

# HEALTHIER SCOTLAND

## News from the Socialist Health Association Scotland



Welcome to the **October 2012** 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.

### Universal services

Scottish Labour Leader Johann Lamont MSP has started a debate on the cost of some universal services in her [recent speech](#). It is worth reading in full rather than relying on some of the hysterical reaction.

SHA Scotland has always supported a universal approach to public services funded by progressive taxation. However, we don't have fully universal services at present and there has always been a debate about where the line is drawn on particular services. Neither can we ignore the current budgetary position that is hitting councils and health boards badly, with a consequential impact on health.

As Scottish Labour establishes a group to look at the issue we will start to look at the issue from a health perspective.

### Homeopathy

Health Board's across Scotland are considering their funding of Homeopathy services in light of the current budgetary difficulties. The efficacy of alternative medicine has always been controversial. SHA Scotland last considered the issue in 2005 and there have been developments since then. The arguments for and against are set out in our [blog](#) and views are welcome.

### Healthier Scotland – The Journal

The next edition of our policy journal, Healthier Scotland is at the planning stage. Contributions would be welcome. Please contact the Secretary.

We are also looking at the role local authorities could play in improving health. Some suggestions are set out in our draft [Charter for Health](#). Views on this issue would also be welcome.

### Health Inequalities

UK Shadow health minister puts the emphasis on [health inequality](#) at SHA fringe meeting, "If we believe as a movement in a more equal society then as a government we must be committed to a more equal society and address health inequalities."

MSPs on the Audit Committee have called for more GPs in deprived areas. Their findings include a fatalistic attitude towards heart disease, "people like us die of heart disease, and that's how it is".

The Centre for Labour and Social Studies have produced a booklet ["Why Inequality Matters"](#). This builds on the pioneering work of Wilkinson and Pickett in [The Spirit Level](#). Explains key concepts simply.

## NHS Scotland

The Scottish Government has published its [draft budget](#) for 2013/14. Funding allocated to healthcare will be £11.8 billion, of which Health Boards will receive a core allocation of £9.1 billion. This is some protection for NHS spending as the budget increases in line with the Treasury's estimate of inflation. However, real inflation levels are likely to be higher and increasing demand is placing most health boards in a difficult financial position. NHS [Highland](#) are the latest to highlight problems.

The English Health minister comes out in favour of [reducing abortion limit](#) to 12 weeks. Important because this is still reserved issue. Scottish Health minister says he is also [in favour](#) of reducing limit, although will take advice on precise time limit. There is limited medical evidence in support of change. Only 1% abortions in 20-24 week period and they involve some of the most vulnerable patients.

Many excitable headlines and statements about Methadone policy following deaths. Chief Medical Officer, Harry Burns is to lead [a review](#). That should ensure a welcome evidence based analysis.

Predictable call by Reform Scotland for marketisation of GP services. Our [blog](#) on the report.

## Social Care

Consultation closes on Scottish Government plans for adult health and care integration. Many critics of the plan that has major implications for health boards and councils. [UNISON response](#).

The Scottish Parliament's [Equal Opportunities Committee](#) has expressed its strong concern over discrimination against Scottish Gypsy Travellers in health and social care provision. UNISON Scotland has produced a [new guide](#) for public service workers on this issue.

## Public Health

Glasgow University has designed an [eating plan](#) that uses some of Britain's favourite foods and also ticks at least nine nutritional requirements. Study supported by FSA in Scotland after evidence that little improvement in Scottish diet. Not quite encouraging crisps and curry as the headline implies, but you get the idea.

A [legal challenge](#) to the minimum pricing of alcohol laws has taken another step when the European Commission officially declared that it "has a problem" with the proposals and joined five European Union nations in submitting legal questions over the moves. The Scottish Whisky industry has announced a similar challenge. The key legal issue will be does the public health benefit trump the trade argument.

The latest [statistics](#) show an increase in overweight very young people in Scotland. New research also warned suffering obesity as a child may take a bigger toll on health in adulthood.

One in seven Scots are now [taking anti-depressants](#), twice as many women. However, we should treat these statistics with caution as these drugs are prescribed for other conditions. Latest Scottish smoking [numbers](#) are down, but [alcohol](#) intake a fifth higher than rest of UK..

Lord Sutherland [tells MSP's](#) there may be a case to "constrain or shame" food producers who continued to offer unhealthy products to families. Food the next big public health challenge.

**Healthier Scotland is a Socialist Health Scotland publication**

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