

Questions (most recent first)

Mental Health

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it is taking to increase access to NHS counselling and psychotherapy services. (S3W-31303)

Shona Robison: We are working closely with NHS Education for Scotland (NES) and NHS boards to expand and increase access to psychological therapies for all ages in a range of settings.

We have already established a Psychological Therapies Group (PTG) to administer the implementation of the advice in The Matrix - a tool for NHS boards to use in reviewing available evidence and in considering which psychological interventions might best be used to meet local need and demand. Recently formed sub-groups of the PTG oversee The Matrix's continuous updating and expansion into other key priority areas in mental health.

NES is working to increase the provision of training in evidence based interventions which are effective for depression (at both certificate and diploma level) such as CBT and other therapies, as well as funding Psychological Therapies Training Co-ordinator posts in boards to provide the educational infrastructure necessary to ensure training and supervision are well organised, sustainable and have maximum service impact.

We are committed to developing a HEAT target for access to psychological therapies for announcement in 2011-12.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what assessment it has made of the increased need for NHS counselling and psychotherapy services. (S3W-31304)

Shona Robison: We have a specific commitment to expand and improve access to psychological therapies for all ages. We are working closely with our partners in NHS Education for Scotland (NES) and NHS boards to deliver this commitment and meet patient's needs better and sooner. Part of our strategy involves enhancing capacity within the service, and training current NHS staff to deliver a range of evidence based interventions.

We are committed to developing a HEAT target for access to psychological therapies over this year for announcement in 2011-12.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what the average waiting times are for patients seeking access to NHS counselling and psychotherapy services. (S3W-31306)

Shona Robison: This information is not collected centrally. This Scottish Government is committed to developing a referral to treatment target for psychological therapies, and as part of that work is developing information systems to track waiting times for those therapies that may be covered by the target.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how many children and adolescents have been admitted to adult mental health beds in each year since 2007. (S3W-31348)

Shona Robison: The highest number of these admissions are of young males aged 15 and over where admissions to adult wards are usually for short periods at times of crisis where there are concerns about the safety of the person. In some cases it will also be the case that admission to an adult facility is judged by clinicians to be the most appropriate setting for the young person, taking account of their needs and safety and the safety of others. The small increase in 2008 is also likely to be in part as a result of the closure of the inpatient facility for young people in Gartnavel Royal

Hospital and the opening of the new facility in Skye House as for a transition period admissions were redirected to adult facilities. We expect to see improvement in 2009-10 figures.

2006-07	186
2007-08	142
2008-09	149

We are also working closely with NHS boards to ensure that where a young person is admitted to an adult ward their care is specifically tailored to their needs.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive whether the two pilots to help improve access to self-help therapies for people with mild to moderate depression or anxiety will include the use of counselling. (S3W-31507)

Shona Robison: The Scottish Government is committed to increasing access to psychological therapies for those with mental illness.

The NHS Living Life Pilot, being run by NHS24 for the Scottish Government, offers CBT Self Help Coaching by telephone and three CBT Therapists are employed for this purpose at NHS Living Life.

The Widening Access to Self Help Therapies (WISH) Programme is hosted for the Scottish Government by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. This programme is designed to offer multiple ways of accessing CBT Self Help, such as via CD Rom, college courses and website access.

This material is available to be used by people themselves, or by people offering care and support, including counsellors.

Mental Health

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what is being done to increase access to counselling and psychotherapy services for primary and secondary school pupils. (S3W-31305)

Adam Ingram: It is for local authorities and NHS boards to design and determine the level of services provided to meet the needs of children and young people who require access to counselling and psychotherapy services, based on local priorities and clinical need.

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, requires education authorities to identify, meet and keep under review the additional support needs of all children for whose education they are responsible, including those with behavioural, social, emotional or mental health difficulties. Appropriate agencies, which includes NHS boards, are required to assist an education authority in the exercise of any of its functions under the act.

As part of our commitment to implementing The Mental Health of Children and Young People: A Framework for Promotion, Prevention and Care by 2015, NHS boards are required to work in partnership with local authorities, schools and the voluntary sector. As part of this function, NHS boards are making available a named health link contact to every school to ensure support and links are in place to child and adolescent mental health services - both voluntary and statutory.

To address the recognised shortfall in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS) workforce we are investing an additional £5.5 million more per year by 2011-12. This will increase the number of psychologists working in specialist CAMHS as well as support our new waiting time target for specialist CAMHS which means that by March 2013 no one will wait longer than 26 weeks from referral to treatment.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what proportion of its £5.5 million additional funding for child and adolescent mental health services will be spent on (a) staffing, (b) additional bed capacity and (c) community interventions. (S3W-31346)

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how many extra staff will be employed as a consequence of its £5.5 million additional funding for child and adolescent mental health services, broken down by speciality. (S3W-31347)

Shona Robison: Our investment of an additional £5.5 million more per year in CAMHS by 2011-12 is to increase capacity in the CAMHS workforce to ensure implementation of the CAMHS Framework. We expect this significant investment to lead to an increase in the CAMHS workforce of about 15% to 20% by that date.

The £5.5 million is made up of two elements, £3.5 million to increase the number of psychologists and £2 million to enhance the intensive community services and reduce the need for children and young people to be admitted to hospital.

We are allocating £6.5 million in total over the next three years to increase the number of psychologists working in specialist CAMHS with £1 million in 2009-10, £2 million in 2010-11 and rising to the £3.5 million referred to above in 2011-12

In addition to recruiting new psychology staff, the resources will fund 10 additional training places for Doctoral Clinical Psychology on the September 2009 intake and again in 2010 and 2011 on top of the already agreed intake numbers. The resources will also fund an additional five training places on the February 2010, 2011 and 2012 intakes for the Masters level psychologist programme: Applied Psychology for Children and Young People. By 2011-12, we expect to have around an additional 60 CAMHS specialist clinical psychologists or trainees and an additional 45-50 masters level applied psychologists in the workforce.

We are also making available £2 million each year, to be matched by NHS boards, to enhance the intensive community services and reduce the need for children and young people to be admitted to hospital. In the North of Scotland, where consideration is still ongoing around the need to increase the number of inpatient beds, the money is to be used to support this process, as well as the development of intensive community services. In the east and west regions, the money is being targeted at increasing workforce and the development of intensive community services.

Whilst each of the regional proposals we are funding are different, all have similar focus and aims and will benefit children and young people with severe mental health problems by improving their access to community support and thus reduce the need for hospital admissions.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive whether NHS Education for Scotland is supporting or commissioning training in counselling as an evidence-based therapy to meet the needs of patients. (S3W-31505)

Shona Robison: NHS Education for Scotland (NES) delivers and commissions training for clinical psychologists, clinical associates in applied psychology, and neuro-psychologists, as well as specific training for particular evidence-based therapies which require a significant professional expertise. Training in counselling is available and commissioned elsewhere.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive whether the Scottish Government Health Directorate Psychological Interventions Team will look at counselling in relation to patient pathways and referral criteria for access to services. (S3W-31506)

Shona Robison: The Scottish Government is funding an initiative on patient pathways and referral criteria as part of the process of developing an access target for Psychological Therapies. This work will be co-ordinated within the Psychological Interventions Team - to be hosted within NHS

Education for Scotland. It will cover a wide range of evidence-based approaches, from those suitable for patients with milder problems (including psycho-educational groups, computerised CBT and guided self-help) to interventions designed for use with the most complex difficulties.

Concessionary Travel

Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how many fraudulent claims have been made to the national concessionary travel scheme since 2006. (S3W-31419)

Stewart Stevenson: Since the introduction of the scheme in 2006, three suspected fraudulent claims have been referred to the police. Of these, one has been called to court and is awaiting a hearing. The remaining two cases continue to be progressed.

Gaelic Language

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what its position is on Bòrd na Gàidhlig's approval in 2008-09 of grants to the value of £3,055,082 out of its annual budget of £4,629,000 to organisations linked to members of its board. (S3W-31284)

Fiona Hyslop: The Scottish Government expects all non-departmental public bodies, including Bòrd na Gàidhlig, to have a clear process and approach to deal with conflicts of interest relating to board members. The Scottish Government's expectations are set out in Guidance on Corporate Governance and the On Board, Guide for Board Members.

The Scottish Government is satisfied that Bòrd na Gàidhlig has a sound and transparent process in place for the allocation and approval of grant to Gaelic ORGANISATIONS, and for dealing with the declaration of any conflicts of interest where Bòrd members may have relevant personal or business interests. This includes a published register of interests and processes to ensure that Bòrd members do not participate in discussions relating to organisations in which they have an interest. Audit Scotland concluded following its audit of 2008-09 that Bòrd na Gàidhlig financial statements were in accordance with any guidance issued by Scottish ministers including on conflict of interest procedures.

I understand that the Chair of Bòrd na Gàidhlig wrote to the member on 17 January 2010 offering a full and detailed response to this question and has offered to discuss these matters with the member for the Highlands and Islands. The figure of £3,055,082 quoted in the question refers to provisional grant allocations over three years, and not annual grant allocation amounts. Bòrd na Gàidhlig's total annual budget in 2009-10 stands at £5.459 million.

Voluntary Sector

Derek Brownlee (South of Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it supports a greater role for the voluntary sector in delivering public services. (S3O-9407)

John Swinney: We are committed to providing high-quality public services and recognise the important role of the third sector in their delivery. We are working with partners in the public sector and the third sector to ensure that the way in which services are commissioned, including the application of community benefit clauses, leads to the best possible services for those that need them.

Mental Health

Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive when work will begin on the new mental health units in Lanarkshire. (S3W-31130)

Nicola Sturgeon: Since 2006, £3.79 million capital has been invested by NHS Lanarkshire in service developments across adult; old age; forensic; psychology and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. Through the same period an additional £1.7 million in capital has gone into improvements in specialist regional inpatient services, for adolescents (£207,000) and medium secure care (£1.5 million). More than £2.6 million of additional ring-fenced funding has also gone into enhance substance misuse services.

In addition, two new capital developments to support patients with complex needs will open this year at Coathill Hospital, Coatbridge (£4.9 million) opening in May 2010 and Caird House, Hamilton (£8.14 million) opening in December 2010.

NHS Lanarkshire's strategic aim for mental health inpatient services is through the provision of a single integrated inpatient unit in the north and one in the south. The unit in the north was identified in the first tranche of capital development priorities in Lanarkshire and the unit for the south remains in the second tranche. The board remains committed to achieving the strategic aim of delivering a single integrated inpatient facility in the north and in the south and are currently scoping options to maximise the benefits of their planned investment in mental health services.

Mental Health

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it plans to implement an NHS stress hotline, given the recent launch of a similar service in England. (S3W-30953)

Shona Robison: The Scottish Government already funds the Breathing Space telephone advice and signposting service for people experiencing low mood, depression or anxiety. Available out of hours on 0800 83 85 87, this handles around 4,000 calls per month and has a website which provides advice on a range of mental health issues. www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk.

The Scottish Government also provides core funding support to Samaritans who provide support to people in crisis by telephone and email.

In addition, the Steps for Stress National Mental Health Improvement Campaign was launched by the Scottish Government in November 2009. It has two aims, to facilitate self recognition of stress, and to inform positive choices around how to reduce stress and improve mental wellbeing.

Both a booklet and website (<http://www.infoscotland.org.uk/stepsforstress/>) are available, giving advice on differing subjects such as money worries, unemployment, problems at work, family and relationship difficulties, physical health problems, the pressure of being a carer, bad experiences in the past, and being discriminated against. Each topic gives practical advice, and has contact details and telephone numbers of organisations which give specialist advice.

Concessionary Travel

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how many people in receipt of the lower rate of disability living allowance in (a) Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley constituency, (b) East Ayrshire and (c) South Ayrshire were admitted to the free bus travel scheme when it commenced. (S3W-30895)

Stewart Stevenson: The Scottish Government does not hold this information.

When the Scotland-wide Free Bus Travel Scheme for Older and Disabled People was introduced on 1 April 2006, existing local authority concessionary cardholders transferred into the new scheme without undergoing a reassessment of their entitlement. The number of those cardholders specifically in receipt of lower rate Disability Living Allowance (DLA) at that time was not provided. Those previously in receipt of concessions on the grounds of receipt of lower rate DLA would, on expiry of their card, no longer be eligible under the Scotland-wide scheme unless they qualified under any of the other criteria.

Concessionary Travel

Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how many registered holders of entitlement cards under the free bus travel scheme there were in (a) 2007-08 and (b) 2008-09. (S3W-31260)

Stewart Stevenson: The Scotland-Wide Free Bus Travel for Older and Disabled People Scheme is delivered through the National Entitlement Card, a multi-application smartcard developed by Scotland's local authorities with the support of the Scottish Government. Information available to Transport Scotland indicates that, at 31 March 2008, 1,162,000 National Entitlement Cards had been issued under the Scotland-Wide Free Bus Travel for Older and Disabled People Scheme. This figure rose to 1,260,000 by 31 March 2009.