

# Scottish Conservative Mental Health Policy

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In our manifesto for May's election, we were clear that **there needs to be a step change in mental health support in Scotland** as we move towards parity of esteem between mental and physical health.

We have called for **an additional £300 million to be spent on mental health** over the course of this Parliament to improve capacity and staffing across the health service and address the unacceptable waiting times for treatment.

Since the election we have engaged with a broad range of mental health organisations, charities and other stakeholders and we believe our proposals below have **the potential to make a real difference.**

Ahead of the Scottish Government's new ten-year Mental Health Strategy which will be published early next year, we hope these ideas will inform Ministers and the debate around how we achieve the most effective strategy possible **that ensures all Scots have access to high quality mental health services**, no matter their age or the community in which they live.

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# Mental health in the workplace

## Workplace Mental Health Champions.

We will encourage all businesses and organisations with more than 10 employees to appoint a workplace mental health champion to be a point of contact for other employees who may have mental health difficulties and who can signpost fellow staff to the appropriate support. Appointing a workplace mental health champion in each place of work will help reduce stigma and allow people to talk about mental health more openly.

We commend PwC for its focus on the mental health and wellbeing of its staff through its “Green Light to talk” campaign whereby senior members of staff who had personal experience or knew of someone who had personal experience of mental health problems wore green ribbons to show the staff that they were happy to be approached to talk about mental health and wellbeing. We have appointed two experienced MSP staff members from the Scottish Conservative Holyrood team to be workplace mental health champions for our staff.

## Disabled people's workplace mental health.

We want to see more disabled people, including those with mental health problems, find employment and benefit from the dignity and respect that comes with work. We will look to see how the proposals of the UK government's new work and health unit can be best applied in Scotland with the aim of giving disabled people more support through new personal support packages, increased access to psychological therapies and a greater number of employment advisers. We would increase assistance for small employers through the provision of in-work support and advice on disability issues and workplace adaptation.

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# Mental health at school and in young people

## Mental health education.

Research from the Scottish Youth Parliament suggests most young people do not know where and how to access mental health advice, information and support. We will expand mental health education in schools so that young people know what support is available. School inspection reports should also include what mental health services are being provided at each school and a similar inspection regime should apply for colleges and universities.

## School champions and counsellors.

As with workplace mental health champions, we will encourage schools, colleges and universities to appoint mental health champions for staff and pupils. We also want to see all school pupils and students have access to counsellors if they need this.

## Social media.

We have called on social media companies to offer free advertising of local mental health services and advice. We also share the serious concerns about online bullying and its impact on young people's mental health in particular. In the New Year, alongside Twitter, we will be organising a conference, on a cross party basis, with social media and mental health stakeholders on how social media companies can play their part in promoting good mental health among young people.

## Supporting youth organisations.

New academic research suggests being a member of the Scouts and Guides decreases the chances of suffering from poor mental health later in life. We will support youth organisations like the Scouts, Guides, Boys Brigade and others and schemes like the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and encourage our young people to get involved and become youth leaders. We recognise that membership of these groups can help increase confidence, tackle social isolation and build resilience in young people. Every school pupil should have access to these groups and we want to see all parents provided with a list of all the local groups in their area.

# Mental health in the Community and Social Prescribing

## Focus on social prescribing.

The continuing rise in anti-depressant use is a real concern. To help reverse this trend, we want a new focus on social prescribing which should be one of the first things offered for people presenting with mild to moderate depression. GPs should have access to all the local support groups in their area, with local authorities providing databases of information.

## A new community mental health fund.

We will set up a new £10 million community mental health development fund to help increase the capacity for social prescribing, establish new groups and fund projects across Scotland. Health Boards and local authorities would be able to bid alongside organisations and community groups.

## Support for third sector organisations.

The focus on social prescribing will mean working closely with and supporting the many voluntary sector groups that offer services locally such as befriending, self-help groups and Men's Sheds. We will also continue to back services like the Samaritans and Childline which provide fantastic 24/7 care.

## Physical activity beyond physical health.

Physical activity and sport should be a key theme of the mental health strategy and social prescribing agenda, recognising the link between physical health and mental health and how physical activity can help lift mood. Physical activity can raise self-esteem, aspiration and personal wellbeing and reassert a perception of control which can both help people suffering from mental ill health recover and, critically, prevent the development of mental health issues.

## Social isolation in older people.

We recognise that older people too often face mental health challenges, especially in relation to social isolation. We will support organisations that offer befriending for older people and dedicated older people's telephone advice lines like Silverline and look to see how we can replicate here successful schemes abroad like the US' Senior Corps programme. We want each local authority to have an older people's social isolation champion who would promote and link services for our elderly citizens.

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## Mental health support from the NHS and emergencies

### Mental health in A & E.

We want to see mental health support provided in every A&E department on a 24/7 basis.

### Access to talking therapies.

As part of our aim to reduce the reliance on anti-depressants we want people presenting initially with mild to moderate depression to have faster access to appropriate talking therapies like CBT.

### Mental health link workers.

We want the Scottish Government to bring forward its plans for mental health link workers in GP practices as part of our aim to have specialist mental health support in every GP practice or hub. Only 40 of the 250 workers will be recruited by 2018 which is unacceptable. These community link workers have the potential to help thousands of people across Scotland who go to their GP with mental health problems. They would relieve the pressure on our family doctors and help people access the most appropriate local mental health services and support.

### Ante and post-natal mental health services.

We will review all services available for mothers to be and mothers of young children with a view to expanding and improving ante-natal and post-natal mental health services. We welcome the government's commitment to establish a managed clinical network for neonatal support.

### Acute mental health support.

More investment is needed in acute CAMHS to ensure that age appropriate services and hospital beds are always available. We need to increase the number of intensive at home mental health nurses who are available to support people at home, including children and young people. We will also look at how we provide better support and provision for children who have additional support needs and suffer from mental health challenges so that their specific requirements are met.

### Improved pathways for referrals for self-harm.

We want to see a much better referral system for young people who self-harm so that they are able to be seen without delay and referred under social prescribing to a local support group.

### Additional support for patients with terminal illnesses and their families.

We will work with the voluntary sector to improve counselling and bereavement support services for cancer patients and others with a terminal illness and their families, building on the good practice that exists, for example Marie Curie's Helper and befriending service.

