

HEALTHIER SCOTLAND

News from the Socialist Health Association Scotland



Welcome to the **November 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.

NHS Scotland

NHS Scotland is rarely out of the news at present. The must read [report](#) is Audit Scotland's overview of the service. It confirms that NHS funding is not keeping pace with increasing demand and the needs of an ageing population. NHS boards are facing an extremely challenging financial position and many had to use short-term measures to break even.

In particular, it confirms our [analysis](#) that health boards are facing real terms cuts in funding once you deduct the social care funding that is routed through the NHS. This may be the right priority for broader care spending, but you can't spend the same pound twice. Our [blog post](#) summarises the key points in the report.

Dodgy figures are not confined to Scotland. MP's have [confirmed](#) that the real level of funding for NHS England is less than half the government claims. This has an impact on Scotland through the Barnett formula. You [heard](#) it from us last May!

In [comparison](#) with other western European countries, the NHS achieves proportionately more with relatively less. But as more is demanded of it, it will fail unless it is properly funded.

Shifting resources from acute to community services is a key, if challenging, element on the Scottish Government's health plan. The Scottish government and the British Medical Association have reached an [agreement](#) over the future of GP services in Scotland that involves taking some workload off GP practices and into wider health teams. Attempts to [recruit](#) more GPs into training are struggling.

With bed numbers down by 600 last year and 5,000 since 2007, let's [hope](#) for a mild winter.

One cost saving could be reducing the number of common treatments and procedures routinely undertaken by doctors that are largely pointless, [according](#) to leading physicians. Another is drug costs. This [study](#) shows how big pharma profits from rare disease.

Is there a [third way](#) for dentists rather than being in private practice or employed?

The Audit Scotland report also highlighted a range of missed performance standards. Earlier it was [reported](#) that only NHS Borders and NHS Lanarkshire hit the target for 95% of patients referred for cancer treatment to be seen within 62 days, with another 12 boards failing.

Opposition parties combined in parliament to [defeat](#) the government on a Scottish Labour motion urging the government to step in over a series of proposals to close or downgrade local NHS services.

Public Health

Figures from ScotCen show that there is a clear [correlation](#) between Scot's heavy drinking and low incomes, although it's not an issue entirely confined to low incomes. A new [study](#) from University of Glasgow lays bare the impact of alcohol on every aspect of our lives. The defeat of the drink industry's latest legal challenge to minimum pricing means the government will [introduce](#) it as soon as possible. Much needed as alcohol is still being [sold](#) for as low as 16p per unit.

Death rates from liver cancer have [increased](#) by 52% in the last 10 years, with the disease killing 572 Scots last year. The incidence of cancer is now 31% higher in poorer areas. A new [study](#) has shown that anxiety is a major factor in cancer for men. It has been [estimated](#) that 500,000 Brits a year could be diagnosed with cancer by 2035.

One in ten children in Scotland started [school](#) as obese or overweight since 2005. The UK's top visitor attractions, including some of Scotland's most popular sites, are selling pre-prepared children's lunchboxes "loaded" with sugar and processed food as the norm, a charity has [claimed](#).

Oh why not! The latest [spat](#) on why the NHS continues to fund homeopathy.

Social Care

The Health Committee conducted an [inquiry](#) into the social care workforce in Scotland. Paying the living wage is an important step in the right direction, but there are still [recruitment](#) and retention issues.

Mental Health

Prescriptions for mental health drugs in [Scotland](#) have hit a ten year high. That's another SNP manifesto pledge that is going to be challenging to deliver.

The rising use of compulsory treatment for mental ill health in Scotland is a "human rights concern", the Mental Welfare Commission has [warned](#). Detention and treatment orders were issued 5,008 times last year - a record high.

The STUC held a conference to [examine](#) workplace dementia in light of longer working lives.

NHS Glasgow has hit a media storm with the announcement that they are considering establishing safe injecting facilities. Here is a more balanced [view](#) of the plan than most.

Increasing numbers of children and young people are being prescribed anti-depressants. Childline [reported](#) that more than 900 children with suicidal thoughts contacted them last year – twice as many as five years ago.

Finally, we have published two blog posts on matters Brexit. The first on Brexit and [health](#), based on the Holyrood event, then one on how EU [trade deals](#) impact on health.

Healthier Scotland is a Socialist Health Scotland publication

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