

PE2008/F: Provide funding for a separate mental health A&E for children

Petitioner submission, 9 April 2024

I would first like to thank the Committee for the renewed opportunity to provide information on the questions raised by the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport's submission of 12th March 2024.

Training and Resources for Police Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service.

The Scottish Government stated that they have provided £6 million to Police Scotland and Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) and NHS 24 to support the Mental Health Unscheduled Care Pathway (MHUC). Can the Scottish Government provide confirmation and evidence that specific training on Children's Mental Health is delivered to all three services due to the specialised needs required to care and keep children in Mental Health Crisis safe? It is not clearly identified anywhere as I have read the Mental Health Strategy. Within the SAS Mental Health Strategy, it was advised:

"This is particularly prevalent in protected characteristic communities such as Black, Asian and Ethnic Minorities (BAME) and LGBTI, and those who have a history of alcohol and substance use disorders."

The Scottish Government advised this was done in consultation with children's organisations. Can they advise why there is no mention of children or disabilities within the protected characteristic communities when these groups make up a significant portion of those struggling with their Mental Health? It was also stated within the Mental Health Strategy that SAS staff will be offered training (pg26). To ensure consistency should the training offered not be mandatory?

Data on Psychiatric Teams

Action 15 of the Mental Health Strategy 2017-27 advises a commitment to fund 800 additional Mental Health Workers. Can the Scottish Government confirm how many have been recruited into Children's A&E and CAHMS? The way the submission reads it appears to be a commitment to Adult Services.

Children Under 12 Accessing the Mental Health Hub

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.

Can the Scottish Government advise what the outcome was for the other 18.3%?

Also, can the Scottish Government advise how this would help the current backlog? These cases would most likely have another referral sent by a GP to CAHMS where currently the 18-week target is not near met, whereas if CAHMS had a base within a children's Mental Health A&E any immediate early intervention could be given.

Services available for children under 12 years old

In their submission the Scottish Government stated:

“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.”

Can the Scottish Government advise why they have not made it mandatory that the funds be spent on Children's Mental Health?

The Scottish Government also advised “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”.

Can the Scottish Government advise how accessible these counsellors are and if there is a waiting list considering they have provided a substantial amount of funding?

The Scottish Government advised within their submission “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”.

Can the Scottish Government advise if this was within mainstream schools and how much training was provided? The current training for Mental Health within education is very brief.