The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) is pleased to submit the following response to the Health and Sport Committee’s very welcomed Inquiry into the Draft Budget 2018-19. BACP is the leading and largest professional body for counselling and psychotherapy in Scotland, with over 1,800 members, and over 44,000 members across the United Kingdom. We have high standards of registered practice, and a flexible workforce, which is currently under-utilised. We work closely with policy makers, stakeholders and other professional bodies.

Improving mental health and wellbeing is a stated priority of Scottish Government, and is covered within the National Performance Framework, the LDP standards (through the Psychological Therapies Waiting Times Targets) and within the National health and wellbeing outcomes. However, despite this, current performance on mental health falls far short of ambition and we believe that three areas in particular would benefit from increased budget and focus – Children and Young People, Older People and Workplace mental health.

Children and Young People's Mental Health

We believe Government should build on the commitment in the new Mental Health Strategy to review counselling in schools, by making a commitment to establish a trained counsellor in every secondary school in Scotland. School-based counselling is a cost-effective and proven early intervention which improves children and young people’s mental health and emotional well-being.

School-based counselling is available to children in Northern Ireland and Wales through government supported national programmes, whilst in Scotland provision is patchy. BACP would like to see all children and young people of school age across Scotland being given access to professional, qualified counselling services in their schools.

In Wales, where school counselling is enshrined in legislation, 88% of children and young people who completed an average of five counselling sessions did not require onward referral to specialist help. Children and school staff like counselling as it is accessible, non-stigmatising and effective. Evaluation evidence from school managers demonstrates improvements in attainment, attendance and behaviour of young people who have accessed services.

The cost of five sessions of counselling is equivalent to just one contact with CAMHS. We estimate that providing school-based counselling in secondary schools in Scotland under £7m. This could be delivered by investing a fraction of the mental health budget, as well as significantly reducing the burden on CAMHS, keeping children in school and helping avoid unnecessary and often stigmatising mental health diagnoses. Overtime, the savings of putting in this programme would more than cover its costs.

For further information please refer to BACP’s [School counselling for all](#).

Older People's Mental Health
Older people in Scotland suffer high levels of treatable depression but don't receive the help and support they need. This is a growing problem as Scotland's population is ageing. The number of people aged 75 years old plus is projected to rise by 75 per cent by 2031. Shockingly, the majority (85%) of older people with depression receive no help or support from the NHS. Despite this, the recent Scottish Mental Health Ten Year Plan surprisingly makes no reference to supporting this very vulnerable group. BACP would like to see a much greater emphasis on the mental health of older people and a push to ensure increased access to counselling for our ageing population.

Older people in Wales and Northern Ireland benefit from an Older People’s Commissioner, providing an independent voice for older people and championing their interests. BACP would welcome funding for the position of Older People’s Commissioner in Scotland, ensuring our older people get the dignity and support they need.

Workplace mental health

Each year in the UK, 140 million working days are lost through sickness absence, costing employers £9 billion in sick pay and associated costs. Research by SAMH in 2011 estimated that output losses to the economy from poor mental health were £3.2bn per year in Scotland.

Typically a third of our lives are spent at work, and at least three in ten employees suffer from mental health problems (ranging from short-term depression to chronic conditions), costing businesses up to £1000 per employee each year. Stress at work, a key driver of long-term absence, has more than doubled since the 1990s, with one in five workers having taken a day of sick for stress (of which 90% gave a different reason for their absence). By treating poor mental health, reducing lost productivity and helping people return to work, workplace counselling boosts outputs and reduces the burden on other services.

BACP would like all employees in Scotland to have access to workplace counselling, with the Government making up the shortfall where provision does not exist. We believe that savings would significantly outweigh investment. By treating poor mental health, reducing lost productivity and helping people return to work, workplace counselling can produce multiple benefits to the exchequer, boosting employment taxes while reducing the burden on major government departments.

For further information please refer to BACP’s: Improving mental health in the workplace