

HEALTHIER SCOTLAND

News from the Socialist Health Association Scotland



Welcome to the **January 2013** edition of *Healthier Scotland*, the E-Bulletin of the Socialist Health Association Scotland.

SHA Scotland is a campaigning organisation which promotes health and well-being and the eradication of inequalities through the application of socialist principles to society and government. We believe that these objectives can best be achieved through collective rather than individual action. We campaign for an integrated healthcare system which reduces inequalities in health and is accountable to the communities it serves.

For the latest Scottish health news follow @shascotland on Twitter.

Health Inequalities

There has been a welcome focus on health inequalities in recent months. The latest Long-term Monitoring of Health Inequalities: Headline Indicators report has been [published](#). The gap in health outcomes between the most deprived and least deprived areas of Scotland is reported for a variety of indicators in both absolute and relative terms. Figures show that healthy life expectancy among men in the poorest areas of the country is just 47. We summarise this in our [blog](#).

The latest [report](#) from the Glasgow Centre for Population and Health provides a summary of Scotland's mortality position relative to other mainly Western European countries. Sadly, it would appear that Scotland is "Still the sick man of Europe" - but women are getting sicker too. Again the main points in our [blog](#).

Audit Scotland joined the debate by [calling](#) for resources to be shifted from more affluent areas to poorer ones to tackle persistent health inequalities.

Scottish Government action is focussed through the [Ministerial Taskforce](#) on Health Inequalities that met for the first time last month to examine all available evidence and to suggest new or improved ways to reduce the difference in life expectancy and health among the whole population. Sir [Harry Burns](#) rightly explained to the Holyrood Audit Committee that health inequality is biggest issue facing the country.

Healthier Scotland – The Journal

The next edition of our policy journal, Healthier Scotland will be published before Scottish Labour Party conference. Contributions still welcome. Please contact the Secretary.

Mental Health

Researchers in Glasgow have produced a [report](#) for the Medical research Council that shows the onset of the economic downturn could be considered a "threat to public health". Men appeared to be worst affected. The rate of poor mental health in men rose from 11.3% in 2008 to 16.6% in 2009. In women, the rate only increased by 0.2%, to 16.2%.

Ed Miliband's speech on mental health has been widely welcomed - tackling what many see as a taboo subject for politicians. Our [blog](#) commentary highlights that with one in ten workers (160,524 nursing hours lost among [NHS Lothian](#) nurses alone) having a mental health condition every year, much more needs to be done.

Scottish blood is being [sent to](#) England. Really a devious plot to inculcate the English with Scottish values!

NHS Scotland

A bleak picture for NHS Scotland finances is set out in an Audit Scotland report. We summarise the main points in our [blog](#). Iain Gray MSP [asks](#) “Just how healthy is our NHS?” He argues that a, “steady as she goes” NHS strategy will not work much longer. Not that you would recognise any problems in the NHS Scotland Annual Report. Our [blog](#) summarises the spin.

Health boards are also looking for savings of £51m in the drugs and prescriptions budget. Been tried many times before, but significant savings have been difficult to achieve. High [wastage](#) rates as well.

More questions have been asked about waiting time statistics, not just at NHS Lothian. A document leaked to [The Herald](#) shows questions asked by staff who track waiting times for cancer patients about such fine-tuning of figures. Actual guarantees have also been [broken](#) for cancer patients demonstrating further pressures on staff and resources.

MSPs have [warned](#) that Scotland will see a widening gap over the next decade as growing numbers of NHS staff retire while the numbers of nurses and midwives coming into the profession are cut by 20%.

The Scottish Government has [vowed](#) not to ask doctors to hit targets for the number of patients who die on the controversial Liverpool Care Pathway; after it emerged hospitals in England were being given financial incentives to do so. Scottish doctors have [defended](#) the Pathway approach in the BMJ.

The Health Minister announces progress with more single rooms in hospitals. But others argue that this is not the right approach. Good for and against debate in the [Scottish Review](#).

Some good [news](#) with mortality figures in hospitals dropping annually by around 1.4%. It coincides with the roll-out of the Scottish Patient Safety Programme. However, Jim Martin, the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, [called](#) for a national reporting system of serious incidents that cost £120m in compensation over past three years.

Social Care

The Scottish Government has [published](#) the consultation responses on its plan for adult health and care integration. Lots of concern on the detail, particularly governance and accountability.

Public Health

The annual Scottish Health Survey paints a bleak picture of the scale of the challenge over obesity. In 2011 just under two-thirds, 64.3 per cent, of adults aged 16 and over were overweight or obese. [Holyrood Magazine](#) asks are we paying it the attention it deserves?

Following on from the debate over the efficacy of breast screening, the health drive featuring actress Elaine C Smith has led to thousands more women being referred by their GPs. This has brought [calls](#) for increased capacity in treatment services.

The Supreme Court has [thrown out](#) the disgraceful tobacco company challenge to display ban.

Healthier Scotland is a Socialist Health Scotland publication

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