

HEALTHIER SCOTLAND

News from the Socialist Health Association Scotland



Welcome to the **May 2016** 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. We also have a [web site](#) with access to all our publications.

Election and Health

As we outlined in our election [blog post](#) the health debate in the Scottish Parliament election didn't inspire many in the health sector. It rarely got above the level of NHS targets and there was very little focus on health inequalities. At least the Scottish Labour manifesto led with that issue.

As we look ahead to the new parliament there are going to be a few challenges for health. The biggest is austerity, as the SNP have largely boxed themselves into following George Osborne's spending plans. Health spending is to increase broadly in line with the Barnett consequential of English health spending, although the extra (and much needed) social care funding (£1.3bn) is to come 'from the NHS'. As this is a local government function that is a big chunk out of NHS spending at a time when many health boards are reporting serious budget problems. Many suspect a number of difficult decisions have been kept under wraps until after the election.

All the manifestos had a welcome focus on [mental health](#) services and £150m is committed in the SNP manifesto. There is another £200m for elective treatment services, although doctor's organisations have queried the cost of this. It is a suspiciously round number! Other commitments included 500 extra health visitors - primarily for the controversial 'named persons' scheme; 500 advanced nurse practitioners and 1000 paramedics working in the community.

There is at least the prospect of structural reform. The SNP manifesto has a commitment to review the 'number, structure and regulation' of health boards and their relationship with councils. The renegotiation of the GP contract might form the basis for a necessary shift of resources into primary care, but this won't be easy.

A number of MSPs retired (voluntarily!) at this election. SHA Scotland would like to pay a particular thanks to **Malcolm Chisholm** who gets insufficient credit as the health minister who stopped the marketisation of NHS Scotland. Our [history lesson](#), especially for those who try and rewrite it!

Mental Health

Our Action on mental health services [blog post](#) welcomes greater media attention given to mental health issues. If acute services were this limited there would be a major public outcry.

Doctors look after our mental health, but who looks after theirs? A new [study](#) reports that 60% of doctors have suffered mental illness and psychological problems at some stage of their career.

Alliance of service providers, which support vulnerable young people, has made their own [demands](#) for fixes to what it describes as a "mental health crisis storm" in services for young people.

NHS Scotland

Problems with the troubled NHS24 [computer system](#) have rarely been out of the media. The latest concern is a six and a half hour training session for staff. No one [listened](#) to staff.

Surgeons are [warning](#) that the future of six rural hospitals is 'precarious' due to recruitment problems.

NHS Lothian [approves](#) £25m of cuts, including [200 beds](#), as they struggle to tackle a £77 million funding gap against a backdrop of rising demand and an ageing population. And they are not alone.

Pharma greed kills. The [campaign](#) that confronts big pharmaceutical companies about their rip-off prices. It [threatens](#) to 'bankrupt' NHS Scotland. Some [progress](#) has been made on cancer drugs, but why did it take so long?

The government's latest £100m to tackle cancer has been [welcomed](#) but money alone isn't enough.

42,021 patients were [moved](#) between Scottish hospital wards between 11pm and 6am in 2015, with critics warning the actual number is likely to be even higher. That's what happens in a target culture.

Public Health

Obesity Action Scotland [highlights](#) the fact that 65% of Scottish adults are overweight, including 28% who are obese. The problem is more complex than simply behavioral change.

Expensive health promotion campaigns have failed repeatedly because of a failure to tackle the root causes of inequality says new [research](#) from University of the West of Scotland. The people who respond best are those who are already healthy. We are ignoring inequalities and blaming the victim.

Bowel cancer ranks as the fourth most commonly [diagnosed](#) cancer in the UK. But take up of screening is still poor in many areas. Reluctance to discuss our bowels?

Over 276,000 people live with diabetes in Scotland, 500,000 at high risk of developing Type 2 diabetes and 45,500 living with it undiagnosed. Bellwether [Report](#) makes the case for greater support.

Study [suggests](#) adults slumber average of 6.8 hours, missing an hour, and calls for national strategy to publicise importance of good sleep.

Greater fuel poverty [awareness](#) could save NHS Scotland up to £80m. A perfect example of the wider impact of inequality on health.

Social Care

Adult social care is rarely out of the [headlines](#). It is underfunded; it is damaging the NHS through delayed hospital discharges; it is financially crippling for users; care workers are being sold short; there are serious concerns about the quality of care; and providers say they are about to go bust. The common feature? It's largely outsourced. Call for [overhaul](#) of system in Scotland.

Healthier Scotland is a Socialist Health Scotland publication

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