

Conservatives backing mental health commitment

Scottish Conservative leader Douglas Ross was in Edinburgh today pledging to commit 10 per cent of Scotland's NHS budget to mental health treatment.

This would be an increase from the current level of 8.1 per cent, and it will be accompanied by manifesto pledges around mental health.

Warning that the peak of the pandemic's impact on mental health is still ahead of us, Mr Ross says that there are too many people waiting too long for treatment. A package of measures will include emphasis on the importance of physical activity and reforming services to provide quicker support.



Douglas Ross campaigning in Edinburgh on 8 April 2021 PHOTO Martin P McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

Football is never far away from his thoughts as a part-time referee, and he has also given his support for the UK's bid to host the 2030 World Cup – and he will push for the final to be staged in Scotland.

Mr Ross said: “I am determined to do everything possible to ensure Scotland emerges from the pandemic as a healthier and happier place.

“So many people have suffered due to the extreme pressures of the past year and the impact on our mental health has been

stark.

“Society is so much better at talking about and understanding these issues but addressing them is a different matter.

“Far too many people are still not able to get the help they need which is why we should ensure 10 per cent of the health budget is ring-fenced for mental health treatment.

“That is just part of the action that must be taken. We have an ambitious range of policies to make it easier for people to get active, which we know can help improve mental health.

“Football is so important to Scotland, and a big part of my life. For the UK to secure the World Cup would be fantastic and I will do whatever possible to see the final played here in Scotland.

“These are the kind of issues we want our Parliament to focus on over the next five years – not the SNP’s reckless, damaging and distracting plans for another independence referendum.”



Douglas Ross campaigning in Edinburgh 8 April 2021 PHOTO
Martin P McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

The Scottish Conservatives have unveiled a series of manifesto pledges on mental health to ensure everyone is able to access support when they need it.

These include:

Increasing the share of health funding spent on mental health services to 10 per cent by the end of the next Parliament.The current medium-term financial framework gives mental health an

8.1 per cent share. We would include an ambition to increase this to 10 per cent by 2025-26 in the next framework. Based on our plans to increase NHS funding, this would increase the mental health budget by at least £325 million.

Kickstarting a permanent shift towards community mental health services by expanding programmes such as cognitive behavioural therapy, social prescribing, exercise referral schemes and peer support. These services would be available through community triage centres in order to offer people with mild to moderate mental health problems support within six weeks.

Developing a Self-Harm Strategy and working with stakeholders to update the Suicide Action Plan.

Improving the use of data and developing a comprehensive multi-agency workforce plan to help ensure the right services are available in the right places.

Other measure around physical activity and prevention include:

Reopening gyms as soon as possible. As part of our plans to safely ease restrictions at a faster pace, gyms would reopen immediately.

Supporting community leisure facilities to reopen. Local facilities are in a precarious position following years of SNP underinvestment and the devastating impact of the pandemic. We would ensure leisure facilities are embedded in Covid recovery and local regeneration plans, deliver fair funding for councils to support facilities and develop a national strategy to protect these vital community assets.

Encouraging more schools to open their facilities to the public. We would invest an additional £1 million to support more schools to open their facilities to the public during evenings and weekend.

Doubling SportScotland's funding to support grassroots and

elite sport. We would double SportScotland's budget over the course of the next Parliament to fund grassroots and elite sport, supporting our athletes and training the next generation.

Backing the 2030 World Cup bid, including holding the final in Scotland, and developing a 2030 strategy for grassroots football. Football is woven into the fabric of Scottish society and plays a vital role in every community. We would develop a Road to 2030 strategy for grassroots football.