

HEALTHIER SCOTLAND

News from the Socialist Health Association Scotland



Welcome to the **June 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

The latest edition of our [policy journal](#) has a focus on health inequalities with articles by Iain Gray, Dr Margaret McCartney, Dave Watson and Shelia Duffy.

We followed that up with a contemporary [motion](#) on the subject at the Scottish Labour Party conference. The aim is to make health inequality central to Scottish Labour's policy programme for 2016. Recognising that this is not a matter for NHS Scotland alone and requires a comprehensive policy response across all government departments and public bodies.

Our fringe meeting at conference was also on the issue of health inequalities and was addressed by Dr David Conway and the shadow health minister, Jackie Baillie MSP. David has followed this up with a posting on our [blog](#) that makes the case for making health inequality Scotland's top priority.

At our last meeting we agreed to make this issue our autumn campaign focus. The meeting recognised that there has been a lot of analysis of health inequality, but less on the practical actions needed to seriously address it. So if you have a view on the key actions required – let us know.

Danny Dorling's [new paper for Class](#) looks at what we can learn from the trend of increasing health inequalities in the UK.

Tackling health inequality is an uphill struggle when tobacco companies appear to have the [ear](#) of the UK government over plain packaging. Another issue highlighted by Shelia Duffy from ASH in our [policy journal](#). On a similar theme the drinks lobby has been accused of [misleading MSPs](#) on minimum pricing and persist with their legal challenge, using their deep pockets to delay another public health measure. Diageo are investing in a new distillery, so minimum pricing doesn't appear to be a big barrier to making profit!

Another [study](#) claims sugary soft drinks cause 200k deaths per year in the UK.

Mental Health

In the developed world, mental illness causes more misery than physical illness. Yet, as [Richard Layard](#) explains, there is far too little attention focused on this important problem. [Gordon McKay](#) gives a Scottish focus to this in the latest edition of our policy journal.

The Scottish '[see me](#)' campaign argues that we need to take some lessons from the English evaluation of their 'Time to Change' campaign, but shouldn't rush to the conclusion that anti-stigma campaigns don't work.

NHS Scotland

Emergency beds made available to help the NHS cope with a flood of patients last winter are still being used because regular wards are [overflowing](#). The average number of available staffed beds in Scotland's acute hospitals has fallen by 1400 since 2003, to 16,503 last year. NHS Lothian has also highlighted the shortage of beds in the ERI. This is something SHA Scotland and others warned would happen when beds cut due to PFI funding. Big increase in [private bed](#) spending in some boards as a consequence. A&E waiting times [treble](#) in some boards and MSPs [call](#) for patient records to be checked for waiting time manipulation.

Tough decisions must be made about how much is spent on care towards the end of life if health services are to remain affordable in years to come, a leading Scottish doctor has [warned](#). Claims 50% of spending is in last six months of life.

Small increase in NHS Scotland workforce in last quarter but still down some 6,000 since the crash. Alarming increase in staff turnover and a full analysis on our [blog](#). Safety concerns as accident statistics show 64 people a day [injured](#) in Scottish hospitals.

Campaigners call for more [services](#) to tackle chronic pain. Mostly adults, but 70k children also suffer and only four health boards have a budget for chronic pain treatment.

Social Care

The Scottish Government has [published](#) the Public Bodies (Joint Working) Bill. This sets out the provisions for health and care integration. Essentially enabling legislation to allow different models of integration, but still plenty of issues, not least democratic accountability.

A new blog speaking up for those who have unpaid carers is worth a [read](#).

Public Health

Children as young as 13 should be provided with contraception, and sex education should be given in schools from "the earliest age possible," to tackle the urgent problem of teenage pregnancies in Scotland, a Holyrood [inquiry](#) has recommended. Contrast with invite to Christian fundamentalist to [speak](#) at Catholic school.

Tesco is to restrict its range of alcoholic drinks after West Dunbartonshire Licensing Board imposed the move as a license [condition](#).

Scots mothers are to be targeted in a new £300k [drive](#) in Glasgow to make them aware of the serious dangers of habitual drinking.

Almost one in every two people in Scotland will be expected to get cancer during their life in as little as seven years, experts [estimate](#), posing a "herculean challenge" to the NHS.

Newly-diagnosed cases of [diabetes](#) have increased by 275 per cent overall in the past two decades, those among people under 40 are up almost 600 per cent.

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