

PE2091/C: Provide funding to have a CAHMS worker and a nurse based within Scottish high schools

Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport written submission, 1 May 2025

Thank you for writing to me regarding the above petition, which I understand the Committee considered at its meeting on 2 April. I note the points on which the Committee are seeking a response and these are covered below.

The Committee will be aware that the Scottish Government is responsible for setting the overall policy direction of mental health services, and for working with and funding NHS Health Boards and local authorities to ensure they plan and deliver appropriate local services. It is for local NHS Boards and local authorities to decide how they implement these policies to ensure that their local population have the highest quality of care and treatment at the right time and in the right place.

I wish to start by assuring the Committee that the Scottish Government remains committed to improving CAMHS services as a whole. As I have outlined before, in 24/25 we directly allocated £123.5 million to NHS Boards and IJBs for an Enhanced Mental Health Outcomes Framework; and will ensure similar funding in the new financial year. The Framework provides a single, flexible funding stream to support continued improvements and better outcomes across a range of mental health and psychological services in line with the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, including CAMHS. We continue to see significant and sustained improvements in CAMHS waiting times. For the first time ever, national performance against the 18-week CAMHS standard has been met, with 90.6% of children and young people starting treatment within 18 weeks of referral.

We also continue to provide local authorities with £16 million per annum to provide counselling services in secondary schools, which are available to all children in Scotland aged ten years and over. School counsellors have helped children and young people explore, understand and overcome issues in their lives to improve their resilience, which may prevent the need for higher tier treatment approaches.

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, available and open to anyone who wishes to enhance their knowledge and skills.

We also published a whole school approach framework for schools to utilise as they continue to support positive mental health in children and young people. The framework is designed to help all school staff to promote children and young people's mental, emotional and social wellbeing and assist in responding to and supporting children and young people's mental health in schools.

Counsellors' Co-ordinators Network

The Counsellors' Co-ordinators Network is continuing to consider the recommendations made by the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland on counselling in schools. I have previously written to the Commissioner to confirm that a standing item would be included on the agenda of each of the Network's quarterly meetings to ensure a focussed discussion on

the recommendations. To assist the group to approach this in a strategic way, the recommendations have been grouped into key themes: children and young people engagement; access; promoting services; information sharing; local evaluation and data collection and support; supervision and training. An update will be provided to the Commissioner once all themes have been considered.

Remit of School Nurses

I recognise that school nurses across Scotland provide significant support to school aged children with emotional health and wellbeing needs. That is why support for school nurses is included within the Enhanced Mental Health Framework funding highlighted above. In March 2024 and in response to the findings of the school nurse survey, the Scottish Government convened a meeting of the School Nurse Implementation Group in which the relationships and interdependencies between school nursing, school counselling and CAMHS were discussed. This allowed Health Board representatives to share experiences on the provision of mental health support to school aged children.

Furthermore, a subgroup of the School Nurse Implementation Group has been established to take forward work to better promote the transformed School Nurse role, which places a particular focus on mental health and wellbeing. This is with a view to ensuring that services working with School Nurses are more aware of their role and remit and able to collaborate most effectively.

The aforementioned work aims to support a greater level of cohesion between school nursing teams and associated services such as CAMHS. Of course, it remains the responsibility of territorial Health Boards to ensure that children have access to appropriate services in line with their established needs.

Community-based Mental Health and Wellbeing Support

It is important for me to stress at this stage that not all children and young people need specialist services like CAMHS, and many will find more suitable support in their local community. This is why we have provided local authorities with over £80 million since 2020 to fund community mental health and wellbeing supports and services for 5-24 year-olds (26 if care-experienced) and their families. As of 2025-26, this £15 million per year has been baselined into local authority general revenue grants.

The supports and services are focused on prevention and early intervention, promoting positive mental health and wellbeing, and tackling emotional distress. Where appropriate, these services offer an alternative to CAMHS by providing support in a community setting. Support can also be made available to children and young people who are awaiting CAMHS treatment.

Community supports and services are available in every local authority area, and more than 300 have been put in place across the country. Local authorities have reported that nearly 83,000 people used the supports and services between July 2023 and March 2024.

I would like to thank the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee for the opportunity to provide further information on the topics raised in the petition. I hope that the information outlined above provides the Committee with the details they need to appropriately consider the petition.

MAREE TODD MSP