

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee  
Wednesday 27 November 2024  
18th Meeting, 2024 (Session 6)

## PE2008: Provide funding for a separate mental health A&E for children

### Introduction

**Petitioner** Kirsty Solman

**Petition summary** Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide funding to create a separate Accident and Emergency for children and young people presenting with mental health issues.

**Webpage** <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2008>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 7 February 2024](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received new written submissions from the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport, and the Petitioner, which are set out in **Annexe C**.
4. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage](#).
5. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. [The Scottish Government gave its initial response to the petition on 27 March 2023](#).
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 429 signatures have been received on this petition.

### Action

8. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

**Clerks to the Committee**  
**November 2024**

## **Annexe A: Summary of petition**

**PE2008: Provide funding for a separate mental health A&E for children**

### **Petitioner**

Kirsty Solman

### **Date Lodged**

28 March 2023

### **Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide funding to create a separate Accident and Emergency for children and young people presenting with mental health issues.

### **Previous action**

I have emailed MSPs and media to highlight that children are being failed by the current mental health system

### **Background information**

A member of my family tried to commit suicide 3 times at the age of 10 due to a decline in his mental health and was not seen by any mental health professionals within A&E until his 3rd attempt.

We feel this is because A&E are equipped to deal with physical difficulties and are not trained to deal with these issues.

A specialised A&E stream for mental health only would ensure better care for our children and young people.

## **Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2008 on 7 February 2024**

**The Convener:** Our last on-going petition is PE2008, which was lodged by Kirsty Solman. It calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide funding to create a separate accident and emergency for children and young people presenting with mental health issues.

Following the previous consideration of the petition, the committee put points raised by the petitioner to the Scottish Government. The submission from the Scottish Government outlines a number of workstreams including work with Police Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service to improve unscheduled care pathways.

The minister's response notes that attendance at a children's hospital instead of general A and E may be advised where that is available and appropriate. In response to the petitioner's concerns about the efficacy of phone assessments, it states that a patient-centred approach is adopted when considering the suitability of digital technology and that that is included in the national guidance for clinicians. The minister's response recognises that the child and adolescent mental health services target of all boards achieving a 90 per cent standard by March 2023 was not achieved and points to on-going work with health boards to develop CAMHS out-of-hours service provision.

The petitioner has responded to the minister raising questions about the impact of significant staff cuts on the planned work with Police Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service. She has asked how many psychiatric teams there are, as her experience involved waiting for several hours because the team was not based in the hospital. The petitioner shares that many families have reached out to her to say that their child could not get help through the mental health hubs because they were under 12. She asks for clarity on what services are available for children under the age of 12.

Do members have any comments or suggestions for action?

**Foyso Choudhury:** We should write to the Scottish Government to seek—sorry, I have lost my place.

**The Convener:** We should write the Minister for Social Care and Mental Wellbeing and Sport.

**Foyso Choudhury:** That is right. We should ask about the age of people using the services. How many people have attempted to access support through the mental health hubs and how many were under 12 years of age?

**The Convener:** Okay. We might like to know the number of psychiatric teams in Scotland, and it would be useful to have that broken down by health board. We should also ask whether the Scottish Government recognises that increased training will be required with partner agencies such as Police Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service to improve the unscheduled care pathways and, if so, what

resources and funding will need to be put in place. Are we content with those suggestions?

**Members *indicated agreement.***

**The Convener:** Thank you very much. We will keep the petition open, and we will investigate further and return to it when we have those responses from the minister.

## **Annexe C: Written submissions**

### **Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport written submission, 12 March 2024**

#### **PE2008/E: Provide Funding for a Separate Mental Health A&E for Children**

The Scottish Government would like to thank the Committee for the renewed opportunity to provide information on the questions raised in the petitioner's submission of 29 August 2023. We hope that the information included in this response will provide some reassurance to the Committee and Ms Solman that mental health remains an absolute priority for the Scottish Government, and that we continue to work on ensuring that everyone in need of emergency mental health care receives that support quickly and, wherever possible, close to home.

#### **Training and Resources for Police Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service**

The Scottish Government published, jointly with COSLA, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Action Plan on 7 November 2023, setting out the actions to ensure we have a resilient and sustainable workforce who feel valued and supported, and who have the right skills to deliver the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

An Education and Training Advisory Group, chaired by NHS Education for Scotland (NES), was established to bring together senior leaders from key sectors and organisations to develop a shared understanding of the critical areas where education and training can support the delivery of improved unscheduled care.

The Group will work to increase awareness, uptake and accessibility of existing, reliable mental health training resources and support decision-making on what further resources might be required to best meet the training needs of the wider workforce. This includes the development of an induction training framework for the wider mental health and wellbeing workforce, volunteers and carers. The mental health induction training framework will include promotion of informed level mental health and wellbeing training and resources and will be accessible across sectors.

As noted in the Scottish Government's submission of 29 June 2023, the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) and Police Scotland are key partners in improving the Mental Health Unscheduled Care (MHUC) pathway. The Scottish Government has enabled Police Scotland and SAS to access mental health professionals in NHS 24 through the Enhanced Mental Health Pathway. Since 2020-21, we have provided over £6 million to Police Scotland, SAS and NHS 24 to support the pathway which enables Police Scotland and SAS to direct callers who are identified as requiring mental health advice to the Mental Health Hub within the NHS 24 111 service.

In May 2022, SAS launched their Mental Health Strategy which was developed in consultation with Children's organisations, sets out their coordinated approach to how SAS will provide care for people in crisis, those who are experiencing mental ill-

health, and those experiencing mental health distress. The strategy recognises that in order to achieve this, staff at all levels need to be provided with the appropriate knowledge and skills to confidently recognise poor mental health and the associated risk factors.

Through the NES National Training Programme, SAS also aims to educate all frontline staff with the appropriate knowledge, skills, and confidence to identify psychological trauma by the third year of the strategy's implementation. Furthermore, SAS will provide its staff with better tools to assess mental health using a biological, psychological, social, emotional, and spiritual approach, including on scene assessment tools and professional-to-professional support. The Scottish Government allocated SAS £180,000 in 2023-24 to support the delivery of this mental health training and education.

With regards to Police Scotland, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland's (HMICS) report on mental health and policing, published in October 2023, highlighted a gap in training relating to mental health. HMICS have made two recommendations on improving the training available to officers and staff: "Police Scotland should provide clear guidance and effective training for officers and staff, in, to help address the culture of risk aversion evident in the policing of mental health-related incidents and to improve outcomes for people experiencing poor mental health" (recommendation 5); and "Police Scotland should conduct a full training needs analysis for policing mental health, reflecting its published strategy, to include (but not necessarily limited to) all public-facing roles across the service" (recommendation 7). The Scottish Government, Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland have established a Partnership Delivery Group to drive activity relating to the recommendations. We are happy to provide the Committee with updates on this as the work progresses.

### **Data on Psychiatric Teams**

Concerning the request for information on the number of psychiatric teams in Scotland, broken down by health board, the Scottish Government does not currently hold this information. Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) workforce data is publicly available in NHS Education for Scotland (NES) Turas Data Intelligence at: [NHS Scotland Workforce Data](#). This also provides data on staff joining and leaving rates by each Health Board.

On Ms Solman's comment about having mental health teams based within acute hospitals, the Scottish Government would like to highlight that Action 15 of the Mental Health Strategy 2017-27 outlined our commitment to fund 800 additional mental health workers within 5 years to key settings, including A&Es, GP practices, police station custody suite and prisons – ensuring local provision and support is at the heart of our plans.

At the end of the commitment on 1st April 2022, an additional 179.2 whole-time equivalent mental health posts had been recruited to A&E settings. We have allocated over £107 million since 2018-19 to enable recruitment through Action 15 and will continue to provide the necessary funding to ensure that posts are protected

in future. Workforce and service planning will continue to be conducted by Integration Authorities according to the needs of their populations.

### **Children Under 12 Accessing the Mental Health Hub**

On the request for information on the number of people who have attempted to access support through NHS 24's Mental Health Hub, NHS 24 informed us that they responded to 87,409 calls during the period of February 2023 and January 2024. Of these, 287 concerned children under 12 years old. NHS 24 were also able to provide some information on the outcomes for calls concerning children under 12:

- Over 52% of calls for under 12s resulted in a referral for a telephone follow-up from a local out of hours GP service.
- 28% of calls were signposted back to their own GP.
- 1.7% were referred to A&E.

### **Services available for children under 12 years old**

Ms Solman enquires about the services and supports available for children under 12 years old who are significantly struggling with their mental health, out with those mentioned in previous correspondence such as local CAMHS services.

Where appropriate, community-based mental health supports for children, young people and their families can be offered as an alternative to CAMHS, focused on early intervention and prevention, and including support for emotional distress delivered in a community setting. We are providing local authorities with £15 million per annum to fund these supports – it is for local authorities to decide how the money is best invested according to local need. In the first half of 2023, more than 58,000 children, young people and their family members accessed these community-based mental health support.

Examples of supports that are available to children 12 and under include: Educational Psychologist in Aberdeenshire, Parent to Parent Ltd in Dundee, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Service in East Lothian, Tier 2 CAMHS support team in Glasgow and Crisis Counselling in North Ayrshire. Digital services such as Shout and Togetherall are also available in many local authority areas to support those in distress or crisis.

The Scottish Government have also ensured counsellors are available in schools for pupils aged 10 and over, backed by £16 million in funding, which means that children are able to have their mental health needs met earlier.

We have supported school staff to understand and recognise the range of mental health and wellbeing concerns that young people may experience in a new professional learning resource introduced in June 2021. We have also introduced new guidance to support whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing, complementing the work that education authorities and schools already do to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

The Scottish Government would like to thank the Committee again for the opportunity to provide further information based on the points raised in Ms Solman's

submission. As noted in our previous submissions, we are aware that more work needs to be done and we will continue to work with key professionals and stakeholders to develop safe, meaningful, and sustainable mental health unscheduled care pathways and associated services across Scotland for everyone.

Yours sincerely,

**Maree Todd MSP**

## **Petitioner written submission, 9 April 2024**

### **PE2008/F: Provide funding for a separate mental health A&E for children**

I would first like to thank the Committee for the renewed opportunity to provide information on the questions raised by the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport's submission of 12th March 2024.

#### **Training and Resources for Police Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service.**

The Scottish Government stated that they have provided £6 million to Police Scotland and Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) and NHS 24 to support the Mental Health Unscheduled Care Pathway (MHUC). Can the Scottish Government provide confirmation and evidence that specific training on Children's Mental Health is delivered to all three services due to the specialised needs required to care and keep children in Mental Health Crisis safe? It is not clearly identified anywhere as I have read the Mental Health Strategy. Within the SAS Mental Health Strategy, it was advised:

"This is particularly prevalent in protected characteristic communities such as Black, Asian and Ethnic Minorities (BAME) and LGBTI, and those who have a history of alcohol and substance use disorders."

The Scottish Government advised this was done in consultation with children's organisations. Can they advise why there is no mention of children or disabilities within the protected characteristic communities when these groups make up a significant portion of those struggling with their Mental Health? It was also stated within the Mental Health Strategy that SAS staff will be offered training (pg26). To ensure consistency should the training offered not be mandatory?

#### **Data on Psychiatric Teams**

Action 15 of the Mental Health Strategy 2017-27 advises a commitment to fund 800 additional Mental Health Workers. Can the Scottish Government confirm how many have been recruited into Children's A&E and CAHMS? The way the submission reads it appears to be a commitment to Adult Services.

#### **Children Under 12 Accessing the Mental Health Hub**

NHS 24 were also able to provide some information on the outcomes for calls concerning children under 12:

- Over 52% of calls for under 12s resulted in a referral for a telephone follow-up from a local out of hours GP service.
- 28% of calls were signposted back to their own GP.
- 1.7% were referred to A&E.

Can the Scottish Government advise what the outcome was for the other 18.3%?

Also, can the Scottish Government advise how this would help the current backlog? These cases would most likely have another referral sent by a GP to CAHMS where currently the 18-week target is not near met, whereas if CAHMS had a base within a children's Mental Health A&E any immediate early intervention could be given.

### **Services available for children under 12 years old**

In their submission the Scottish Government stated:

“Where appropriate, community-based mental health supports for children, young people and their families can be offered as an alternative to CAMHS, focused on early intervention and prevention, and including support for emotional distress delivered in a community setting. We are providing local authorities with £15 million per annum to fund these supports – it is for local authorities to decide how the money is best invested according to local need. In the first half of 2023, more than 58,000 children, young people and their family members accessed these community-based mental health support.”

Can the Scottish Government advise why they have not made it mandatory that the funds be spent on Children's Mental Health?

The Scottish Government also advised “The Scottish Government have also ensured counsellors are available in schools for pupils aged 10 and over, backed by £16 million in funding, which means that children are able to have their mental health needs met earlier”.

Can the Scottish Government advise how accessible these counsellors are and if there is a waiting list considering they have provided a substantial amount of funding?

The Scottish Government advised within their submission “We have supported school staff to understand and recognise the range of mental health and wellbeing concerns that young people may experience in a new professional learning resource introduced in June 2021. We have also introduced new guidance to support whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing, complementing the work that education authorities and schools already do to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing”.

**CPPP/S6/24/18/6**

Can the Scottish Government advise if this was within mainstream schools and how much training was provided? The current training for Mental Health within education is very brief.