**RCPsych in Scotland’s response to the Independent Inquiry into Tayside Mental Health Services final report**

On the 5th of February, [the final report](https://independentinquiry.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Final-Report-of-the-Independent-Inquiry-into-Mental-Health-Services-in-Tayside.pdf) of the Independent Inquiry into Tayside Mental Health services was published. The College has followed the Inquiry team’s progress closely and submitted detailed comment on the interim report, published in 2019. Through a period of consultation last year, we have spoken with a number of members who have been directly and significantly impacted by the shortcomings in NHS Tayside, and whose comments helped shape our response. We are pleased, therefore, to note that final report has highlighted a number of our concerns, and grateful to all those who shared their own personal experiences

We agree with the report’s conclusion that there is urgent need for a system-wide review. Our members spoke of the challenges they’ve encountered from fragmented services, lack of clear leadership, disengagement between senior management and front-line clinicians, and a perceived lack of accountability and unwillingness to take on board any suggestions for change. We were told of seemingly ‘knee-jerk’ emergency actions, such as closing wards without any clinical consultation, and such closures, initially scheduled as temporary and becoming permanent without explanation to clinicians or service-users affected.

The College echoes the report’s recommendation that it is essential that frontline Mental Health workers must be included in decision making and development of services. These voices should be listened to and respected, and not treated as a tokenistic exercise. On the same note, concerns raised, particularly surrounding matters such as patient safety, must be acknowledged and dealt with properly, and not dismissed as unsupportive and out of touch, as members have reported. Strong clinical leadership, the nurturing of a culture of trust and respect, and clear lines of management for all employees is much needed.

Focus must also be placed on the recruitment and retention of substantive consultants in NHS Tayside and a move away from overdependence on locums. This is essential to support and develop services & give staff and service users consistency & security. The fact that nine services within Tayside are operating without a substantive consultant is of serious concern, and reports of members and other medical professionals juggling caseloads far beyond their capacity, is highly unethical, impractical and an indication of the poor efforts of management to retain and recruit the Tayside workforce. It remains our strong view that no locum should be appointed who does not hold the same level of qualification as their substantive equivalent. The College‘s [position statement](https://bit.ly/36ZWXOE) on locums highlights acceptable standards and the detriment that over-reliance on a locum workforce can have on a service.

The report also highlights the important of the wellbeing of the workforce. The College continues to work with partners in the development of the Doctors Specialist Health Service proposal and look forward to positive developments this year.

We are grateful to all members who contributed to the work of this inquiry, and to those who continue to work hard within mental services in Tayside. The College will continue to engage with members and services in NHS Tayside and will provide all available assistance to help address the issues that arisen.