

Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Bill

Stage 3 Debate Wednesday 19th and Thursday 20th March 2003.

Throughout the passage of the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Bill Children in Scotland has argued:

- That a duty should be placed on health boards to provide services that are age appropriate. (Section 19)
- That section 21 (2) of the Bill should be widened to include 'Education and associated services'

Reason for the Amendments

Age Appropriate Services (Amendment 34)

There is a severe shortage of psychiatric inpatient beds for children and adolescents in Scotland.

- Scotland has only 35 psychiatric beds for adolescents, after 12 beds in Fife were recently closed. Just 16 beds in Glasgow, 12 in Edinburgh and 7 in Dundee remain.
- The situation for children is even more serious. The closure of 4 beds in Dundee means that 9 beds in Glasgow are the only resource for children needing inpatient care in the whole of Scotland.
- In addition there is no secure provision for young people at all with the result that under 18's who require this provision are being treated in adult Intensive Psychiatric Care Units.

A duty should be placed on health boards to provide age appropriate services to children and young people. The duty would apply not only to inpatient services but to primary care and outpatient services. Guidance can specify standards and types of services that should be provided. This balance between primary legislation and guidance would allow certain flexibility to local circumstances but within a framework of statutory obligation.

In the last year 7 out of 10 young people admitted to hospital on a compulsory basis were admitted to an adult ward. At present there is no strategy in place to address this issue. **The interim Scottish Needs Assessment Programme Report (SNAP) on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) stated that a strategic approach to the resourcing and development of specialist CAMHS required particular attention.** This amendment would ensure that health boards had a legal obligation to provide age

appropriate services. The Royal College of Psychiatrists, when giving evidence to the Health and Community Care Committee stated:

We have admitted adolescent inpatients to adult wards. We think that this is a frightening and distressing experience. A very disturbed adult unit, often with violent and aggressive male patients, is not the place to be at that point in time.

In its Stage 1 Report the Committee recommended that the Executive take steps to provide age appropriate services

The Royal College of Psychiatrists has estimated that a country the size of Scotland requires 80 – 100 such beds.

Education and Associated Services (Amendment 108)

The number of children and young people suffering from mental health problems is increasing. At any one time in Scotland 125,000 young people will have a mental health problem severe enough to interfere with their day to day life.

A recent national conference on promoting mental and emotional well-being in schools heard:

- There was a feeling that schools were under pressure to support an ever growing number of pupils with emotional problems
- Liaison between key agencies in health, social work and the voluntary sector needs to be improved.
- Child and adolescent mental health is often not part of the training of staff in education or social work

The specified services in Section 21(2) do not include school education, associated education services or other learning opportunities. Research demonstrates the vital importance of school to children's well-being. **Children in Scotland support the amendment to add Education and Associated Services to Section 21 (2)** . This would have the particular benefit of a 'joined up approach' in ensuring that health services work with schools for these children and young people. **The interim SNAP report highlighted the importance of developing a joined up, multi agency Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service which, as a matter of priority, focuses on early identification and intervention.**

The addition of 'Education and Associated Services' will compliment existing legislation which places a duty on education authorities to secure the direction of education to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of children and young people to their fullest potential. It will assist in making the mental and emotional well-being of children and young people a priority for all relevant agencies and ensure that the not insignificant numbers of young people who experience mental distress receive the services they require.