

GE 2019 - Manifesto submission Scotland

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) is the leading and largest professional body for counselling and psychotherapy in the UK. Representing 49,000 practitioner members working across the United Kingdom, and over 2,200 in Scotland, we set and maintain high standards of ethical practice. Our members are a registered, flexible and under-utilised workforce who make a vital contribution to improving the mental health of people across the country.

In recent years all parties have begun to do separate manifestos for Scotland. We are pleased to present the following core mental health policy priorities for inclusion in those manifestos.

Protecting funding for mental health in Scotland

Evidence from BACP members highlights a proportion of funding for vital third sector counselling services across Scotland, and the UK as a whole, is currently obtained through our membership of the European Union. Life-changing mental health support must not be put at risk through Britain's exit from the European Union.

BACP recommends:

The level of funding for mental health projects currently obtained through the European Union and European Commission should be matched by the UK Government in the event of Brexit.

Tackling the drug deaths crisis in Scotland

Drug deaths is becoming a national public health crisis in Scotland. The past year saw a 27% increase in drug deaths, with 1,187 people dying from drug related deaths, the highest since records began and three times higher than England and Wales. All could have been avoidable if the right support was in place at the right time. As well as providing swift access to opiate replacement therapies, evidence has shown that direct access to professional counselling services can play a significant part in helping tackle addiction. Therapy has a key role to play not only in supporting those who use drugs to excess but also in healing the family and community members who are directly affected by drug deaths.

BACP recommends:

Funding a new national programme of counselling support to help tackle addiction, whilst providing psychological support for families affected by Scotland's drug death crisis.

Greater psychological support for Scotland's older people

Older people in Scotland suffer high levels of treatable depression but don't receive the help and support they need. This is a growing problem as Scotland's population is ageing. The number of people aged 75 years old plus is projected to rise by 75% by 2031. Shockingly, the majority (85%) of older people with depression in the UK receive no help or support from the NHS.

BACP recommends:

A greater emphasis on the mental health of older people and a push to ensure increased access to counselling for our ageing population, including those with dementia.

Recognition of the psychological impact of the onset of later life physical conditions such as sight-loss and action to ensure all those affected are provided with accessible and regular information and a choice of psychological therapies.

Older people in Wales and Northern Ireland benefit from an Older People's Commissioner, providing an independent voice for older people and championing their interests.

BACP recommends:

Funding the position of Older People's Commissioner in Scotland to act as an independent champion for Scotland's older people.

Supporting relationships and families

Adults in poor-quality and distressed relationships are much more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety and other mental health problems, and from poor physical health. There is also clear evidence that poor-quality parental relationships and inter-parental conflict in particular have a negative impact on children's mental health and long-term life chances across many areas.

Studies have found relationship counselling and couples therapy results in a significant change in relationship satisfaction. A government-backed evaluation of UK relationship support found that for every £1 invested the state could see £11.40 of savings.

BACP recommends:

That relationship counselling is accessible to anyone who needs it, regardless of income, and calls on a future Government to invest in relationships.

Workplace mental health

Typically, a third of our lives are spent at work, and at least three in ten employees suffer from mental health problems (ranging from short-term depression to chronic conditions), costing businesses up to £1,000 per employee each year.

Each year in the UK, 140 million working days are lost through sickness absence, costing employers £9 billion in sick pay and associated costs. Stress at work, a key driver of long-term absence, has more than doubled since the 1990s, with one in five workers having taken a day off sick for stress (of which 90% gave a different reason for their absence). Absenteeism and presenteeism together cost the UK economy £73 billion per year, with 27 days of productive time per employee lost each year due to presenteeism.

Preventing and treating poor mental health in the workplace helps reduce these losses, enabling people to return to and stay in work. Moreover, workplace counselling boosts outputs, increases motivation and reduces the burden on other services.

BACP recommends:

All employees should have access to workplace counselling, giving both support to employees and reducing costs to businesses.

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