



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Public Audit Committee

Caroline Lamb  
Chief Executive NHS Scotland and Director-General  
for Health and Social Care  
Scottish Government

**15 January 2025**

Dear Caroline

### Alcohol and drug services

Thank you for providing evidence to the Public Audit Committee on the above report, at its [meeting on 19 December 2024](#). Following the evidence session, the Committee agreed to write to you with some additional questions relating to issues raised in the report.

### Long term sustainability of alcohol and drug services

The report recommends that the Scottish Government develops “a transition plan for the ongoing funding and sustainability of alcohol and drug services after the National Mission ends in 2026”. The report also reflects the “significant” concerns of stakeholders around—

“...the sustainability of services when the National Mission ends in 2026. This includes ADPs facing the challenges of deciding which services to renew and which new services to commission, whether Corra Foundation funded services will continue, and affordability of increased residential rehabilitation capacity”.

During the evidence session the Committee heard that Public Health Scotland is undertaking an independent review of the National Mission and that the review will contain an evaluation of “how national mission funds have been allocated and spent, and information on the benefits that the expenditure has or is likely to have delivered”.

However, it was not clear to the Committee how the Scottish Government intends to ensure the long-term sustainability of alcohol and drug services to those that require them.

**Can you provide more clarity on how the Scottish Government plans to address these concerns, particularly in relation to the long-term funding model**

---

Contact: Public Audit Committee, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP.  
Email [publicaudit.committee@parliament.scot](mailto:publicaudit.committee@parliament.scot). We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

**for these services? Specifically, how will the Scottish Government ensure that services, including those funded by the Corra Foundation and the expanded residential rehabilitation capacity, will continue to meet demand once the National Mission concludes, and what steps it is taking to assess the impact of funding allocations as part of the ongoing review by Public Health Scotland.**

## **Regional variations**

Key message 4 of the report stated that one of the barriers to people being able to access the services that they need is limited access to services in rural areas. During the evidence session on [21 November 2024](#), the Committee heard from the Auditor General for Scotland (AGS) that—

“...there are barriers to accessing services, depending on one’s circumstances. Some of them will be geographical. For example, 18 of the 32 local authorities in Scotland have rehabilitation services, four of which are in Glasgow and three of which are in Inverclyde. Therefore, if you are living in a different part of Scotland, your access to services will be impacted.”

and

“However, the nature of the set-up, the structure and the resources that are available are such that some of the alcohol and drug partnerships are very small teams. Some of the services are operated by only a handful of people, so they might simply not be able to apply in their area an approach that might work incredibly well in another part of Scotland. There is regional variation. Aspects of Scotland’s geography can act as barriers.”

Exhibit 5 of the report also highlights a regional variation in the performance of NHS Boards in meeting the three-week waiting time target for alcohol and drug services treatment. During the evidence session with the AGS on 21 November the Committee heard that—

“There is stark variation between different parts of Scotland in terms of meeting the quarterly target for drug and alcohol services... we do not know why there is such variation”.

**The Committee asks that you provide clarity on the specific steps that the Scottish Government is taking to tackle the regional disparity that exists for those seeking to access alcohol and drug services.**

**The Committee would also welcome clarification of how the Scottish Government plans to ensure that smaller, rural alcohol and drug partnerships are adequately supported to deliver services, and what measures are being taken to better understand and address the underlying causes of the variations between Boards.**

During the evidence session on 19 December, you also undertook to provide the Committee with the following information:

- Data on the size and scale of recovery communities (in response to James Dornan's question, columns 21/22)
- Capacity of residential rehab (in response to the Convener's question, column 22)
- Data relating young people and alcohol (in response to Graham Simpson's question, column 25)

I would be grateful for your response by **12 February 2025**.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Leonard". The script is cursive and somewhat informal.

**Richard Leonard MSP**

**Convener**