

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition PE2148: Improve Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services to Adult Mental Health Services transition, lodged by Heather Stitt

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

[PE2148](#) calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to improve the transition for young people moving from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to Adult Mental Health Services. It highlights current issues with a lack of adherence to national clinical process guidance as outlined in the Scottish Government's [Transition Care Planning action 21: principles of transition](#) and inappropriate signposting to the voluntary sector which may be unable to provide the specialist support required.

Background

Adolescence and young adulthood are a time of significant physiological, social, and psychological transformation. For young people with mental health service and care needs, this phase often requires transitioning from child to adult mental health services. This process can be very stressful for both young people and their carers and families. Those with complex needs may face even greater challenges, as they may need to navigate multiple service transitions.

[This transition period can be especially difficult for two vulnerable groups of young people](#). The first includes young people with profound support needs, including those with severe disabilities or life limiting conditions. The second includes young people whose service or care needs are less apparent. These young people face increased risk of falling through the cracks as they transition to adult services, particularly when support is not appropriately signposted or effectively coordinated.

[Previous research with young people, their carers, and families has highlighted several barriers](#) that prevent smooth transitions from child to adult mental health services. Key barriers include:

- unclear transition pathways and poor coordination between services,
- inadequate planning and a lack of clarity about accountability for planning and implementing transition processes,
- insufficient accessible information about available options,
- limited support from adult services, and
- organisational processes taking priority over young people's voices and individual needs.

Scottish Government actions

- In 2010, the Scottish Government commissioned the [Doran Review](#) to evaluate learning provisions in Scotland for children and young people with complex additional support needs. The 2012 report identified major challenges faced by young people and their carers and families in transitioning to adult services and provided recommendations. In response, the Scottish Government committed to making transitions the focus of its [2014 report to Scottish Parliament](#), tasked a subgroup of the Advisory Group for Additional Support for Learning in 2013 to assess transitional arrangements and examine existing legislation. It also committed to revising the code of practice for additional support and learning and develop practice guidance in connection with the Children and Young People's Bill. The Advisory Group for Additional Support for Learning was also directed to continue reviewing the need for additional guidance as part of its ongoing work programme.
- [The Scottish Government commissioned qualitative research focusing on transitions](#) to adult years and services, completed by the Health and Social Care Alliance between July 2016 and March 2017. This made several recommendations, including the use of Wellbeing Indicators and the adoption of the Principles of Good Transitions as the standard approach to transitions across all services. This research also highlighted the need for improvements in access to local information about available resources and local pathways and processes, better training resources, more proactive outreach to reach vulnerable individuals with additional support needs and those who may be unknown to services, better coordination of services and an established point of contact, and the implementation of Family Group Decision Making.
- In 2017, the Scottish Government published its [2017-2027 Mental Health Strategy](#) with specific actions for children and young people's services. Action 21 of this strategy states the Scottish Government will: "Improve quality of anticipatory care planning approaches for children and young people leaving the mental health system entirely, and for children and young people transitioning from CAMHS to Adult Mental Health Services."
- In 2017, the [Association for Real Change \(ARC Scotland\)](#) published the [Principles of Good Transitions](#) on behalf of the Scottish Transitions Forum. This established seven key principles designed to inform and guide professionals across all sectors involved in supporting young people transitioning to adult services. The Principles of Good Transitions have been endorsed by the Scottish Government.
- In 2020, the Scottish Government published the [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services \(CAMHS\) Service Specification](#). This outlines the provisions that young people and their families expect from the NHS. It emphasises that

all children and families should receive support and services that are appropriate to their needs and sets an expectation that the Scottish Government's Transition Care Planning Guidance is implemented. It recommends that, wherever possible, services work collaboratively with the child or young person and their family to proactively plan transitions to adult mental health services, primary care or other services, including those provided by voluntary or third sector organisations. Additionally, the specification ensures that children, young people, and their families should be able to access additional support for emotional distress through the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Supports and Services. Community supports and services are expected to work closely with CAMHS, relevant health and social care partners, children's services, and educational establishments to establish clear and streamlined pathways that support children and young people during transitions.

- In 2024, the Scottish Government allocated £120 million to NHS boards and Integration Joint Boards (IJBs) for the [Enhanced Mental Health Outcomes Framework in 2024-25](#). The Framework focuses on increasing capacity around CAMHS, the delivery of psychological therapies, eating disorder care, and neurodevelopmental services, in addition to ongoing innovation and service reform. The Scottish Government also allocated [£65 million since 2020](#) to fund community-based support services.

Scottish Parliament actions

- In 2018, the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) collaborated with the Scottish Government and CAMHS in Edinburgh to develop the [transition care plan \(TCP\)](#), including a TCP [template](#). The TCP is a document designed to assist young people in navigating the transition to adult services. According to the [guidance](#), the TCP should be completed once a young person and their CAMHS team decide that they should begin this transition. It captures the young person's views, opinions, and concerns information about their needs to help adult mental health services determine the appropriate treatment. The guidance recommends that TCPs should be regularly reviewed, updated, and amended by the young person and key health practitioners throughout the transition process. This approach also allows flexibility for those aged 18-25 to continue their care and treatment with CAMHS where this is in their best interests, rather than automatic transfer to adult services.
- During the 77th National Sitting of the SYP, members of SYP (MSYP) put forward a motion for a further review of the support provided to young people undergoing transitions. This was passed by MSYP with 98% support.

- The Scottish Parliament reviewed the Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood) (Scotland) Bill, which fell on 23rd November 2023 at Stage 1. The Bill would have required a Scottish Government minister to be in charge of improving opportunities for disabled children and young people moving into adulthood and for local authorities to have plans for each disabled child and young person as they move into adulthood.

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The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at

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