Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

Petition Number: PE01611

Main Petitioner: Angela Hamilton

Subject: Mental Health Services in Scotland

Calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to improve access to mental health services in Scotland by –

1. Reducing the mental health waiting time target from 18 to 14 weeks for adult therapies, and to 12 weeks for child and adolescent mental health services, and committing to ensuring 90% of patients begin treatment within these times;
2. Providing funding to ensure primary care staff receive additional training on supporting patients with mental health conditions;
3. Providing funding for third sector organisations that deliver community based services, such as support groups, which can be accessed by patients whilst waiting for referral appointments.

Background

Early intervention for people with mental health difficulties is considered important because people who receive treatment quickly are more likely to make a full recovery. Timely intervention may also minimise the impact of mental health problems on young people’s development and education.¹

Psychological Therapies Waiting Time Targets

A waiting time target measuring access to adult psychological therapies has been in place since April 2011. Psychological therapies are interventions that help people better understand their feelings, thoughts and behaviour. A wide range of therapies are available, including different forms of counselling, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and Psychotherapy. The type, intensity and duration of therapy offered is dependent on the needs of the individual. More information about types of psychological therapies is available from NHS Education for Scotland.

The waiting time target specifies that people should wait no more than 18 weeks between being referred for treatment and beginning therapy, and that this standard should be met for at least 90% of patients.

More information about this target, and quarterly reports, are available at ISD Scotland. The most recent information published shows that for the quarter ending June 2016, 12,779 people started treatment for psychological therapies and 81.2% of these were seen within 18 weeks. The trend of patients seen within 18 weeks has remained relatively stable over the last five quarters. The median waiting time for treatment was 8 weeks. There is significant variation between the performance of different health boards: in the last quarter only five health boards met this target.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Waiting Time Targets

A waiting time target to deliver faster treatment from CAMHS was established in April 2010. It specified that that by March 2013 people referred to CAMHS should wait no more than 26 weeks between referral and treatment, and that this standard should be met for at least 90% of patients. This target was reduced to 18 weeks from December 2014. CAMHS comprises a wide range of treatments and therapies, including treatment by psychiatrists; psychologists; psychotherapists; speech and language therapists. IDS Scotland reports on this waiting time target quarterly.

The most recent information published shows that, for the quarter ending June 2016, 4,642 children and young people started treatment and 77.6% were seen within 18 weeks. Whilst this is a decrease compared with the previous quarter (84.4%) there is a slight increase compared to the same period quarter ending June 2015 (76.7%). The median time waiting for treatment was 10 weeks. There is wide variation between the performance of different health boards. In the last quarter, 7 health boards met this target. NHS Borders (85.6%), NHS Fife (87.7%), NHS Forth Valley (28.0%), NHS Grampian (41.0%), NHS Lanarkshire (88.9%), NHS Lothian (57.4%) and NHS Shetland (22.7%) did not meet the standard.

Mental health training for primary care staff

A target was established to increase from 16% (2008) to 50% (by the end of 2010) the number of frontline staff in mental health and substance misuse services, primary care and A&E who are educated in using suicide assessment tools and/or suicide prevention training programmes. This target was met, with 52% of frontline staff in these services trained in suicide assessment/prevention.  

Funding for third sector organisations

The third sector, which includes charities, voluntary and other not-for-profit organisations, plays an important role in the provision of services, support and information for people with mental health conditions. Current arrangements between NHS services and third sector organisations vary considerably between different NHS boards and local authorities.

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Scottish Government Action

Mental Health Funding

In January 2016, the Scottish Government announced an additional £150 million in mental health funding to be invested over five years. The Scottish Government indicated that £15 million will be allocated to a Mental Health Innovation Fund, improving access to services and support in primary care and frontline settings. £24.7 million will be provided to NHS Boards to improve capacity to see more people more quickly. £4.8 million will be allocated to a Mental Health Access Support Programme, delivered by Healthcare Improvement Scotland. £24.6 million will go to workforce development.

Minister for Mental Health

In May 2016, Maureen Watt MSP was appointed as Minister for Mental Health. Responsibility for mental health was previously included in the role of the Minister for Sport, Health Improvement and Mental Health.

Forthcoming Mental Health Strategies

The Scottish Government is in the process of developing a new national mental health strategy, due to be published in late 2016. Consultation on the strategy was open between 29 July and 16 September 2016. The Scottish Government’s proposed priorities for the new strategy include:

- A focus on prevention and early intervention for infants, children and young people
- Introducing new models of supporting mental health in primary care
- Improving access to mental health services and making them more efficient, effective and safe – which is also part of early intervention.

In June 2016, the Scottish Government committed to developing a 10 year Child and Adolescent Wellbeing strategy, addressing both physical and mental health. A Suicide Prevention Strategy is due to be published in 2017.

Distress Brief Intervention Pilot Scheme

In July 2016, the Scottish Government announced a Distress Brief Intervention (DBI) pilot scheme. The DBI is “a short intervention for people in distress who do not need emergency medical treatment in settings like A&E departments or GP surgeries. Specially trained staff will help them to manage difficult emotions and problem situations early on, and prepare a ‘distress plan’ to prevent future crisis”. The pilot scheme will receive £4.2 million of the £150 million additional investment in mental health services.

3 Mental Health Funding, Scottish Government (2016)
4 Mental Health in Scotland – a 10 year vision, Scottish Government (2016)
6 Early Intervention in Mental Health, Scottish Government (2016)
**Review of NHS Targets**

In June 2016, the Scottish Government announced that current NHS targets will be reviewed. A consultation will be led by an expert group over the summer of 2016, and proposals for future plans published during 2016-2017.

**Scottish Parliament Action**

The Health and Sport Committee will lead a short inquiry on mental health services in November 2016, focusing on CAMHS waiting time targets and the implementation of the previous mental health strategy. The Health and Sport Committee will also lead a short inquiry on NHS Targets, inviting the expert group on the review of targets to give oral evidence.

Access to mental health services has been raised in a number of Scottish Parliament debates, notably *Taking Scotland Forward: Health* on 7 June 2016.

Motion S5M-01356 focuses on CAMHS waiting times:

**Motion S5M-01356, Dean Lockhart, Mid Scotland and Fife, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party, Date Lodged: 09/09/2016**

**Worrying NHS Forth Valley CAMHS Waiting Times**

That the Parliament notes with concern that, according to the recently published IDS report, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Waiting Times in NHSScotland, the percentage of young people starting their mental health treatment between April and June 2016 who were seen within 18 weeks in NHS Forth Valley remains worryingly low; regrets that the health board is one of the poorest performing on this measure, with only 26.5% of young people being seen within the Scottish Government’s target of 18 weeks; understands that young people in the region face the longest average median wait for mental health treatment in Scotland, at 24 weeks, and believes that it is unacceptable that the youngest and most vulnerable people in the NHS Forth Valley area must wait approximately six months for treatment.

Several Parliamentary Questions have addressed access to mental health services, including:

**Question S5W-00429, Murdo Fraser, Mid Scotland and Fife, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party, Date Lodged: 02/06/2016:** To ask the Scottish Government what work the Minister for Mental Health will carry out regarding child and adolescent mental health waiting times.

**Answered by Maureen Watt (16/06/2016):** As part of the £54.1 million package of support announced by the First Minister in January 2016, £4.8 million will be awarded to Healthcare Improvement Scotland to establish a mental health access improvement support team. This

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team will provide support to boards to improve access to psychological therapies for all ages, including for children and adolescents.

The improvement programme will be delivered by Healthcare Improvement Scotland, with support from NHS education for Scotland to enhance the supply and training of workforce (£24.6 million Scottish Government funding).

The Scottish Government has invested £16.3 million over a six year period to increase the number of psychologists working in specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) with a further £3.5 million committed in 2016.

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SPICe
21 September 2016

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