

Liberal Democrat Debate on Mental Health
Wednesday 27th November 2019
SAMH Briefing

Introduction

SAMH has represented the voice of people most affected by mental health problems in Scotland for more than 90 years. SAMH is dedicated to mental health and wellbeing for all: with a vision of a society where people are able to live their lives fully, regardless of present or past circumstances.

Today, in over 60 communities we work with adults and young people providing mental health social care support, services in primary care, schools and further education, among others. These services together with our national programme work in See Me, respectme, suicide prevention and active living, inform our policy and campaign work to influence positive social change.

Children and Young People's Services

The announcement that the community mental wellbeing services for 5-24 years olds - promised in the 2018-19 Programme for Government - will now be backed by £17m worth of funding is welcomed. However, this was changed in the latest Programme for Government to a "community wellbeing service" – a subtle but major change. This new initiative must focus on the mental wellbeing of our young people, rather than a generic community service.

Moreover, while we are pleased that national expectations on standards and specifications for CAMHS will be introduced, a year after the Scottish Government accepted all 29 recommendations of the Audit of Rejected Referrals, we have no evidence of plans for real change for CAMHS.

This comes after the most recent CAMHS figures (Tuesday 3rd September) show that 7,518 children and young people – 1 in every 5 that asked for mental health support - have been refused help from CAMHS since the audit was published.¹

SAMH would like to see the following progressed:

- **A timetable for urgent development and implementation of the community mental wellbeing service for 5-24 year olds, promised in the 2018-19 Programme for Government.**
- **Plans to ensure that by the end of 2019, at least 50% of those being rejected from CAMHS are being directly re-routed to another appropriate service.**
- **Plans to ensure that by June 2020, every child referred gets routed to a service or support, which could include CAMHS, by implementing a multi-agency assessment system.**

¹ ISD Scotland, [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services \(CAMHS\) in Scotland: Waiting Times and Inpatient Activity and CAMHS Workforce in Scotland](#)

Crisis Support

SAMH is proud to be a member of the National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group (NSPLG). We're pleased that the latest Programme for Government reiterated the work of the NSPLG; this work is essential in the context of an increase in suicide Scotland from 680 deaths in 2017 to 724 in 2018.² We also welcomed the announcement that a 24/7 crisis support service for young people and their families will be introduced and that this will include a text service for young people. This must be sustainably funded; we await the detail of what funding this new initiative will receive.

Nonetheless, further actions are necessary to reduce suicide in Scotland and support people experiencing mental health crisis, beyond the actions announced in the Programme for Government 2019-20 and Scotland's Suicide Prevention Action Plan: Every Life Matters. Central to this is the availability of out-of-hours support, including Distress Brief Intervention (DBI). DBI provides time limited and supportive problem solving contact with an individual in distress, receiving referrals directly from first responders including police and paramedics.

We are calling for:

- **The national roll out of DBI for people aged 16 and over, following the November 2016 to March 2021 pilot period, incorporating any learning from evaluation.**
- **Clarity on the proposed Crisis Care Agreement, including when the Crisis Care Agreement will be in place locally.**

Workforce Support

Collaboration between and integration of workforces, can help to ensure that people receive the most appropriate support for their mental health. SAMH is delivering a number of services that are located in settings where people who are experiencing mental ill-health often present. This includes two Community Link Worker (CLW) programmes co-located in GP surgeries, and a Distress Brief Intervention (DBI) pilot in South Scotland which receives referrals from first responders.

While the continued roll-out of CLWs and the DBI pilot are both welcomed by SAMH, we believe that more can be done to provide support to workforces that regularly engage with people experiencing mental ill-health.

We are calling for:

- **Roll out of Community Triage nationally, to provide police officers with direct access to mental health professionals to support decision making and reduce inappropriate detentions of people in psychiatric distress or crisis.**
- **The creation of a consistent national programme to train all school staff in mental health.**

² ScotPHO, [Suicide: Scottish trends](#), 2019

SAMH welcomed the commitment in the Mental Health Strategy for 800 additional mental health workers across A&E departments, GP practices, custody suites, and prisons, and is pleased that 268 of these workers are already in place.³

We understand that a number of the mental health workers who are already in place, are employed within the third sector. The third sector plays a crucial role in supporting people who are experiencing mental ill-health and, as such, the future development of this workforce needs to be considered. However, given that the commitment in the Mental Health Strategy was specific about the settings in which additional mental health workers would be allocated, it would be helpful to have clarity on what constitutes 'other settings'.

SAMH is calling for:

- **Clarity on where those mental health workers are allocated that were listed under the 'other settings' category.**
- **Clarity on how many of the 800 mental health workers are employed within the third sector.**
- **Clarity on if the mental health workers allocated to 'other settings' are supporting those settings specified by the Mental Health Strategy.**

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If you have any questions about the information in this briefing, please contact Suzanne Martin, Senior Public Affairs Officer, at suzanne.martin@samh.org.uk.

³ Scottish Government, [Mental health strategy 2017-2027: second progress report](#), November 2019