



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Maree Todd MSP
Minister for Social Care, Mental
Wellbeing and Sport
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Health, Social Care and Sport Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
Tel: 0131 348-5979
Calls via RNID Typetalk:
18001 0131 348-5979

Via email only

Email: HSCS.committee@Parliament.Scot

28 November 2023

Dear Minister,

Perinatal Mental Health

1. The Health, Social Care and Sport Committee concluded a short inquiry into perinatal mental health at the beginning of 2022 with publication of a report setting out several recommendations for future focus: [Inquiry into perinatal mental health | Scottish Parliament](#).
2. The Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care and the Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport [responded to the Committee's report on 28 March 2022](#) with a very comprehensive matrix setting out the Committee's recommendations and the Scottish Government's response to each recommendation. I am now writing to request an update on progress on several areas outlined in that letter.
3. As part of your response, the Committee would also be grateful if you could outline updates in the following areas:

Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Programme Board

4. The board met for the final time in March 2023 and its successor was due to be introduced in 2023. The Committee notes the Scottish Government's commitment in its [Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Plan 2023-2025](#) to "continue to invest in and embed perinatal and infant mental health services at all levels of need so that women and families across all areas of Scotland have access to these services". **Please**

provide an update on who will take this work forward as the successor to the board.

5. The joint response noted that the Scottish Government was working with Public Health Scotland on an evaluation of the delivery of the programme of work overseen by the board. **Please provide an update on this evaluation, and what further actions have been highlighted as a result.**

Service Specification

6. The joint response noted work on development of a Perinatal Mental Health Service specification and detailed several areas that would be contained within such a specification. The response noted:

“We will write to the Committee with further details of planning for the specification, a timeline for stakeholder consultation, a proposed timeline for development/introduction and an overview of how the specification will contribute towards achieving joined up care for women and families in Scotland in due course.”

7. The Committee notes the Scottish Government’s commitment in its [Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Plan 2023-2025](#) that it will:

“Over 2023/24, consider with stakeholders how to develop a service specification for specialist community perinatal mental health support which enables those involved in running and delivering services in providing the standards of care that meets individuals’ clinical needs”.

8. **Please provide further details of associated key milestones, and when the Scottish Government expects a service specification will be in place.**
9. **Please also set out how this specification “includes consideration of alignment with the National Care Service alongside delivery of the specification in a timely manner” as set out in the joint response.**

Scottish Perinatal Mental Health Care Pathways

10. The Perinatal Mental Health Managed Clinical Network Scotland published a series of 5 pathways in June 2021. **Please provide an update on implementation of the pathways and specifically, how they have been promoted and how they are working in practice.**
11. The joint response also noted that the Scottish Government would work with third sector stakeholders and the managed clinical network to produce a good practice statement on cross sector referrals to help support a seamless transition between services and increase joined up care. **The Committee would welcome sight of this statement.**

Funding

12. The joint response set out that enhanced funding for Maternity/Neonatal Psychological Interventions of £2.2m was indicatively planned for 2022/23, to allow enhanced support to mothers or fathers facing challenges around pregnancy, birth and the perinatal period.

Please provide an update on this funding, alongside any evaluation of the interventions.

13. [Minutes from the last meeting of the board](#) state that “funding for statutory perinatal and infant mental health services would continue, and funding for third sector services had been extended until March 2024.” The joint response also notes that:

“In 2022 we will publish Board Progress Updates for each Health Board within Scotland. These will include details of funding for specialist Community Perinatal Mental Health, Maternity/Neonatal Psychological Interventions, Infant Mental Health, Mother & Baby Units and the Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Third Sector Fund Portfolio. These Board Progress Updates will be published as part of a wider online resource aimed at increasing transparency and accessibility in information around perinatal and infant mental health services for families across Scotland.”
14. The Committee notes the Scottish Government’s commitment in its [Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Plan 2023-2025](#) to “launch a new fund to start from 2024/25 onwards building on the learning and successes of the Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Main Fund and Small Grants Fund in increasing access to support, reducing isolation and improving parent-child relationships”.
15. Accelerate and Just Enterprise were highlighted in the joint response in relation to a recommendation calling on the Scottish Government to ensure third sector organisations providing perinatal mental health services are afforded greater financial security by moving towards longer term funding cycles.
16. **Please confirm whether a comprehensive audit of funding available for perinatal mental health support across both the NHS and the third sector has been undertaken, and how such an evaluation will inform building and learning on successes to date.**
17. **The Committee would also welcome updates on:**
 - **multi-year funding considerations as part of the Scottish Government’s Strengthening Collaboration Programme, and**
 - **work undertaken to promote Accelerate and Just Enterprise to third sector organisations delivering perinatal mental health services.**

Training and support

18. The joint response committed to providing the Committee with a detailed written update on perinatal and infant mental health workforce training progress by May 2022. The response detailed that this update would include reference to timescales and sources of funding for any outstanding actions. **The Committee would welcome sight of this update.**
19. The Scottish Government also noted that it “will ensure that further training needs will be

considered as part of the transition planning for the Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Programme Board.” **Please set out these transition arrangements in writing to the Committee.**

20. In relation to training in this area, the [Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Plan 2023-2025](#) contains a commitment to “Promote training at all levels across all sectors that supports development of positive relationships and attachment in the early years”. **Please provide further detail on how this will be achieved.**

21. In addition, please provide:

- an update on NES’ Perinatal Mental Health Champions training,
- details on the uptake of the [perinatal and infant mental health e-learning modules](#) on Turas, and
- an update on the roll-out of additional support for primary care. The Committee would also welcome sight of the guidance that was issued to GPs on how to support women and families in accessing perinatal mental health services.

Recruitment and retention

22. The joint response noted that the board’s workforce and sustainability sub-group was conducting thematic research on staff recruitment modelling. **As the board has drawn to a close, the Committee would welcome sight of this research and further detail on what the board’s successor will be doing to action any recommendations from the research.**

23. The response also noted that “As of March 2022, all boards are making significant steps to recruitment of their teams and service delivery.” **Please provide an update on recruitment across all NHS boards.**

Promotion of perinatal mental health services

24. The joint response advised that the Baby Box content was currently under review at the time of writing. It also noted that a new postnatal mental health leaflet would be included, developed in consultation with clinicians and lived experience. **The Committee would welcome sight of this leaflet.**

25. During the pandemic, the Scottish Government worked with third sector stakeholders to develop the Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Directory of Third Sector Services. **Please provide an update on how the Scottish Government has further developed this as planned, including any evaluation of this work.**

Transitional Care

26. The Committee thanks the Minister for the update in July 2023, setting out the intention to move forward with a new model of neonatal care. The letter states that this includes the “expansion of Transitional Care, allowing mother and baby to stay together in a postnatal ward.” **Please provide more information on this expansion.**

Mother and Baby Units (MBUs)

27. The joint response noted that the Scottish Government was gathering views on the best way to expand Mother and Baby Unit capacity in Scotland. The Committee notes that the Scottish Government's consultation analysis was published on 18 August 2022. **The Committee would welcome an update on developments since the analysis was published, including whether a decision has been made in this regard.**
28. In [correspondence](#) to the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee in relation to [PE2017/C: Extend the period that specialist perinatal mental health support is made available beyond one year](#), the Scottish Government notes that at the time of writing, NHS National Services Scotland (NSS) was in the process of producing its report from the options appraisal conducted to expand Mother and Baby Unit capacity and the Scottish anticipated delivery of that in October 2023. **Please provide a copy of this report to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee when available.**
29. The joint response further set out the introduction of the Mother and Baby Unit Family Fund (MBUFF) to provide a contribution towards the cost of visiting a mother and baby being treated in an MBU for perinatal mental illness. The response also noted that the Scottish Government were revising the terms of the MBUFF to make it more accessible and seeking to ensure it is more widely promoted. **Please provide an update on work in this area, including whether the Scottish Government has undertaken evaluation of the MBUFF.**

Specialist Community Services

30. The joint response noted that:

“Ten Boards now have a recently launched or functioning specialist Community Perinatal Mental Health service and 8 Boards have a recently launched or functioning Maternity/Neonatal Psychological Interventions service. Boards who are providing a partial service are on track to do this by the end of the Programme Board.”

31. As part of the Committee's current inquiry into [Healthcare in Remote and Rural Areas](#), the Committee received a response from the [Maternal Mental Health Alliance](#) which called for the new [National Centre for Remote and Rural Health and Social Care](#) to “focus on addressing the barriers that many women, babies and families face when accessing critical perinatal mental health (PMH) services in remote and rural locations.” The response continues to note its [Specialist mental health care in the UK 2023](#) briefing and highlights that it “showed that Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles currently have no multidisciplinary community PMH team provision. In areas with low birth rate, such as Shetland, specialist PMH services are instead delivered locally by generic mental health services with access to specialist clinical advice from larger Health Boards.”
32. **Please provide an update on Specialist Community Services within NHS boards, and actions taken to improve access to specialist community perinatal mental health services across the country. The Committee would be particularly interested to hear of the SG's intended timeframes for achieving equity of access to specialist perinatal mental health services across Scotland.**

33. **The Committee is also keen to understand what work has been done to monitor waiting times for perinatal mental health services and ensure women receive timely support.**

Moray maternity services

34. The Committee understands that the Cabinet Secretary announced a draft plan for the return to consultant-led care at Dr Gray's hospital was approved in December 2022, and £6.6m of funding was announced on 3 March 2023. **Please provide a subsequent update on progress with the Moray maternity services.**

Breastfeeding support

35. The joint response noted that the Scottish Government was undertaking a review of progress on the Becoming Breastfeeding Friendly Scotland report actions and intimated that such a review would be conducted by Summer 2022. The Scottish Government committed to providing the Committee with a fuller update once that had been undertaken. **The Committee would welcome sight of this update.**

Birth trauma

36. The joint response noted that the Scottish Government was working with the managed clinical network to explore the possibility of identifying pathfinder sites to role model good practice to other Boards, in relation to preventing and treating birth trauma.

37. The joint response also noted that for perinatal mental health services, "birth trauma will sit predominantly across top end, complex presentations within Maternity & Neonatal Psychological Interventions Services". The response identifies that the Scottish Government will work with the Managed Clinical Network to explore the possibility of identifying pathfinder sites to role model good practice to other Boards. **Please provide an update on this work.**

Miscarriage and the death of an Infant

38. The joint response highlighted the Scottish Government's commitment to develop the National Bereavement Care Pathways (NBCP) for pregnancy and baby loss in Scotland. The response stated that "The Bereavement care pathways are currently being piloted in 4 early adopter Health Boards in Scotland. Full rollout was paused whilst Health Board resources are focused on dealing with the COVID pandemic, but this work will recommence shortly." **Please provide an update on roll-out of these pathways.**

39. The response further highlighted that the Scottish Government would work with all fourteen territorial NHS boards to ensure dedicated facilities for women who are experiencing unexpected pregnancy complications by the end of 2023. **Please provide an update on how this work is progressing, including whether these facilities will be separate from maternity wards in all NHS boards.**

Stigma

40. The joint response set out plans to expedite the Raising Awareness and Reducing Stigma Strategy, setting out that an interim strategy would be published by June 2022, with a second iteration of the document due for publication in March 2023. **The Committee would welcome sight of the final strategy, alongside detail on what promotion has been undertaken with pregnant women about the strategy.**
41. The Scottish Government further committed to write to the Committee prior to the publication of the Raising Awareness and Reducing Stigma Strategy with an update on current stigma reduction actions. **The Committee would welcome sight of this update.**
42. I would be grateful to receive a response by **25 January 2024** and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "CHaughey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'H' and 'y'.

Clare Haughey MSP
Convener, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee