental health (akin to measures in place in England and Wales). This would mean the mandatory spending of at least 10% of allocated budgets to mental health by each health board and 1% on CAMHS, alongside the mandatory reporting of this.

What could meeting the 10% target fund each year?

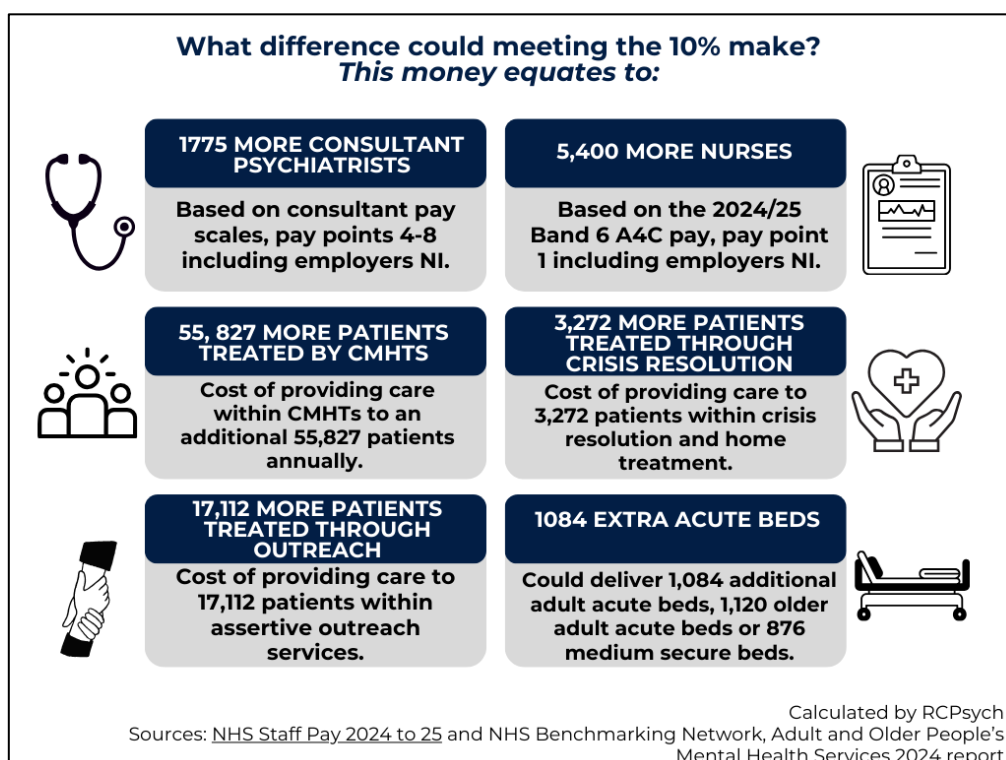


Image 3: What meeting the 10% mental health spending target could fund each year. Please note: this is calculated for each item and is either or.

Taking 2022/23 as an example (the latest available data), NHS health boards would need to have invested an extra £238.5m into mental health services in order for the 10% pledge to have been fulfilled. This funding gap could cover the cost of the items as outlined in Image 3.

Escalating demand, stagnating workforce

Despite an unprecedented rise in demand for services in recent years, there has been no corresponding increase in funding, resulting in no expansion of the psychiatry workforce.

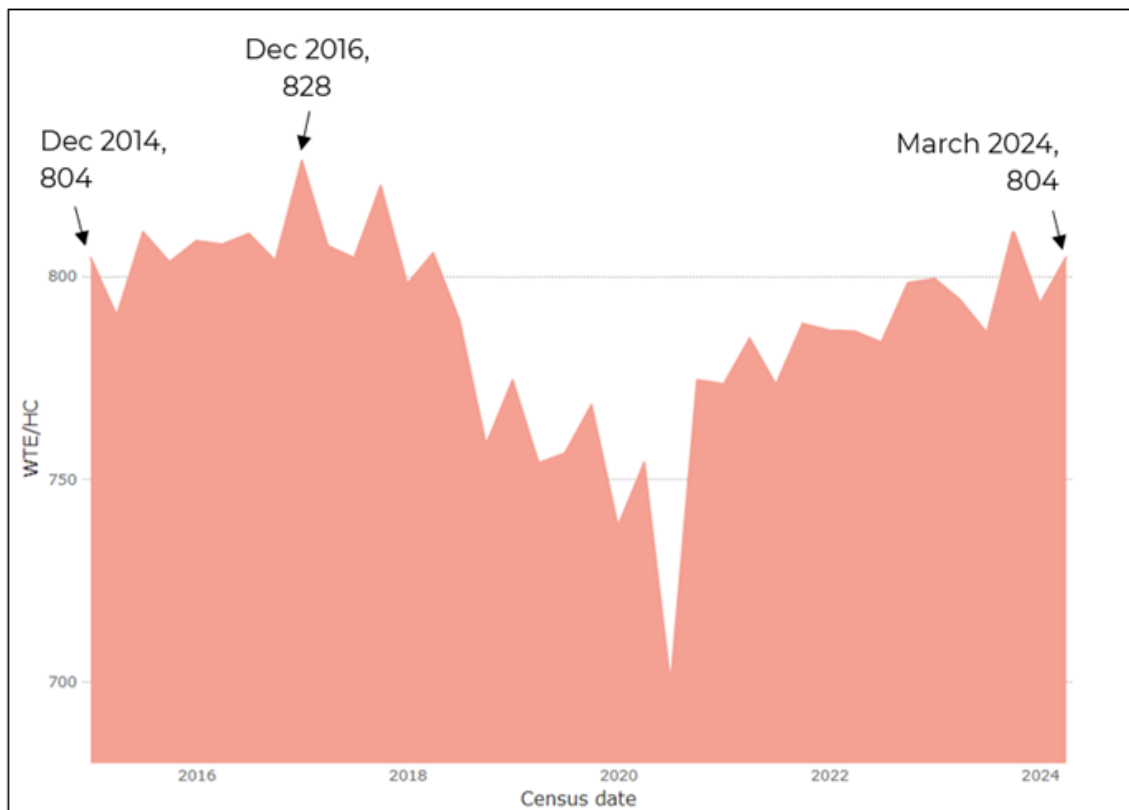


Image 4: general psychiatry employment over time, 2014-2024.

Source: NHS Scotland Workforce Census

As a result of this, the number of psychiatrists in Scotland has flatlined and remained stagnant. According to NHS Scotland Workforce Census data (Image 4), the number of general psychiatrists in WTE posts in March 2024 was **exactly the same as the number in post a decade earlier** (804), even when accounting for locum positions.

Psychiatrists play an indispensable role in healthcare, providing specialised expertise in diagnosing, treating, and managing complex mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and severe depression - illnesses that can profoundly disrupt lives. Often serving some of the most vulnerable members of society, psychiatrists not only alleviate individual suffering but also help restore stability to families and communities. Good quality and prompt psychiatric care can have transformative effects - especially in children and young people,

allowing them to fulfil their potential. Conversely, not having ready access to the right treatment and support can be extremely debilitating to individuals and to society as a whole. [Audit Scotland estimated](#) the cost of poor mental health to the Scottish economy in 2019 at £8.8 billion - with the figure set to rise even further.

Without increased funding invested to grow and retain the psychiatric workforce, we cannot expect to create sustainable, workable roles, address the issues with locums, nor ultimately improve mental health outcomes for Scotland's citizens. Urgent investment is needed to address these workforce challenges and ensure meaningful reform.

Our asks

- Delivery of the Scottish Government's commitment to allocate 10% of NHS spend to mental health and 1% to CAMHS.
- The implementation of a legislative mechanism to ringfence this budget.
- Mandated reporting from health boards confirming this spending target has been met.

About the College in Scotland:

Who we are – The Royal College of Psychiatrists is the professional medical body responsible for supporting the psychiatry profession to develop standards and act collectively to improve clinical care and treatment for people with mental ill health. This support extends throughout their careers, from training through to retirement, and in setting and raising standards of psychiatry in Scotland and the United Kingdom.

What we do – The College aims to improve the outcomes, not just of people with mental ill health, but to also positively address the mental health of all individuals, their families and communities. To achieve this, the College sets standards and promotes excellence in psychiatry; leads, represents and supports psychiatrists; improves the scientific understanding of mental illness; works with and advocates for patients, carers and their organisations. Nationally and internationally, the College has a vital role in representing the expertise of the psychiatric profession to governments and other agencies.

Contact:

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