



Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care
Scottish Government
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By email: Scottish.Ministers@scot.gov

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Dear Cabinet Secretary

On behalf of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland, I would like to congratulate you on your recent appointment as the new Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care.

As the professional medical body for psychiatry in Scotland, we set standards, promote excellence, and ensure quality in the provision of psychiatry and mental healthcare services. We support over 1,400 Members, Fellows, Affiliates and Pre-Membership Trainees in Scotland, and represent them nationally to governments of the day, and other agencies, aiming to improve the outcomes of people with mental illness, and the mental health of individuals, their families, and communities.

We are a devolved nation and council of the Royal College of Psychiatrists with a Royal Charter responsibility to develop apolitical policy in the public interest.

Mental Health Funding Report and Analysis

As made explicitly clear in the Public Audit Committee report on Adult Mental Health services in Scotland, the mental health sector is currently struggling in the face of enormous challenges. We were therefore deeply concerned to learn from Public Health Scotland's Health Service Costs Summary for 2022/23 that NHS frontline spend is moving away, not toward, the Government's own spending commitments. Indeed, despite an ongoing commitment to deliver 10% of NHS frontline spend on mental health services, the share of overall NHS funding has decreased from 8.66% in 2021/22 to 8.53% in 2022/23. Further analysis shows that:

- Mental health spending has declined in real terms by 4.5% in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22, whilst overall NHS spending reduced by 3.1%.
- No health board achieved the 10% funding target set by the Scottish Government in 2022/23; NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde was closest at 9.94%.
- NHS Lothian was the only board to invest at least 1% of its funding into CYP mental health services (1.15%). The overall position across Scotland was 0.75%.
- Based on an estimated population for mid-2022, real terms spend per head has declined in 2022/23 to £237.86 compared to £249.80 in 2021/22.
- CAMHS spending increased by 9.8% increase in real terms, but adult psychiatry spending fell by 5.7% and old age psychiatry spending by 1.2%.

We appreciate that Scotland's challenging economic circumstances require difficult budgetary decisions. However, mental health services are clearly, once again, being disproportionately impacted and we fear that as health budgets come under increasing pressure in 2024/25 this problem will only escalate without robust intervention.

It is universally accepted that poor mental illness has a detrimental affect on the Scottish economy. Research by the Mental Health Foundation shows mental health problems costing Scotland £8.8bn per year. This conservative estimate does not include costs associated with dementia, intellectual disabilities, alcohol or substance misuse, and deliberate self-harm or suicide. If it did, the cost would be much higher.

Early intervention, and appropriate care and treatment could go a long way to reduce this figure, but these necessities require investment and support for the substantive workforce.

RCPsychIS Workforce Census

In addition to the PHS report analysis, high demand coupled with financial pressures facing mental health services are having a direct and highly detrimental impact on the workforce responsible for delivering high quality care and treatment. The RCPsych will shortly publish its latest workforce census, and we attach a copy of the Scottish report for your information. The main purpose of this exercise is to provide an accurate picture of the psychiatric workforce through the quantity and quality of information obtained. This data can assist evidence-based decision making and improved services to our communities. This census also seeks to better understand the growing prevalence of locum doctors and the impact this has on understanding of the true rate of vacancies in the specialty. Key findings are as follows:

- 84.9% consultant posts were filled with substantive and locum consultants (across the boards that responded); down from 91.0% in 2021.
- The true vacancy rate (capturing both locum and vacant consultant posts) is 25.3%
- The proportion of vacant consultant posts continues to rise each census year.

Policy Solutions

Our report – when considered in conjunction with our PHS spending analysis - raises many concerns around the delivery of quality mental health services in the quantities required. So much so that we believe the immediate and future outlook for Scotland's mental health services is looking increasingly ominous.

As such, we have developed a number of pragmatic cost-neutral, high-value solutions. We believe that these policies - which centre on the support and retention of the substantive workforce - can be introduced with relative ease. If implemented correctly they will address the demoralisation and burnout of our workforce. Furthermore, by reversing the exodus of highly trained experts we can preserve and future-proof the delivery of quality mental health services in quantities that meet Scotland's needs.

Representatives of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these solutions in more detail, and we hope to hear from your office soon via Hew.Edgar@rcpsch.ac.uk.

With our very best wishes,
Yours sincerely

Dr Jane Morris
Chair of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland