



Kate Forbes MSP,
Cabinet Secretary for Finance & The Economy
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

01/12/2021

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

As the member-led organisation working on behalf of Scotland's specialist mental health doctors, we write to you ahead of the publication of the 2022-23 Budget seeking to help inform your efforts to effectively fund mental health services.

Our members have worked tirelessly during the pandemic to continue to provide potentially life-saving specialist mental health care. This has included adapting to public protection measures as a result of the pandemic, covering for colleagues personally impacted by the virus, stretched staff rotas and utilising new and expanded innovations such as remote consultations.

We greatly appreciated your efforts prior to the election to ensure the mental health impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic were addressed through a £120m Mental Health Recovery & Renewal Fund. We also welcomed your party and government signing up to commitments we advocated for prior to the election, including 10% of NHS spending to go to mental health, and 1% to CAMHS.

As the briefing paper attached with this letter highlights, however, the pandemic has and continues to place people at greater risk of economic, social and mental distress. These risk factors also exacerbate pre-existing mental illness.

Among the key findings of our research, including a commissioned survey of the public, are:

- 70% of people surveyed felt mental and physical health care should be equally prioritised in spending. This fits the commitment from all political parties to parity of esteem between physical and mental healthcare.
- across the population, rates of anxiety, depression and high levels of psychological distress are nearly double what they were prior to the pandemic.

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- Our members report that, in many areas, mental health services are having to operate at 110% capacity

As the severity of physical illness caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has partly abated, our members continue to report a significant increase in demand on mental health services. This increase comes at a point where they and their colleagues across health and social care are mentally and physically exhausted.

With this data in mind, we would hope you and colleagues would consider the following commitments in this forthcoming Budget:

- 1. To retain the £120m Mental Health Recovery & Renewal Fund into next year**
- 2. To begin in this Budget to map out how you will meet the target for 10% of health spend on mental health by 2026, as well as the 1% target for CAMHS**
- 3. To provide greater clarity on where mental health spending goes and its impact, including in our communities**
- 4. To establish a '10% principle' on health spending to go to mental health, and for this to apply to winter resilience funding**

We believe the above commitments are proportionate to the situation being faced in our communities, in our third and voluntary sector and in our primary and secondary mental health services.

We hope you will consider these pledges as part of your Budget process, and we make the commitment to continue to help inform the work of you and colleagues with the expertise and experiences of our members, alongside other key stakeholders.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Linda Findlay,

Chair of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland

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