

HEALTHIER SCOTLAND

News from the Socialist Health Association Scotland



Welcome to the **March 2015** 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.

Public Health and Inequalities

Public health directors of Scotland's two largest health boards have issued a [stark warning](#) that children from the country's most deprived communities will die younger than their parents unless urgent action is taken to tackle austerity and food poverty. In *New Scientist* magazine Scotland's former chief medical officer Dr Harry Burns has reiterated that job loss and social breakdown, NOT smoking and bad diet, is at the root of the country's infamously high rate of premature death. He points out that from 1950-1970 Scotland had one of the lowest rates of death from alcoholic liver disease, but by 2005 it had the highest.

Food companies and lack of government action are largely to blame for "unacceptably slow" progress towards tackling obesity, according to new data [published](#) in the *Lancet*. In Primary One (P1) last year there were around 3,500 children whose weight gave rise to [concern](#), an increase of almost 400 on the previous year. A major European obesity [investigation](#), including a team from Edinburgh university, has called for urgent action to prevent obesity in women of child-bearing age.

Scots are among those most likely (36%) to binge-drink in the UK, new [figures](#) have shown. However, The proportion of non-drinkers in Scotland (21%) was higher than in many other parts of the UK.

The BMJ highlighted public health scientists and a government committee working on nutritional advice receive funding from [companies](#) whose products are widely held to be responsible for the obesity crisis.

Unemployment over the period 2000 to 2011 was responsible for 45,000 suicides in 63 countries, an analysis in the [journal](#) *Lancet Psychiatry* has found. They found the suicide risk among the unemployed was stronger where more people were in work and the situation of the jobless was therefore more unusual.

Why Health Inequality Matters

"A boy born today in Lenzie, East Dunbartonshire, can expect to live until he is 82. Yet for a boy born only eight miles away in Caltoun, in the east-end of Glasgow, life expectancy may be as low as 54 years, a difference of 28 years or almost half as long again as his whole life!"
World Health Organisation



Time for Action!

There are now more patients stuck in hospital when they shouldn't be than there are beds in Scotland's newest hospital



Time for action on bed blocking

NHS Scotland

Scottish Labour has been effective in highlighting the pressures on NHS Scotland. However, we [believe](#) that policy pledges need to be consulted over and thought through more carefully if the positive messages are to be credible.

The NHS budget may have had a degree of ring fencing from budget cuts, but that doesn't mean that the service isn't under real financial pressure. NHS Scotland [staff](#) make that very clear.

Doctors say patients have deteriorated and become seriously ill while waiting to be seen in overcrowded accident and emergency departments as [official figures](#) show the worst hospital crisis in Scotland for more than seven years. Unions say there is a need for joined up care.

Ministers are to stand by a law that guarantees NHS patients a right to [prompt treatment](#), despite a soaring number of breaches leading to accusations that it had become a farce. Barmy cybernats brand a nurse an actress after she [speaks up](#) for the NHS in a Labour leaflet. This followed a stark warning issued by [health workers](#) about the future of the health service, saying "things cannot go on as they are" if it is to remain viable in the long term.

Hospital consultant [vacancies](#) are increasing to record levels with the number of posts empty for more than six months up 45 per cent since the autumn. A top [surgeon](#) has also warned of the creeping privatisation of the NHS because the bed crisis means health boards are no longer able to treat patients in their local hospitals.

You have to look hard to find some good NHS news at present. However, there was a 16.3% drop in hospital [mortality](#) between October-December 2007 and July-September 2014.

Welcome to Dr Catherine Calderwood, Scotland's new [Chief Medical Officer](#). Big shoes to fill!

Social Care

With thousands of beds blocked this winter by patients healthy enough to return home, we make the [case](#) for politicians to put as much focus on social care as they are on NHS Scotland.

The devolution of NHS services to local government in [Manchester](#) has divided opinion in England. Similar ideas were mooted in the Christie Commission report and the islands have been considering a unitary authority approach for some years.

Mental Health

UNISON [survey](#) highlights pressures on mental health services. More than 8 in 10 (84%) of mental health staff say that their workload has increased, more than 7 in 10 (76%) say they have experienced cuts, with the quality of patient services in decline, in the last three years.

The number of young people waiting more than a year to be treated by mental health services has [increased](#) ten-fold in 12 months.

Healthier Scotland is a Socialist Health Scotland publication

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