

Questions

Up to week ending: 30/10/09

Scots Language

Bill Wilson (West of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will list the Scots language alongside Gaelic in the summary of responsibilities of the Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution on its website. (S3O-8251)

Michael Russell: The Scottish Government website does provide a short list of distinct areas which are within my portfolio. While this is not a complete list of portfolio responsibilities, I would be very happy to include Scots within this brief list of examples.

Mental Health

Hugh O'Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what the target times are for referrals, by GPs to consultants, of people with psychiatric or psychological problems. (S3W-27814)

Nicola Sturgeon: No such referral target has been set. Most referrals take place quickly and well within the target times for other illnesses. The exception to this is referral to consultants for those requiring access to specialist child and adolescence mental health services.

We will shortly announce a target for access in this area in line with commitment I made in November 2008.

Mental Health

Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it has taken to provide inpatient beds for children and adolescents with mental health issues in line with recommendations made in the Child Health Support Group Inpatient Working Group report, Psychiatric Inpatient Services for Children and Young People in Scotland: A Way Forward. (S3W-27816)

Shona Robison: We are working to implement fully The Mental Health of Children and Young People: A Framework for Promotion, Prevention and Care (Bib. number 38415) by 2015. To support this we have made available £2 million on a recurring basis to accelerate the development of specialist child and adolescent mental health community services to reduce the need for admission to inpatient care.

For children there are nine beds provided on a national basis at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children (Yorkhill).

For young people, the recently opened Skye House in the West of Scotland is an indicator of the progress with this agenda, providing 24 beds (an increase from 16). We are also working closely with NHS boards in the north and south east of Scotland. Currently there are 12 beds in Edinburgh and six in Dundee though consideration is being given to increasing this to 12.

The total potential figure of 48 beds is lower than previously announced but reflects the significant additional investment in intensive community services intended to reduce admissions that take children away from their families.

We are also investing an additional £6.5 million over the next three years to NHS boards that will significantly increase the number of psychologists working in specialist child and adolescent mental health services. These additional psychologists will be able to offer direct services and to support others in the work that they do with children and young people with mental health problems.

Volunteering

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive how many volunteer groups there have been in each year since 1999. (S3W-27864)

John Swinney: The number of voluntary organisations in Scotland, which by definition will use volunteers in some capacity, can not be identified with accuracy. The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) has estimated there may be about 45,000 and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator has over 23,800 charities on its register. However, neither of these figures will include the huge number of informal local groups who come together to pursue a common interest.

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive how many volunteers there have been in each year since 1999. (S3W-27865)

John Swinney: The essence of volunteering is that people just do it, often outside any formal setting or organisation, and without any requirement to register. Consequently, there can be no precise quantification of the numbers.

Research by Volunteer Development Scotland suggests that the number of volunteers in Scotland lies in the range 1.3 to 2 million. The Scottish Household Survey also collects some information about rates of volunteering.

Scottish Youth Parliament

Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what level of core funding is projected for the Scottish Youth Parliament over the next three years.
Holding answer issued: 1 October 2009 (S3W-27446)

Keith Brown: The Scottish Youth Parliament currently receives Unified Voluntary Sector Funding (UVSF). A decision on funding in future years will be announced in due course.

Community Care

Christina McKelvie (Central Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what guidance is issued to local community care partnerships with regard to advance planning for the expected future care needs of people with progressive illnesses such as motor neurone disease. (S3W-27729)

Nicola Sturgeon: No such guidance has been issued. Community care partnerships are responsible for such planning in the light of local needs and circumstances.

NHS Quality Improvement Scotland is however, developing generic clinical standards for neurological conditions and the draft standards include a requirement that each regional neurology centre has identified contacts with the individual responsible for neurological conditions in the local community health partnerships, to facilitate management in the community.

The draft clinical standards also include standards specific to motor neurone disease (MND), focussing on the delivery of specialist MND services, diagnosis of MND and condition management of MND.

Sensory-Impaired People

Christina McKelvie (Central Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what guidance is issued to community health partnerships regarding the provision of specialist paediatric occupational therapy services for children with sensory impairment. (S3W-27731)

Nicola Sturgeon: The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 introduced a new framework to assist children and young people with additional support needs who face barriers to learning. The act imposes a duty on NHS boards and others to comply with requests from local authorities for assistance.

The then Scottish Executive's Sensory Impairment Action Plan (SIAP), launched in January 2004, identified common community care priorities for people with sensory impairment and made seven recommendations setting out short, medium and long-term goals to improve access to services. The Scottish Government is working with service users, and relevant voluntary and statutory agencies to implement the recommendations.

In 2007, the Scottish Government published, under cover of HDL(2007)20, Community Care Services For People with A Sensory Impairment: Policy and Practice Guidance for local authorities and their partners on meeting the needs of people with a sensory impairment. It sets out the role of community health partnerships in reducing the health inequalities faced by this group.

Christina McKelvie (Central Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive which community health partnerships currently provide a specialist paediatric occupational therapy service for children with sensory impairment. (S3W-27732)

Nicola Sturgeon: This information is not held centrally. It is for NHS boards to determine the services they provide for this group of children, based on local priorities and clinical need. The Scottish Government has funded an allied health professions officer and an education officer who are currently scoping children's services. They are working to support a partnership approach to enhancing access to therapy services, including occupational therapy for children with sensory impairment.

Education

Christina McKelvie (Central Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive when it will publish its response to the consultation on supporting learners in higher education, Supporting a Smarter Scotland. (S3W-28044)

Fiona Hyslop: I am pleased to announce that the Government's response to the consultation Supporting a Smarter Scotland will be published today. Copies of the government's response plus supporting analysis has been placed in the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (Bib. numbers 49347 and 49348).

Copies of the government's response plus supporting analysis can also be found at:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/12/12121638/0>