

Dear Sir / Madam

I wish to respond to the above consultation document.

While recognising the positive aspects of a health promotion approach, I was disappointed that this important document did not take the form of a national consultation. The distribution of the document to Health Board areas and Local Authorities 'for local action and response' implies that the approach has already been decided, and there is explicit reference to a shift from action and implementation at a National level, to local plans. Despite the superficial appeal of this approach, the disadvantage is that major health promotion opportunities will be lost through restricted funding, and a random implementation of the various suggested programmes, between each local area. Put plainly, Scotland's mental health is now so poor, (despite growing wealth) that the issue is too important to be left to local areas with limited funding, and an already packed programme into which health promotion must somehow fit.

The 'dual continua' model is interesting, but was presented as a 'given', without adequate referencing. The closest I could come to supporting the model would be that a mentally flourishing state makes mental illness less likely. I would have to agree that the Support agenda is important and mitigates against the damaging effects of residual symptoms of illness. 'Mental flourishing' is not a commonly recognised concept; perhaps it refers to spiritual health; the ease of spirit deriving from knowledge of self-worth, care of and respect for others, spiritually nourishing and engaging activity (within families and natural communities), appreciation of the natural environment, and (many would say) faith. It should be possible to promote spiritually nourishing programmes, activities and investment, without stigmatising sterile or positively damaging activities. Despite the evidence supporting early intervention, and reference to this in the document, there is little mention of funding in this area. Our children are our future; so many are being lost. It is time for a major Government investment in :

Positive parenting (starting with health visitors as being the only way of ensuring a captive and non-stigmatised audience). [All other new programmes should avoid targeting 'socially excluded groups', as targeting causes shame and stigmatisation; the aim should be for universal invitations to join positive parenting classes, aiming for a social mix].

A revitalised cultural programme for schools. Last year I attended a South Ayrshire sponsored puppet event in a deprived part of Ayr, with my children. The event was superb; totally engaging, amusing yet teaching lessons about grief, challenge, conflict. Sadly, about half of the attendees appeared to be from well-off areas including many from the private school in Ayr. There were very few people from the surrounding estate, and of those that attended, the children had an absent concentration span. The streets around the centre were deserted on a sunny day. This was spiritual poverty in action, and I was very saddened by the opportunities that so many children are missing. The only way to counter this is to introduce literature and the arts in all their vitality to the schools, and to extend access to music education. The latter has in the past suffered from elitist suspicions and from funding cuts, but all children can enjoy and benefit from playing, e.g. percussion instruments. Council school holiday programmes should be widened to include more cultural / art activities, and evening classes for children should be supported by Government funding. All of this is likely to require significant investment in Arts educational programmes. Something that would not require additional investment would be for libraries to be more careful in their choice of childrens' books, with an emphasis on spiritually nourishing material. We have found that

what our childrens' bodies consume is important for their physical health: it is now time to consider what represents good nourishment for young minds, emotions and spirits.

I am glad to see that the UK Government is supporting cookery classes in school; an exemplar activity which is educational, fulfilling, teaches essential life skills, encourages confidence and creativity, and with suitable direction promotes a healthy, enjoyable and low cost diet (vs. processed packaged food). I trust that the Scottish Government will also support this programme.

Yet more emphasis on anti-bullying programmes within schools. Schools and Local Authorities should not be able to get away with denying that a problem exists.

Major investment in community centres / cafes / sports halls.

Defining and promoting more healthy images of femininity and masculinity in our society.

The promotion of links between the generations, by various means.

Youth leadership programmes.

Valuing and promoting community volunteering for social and community programmes, from late secondary school age (with appropriate safeguards). Environmental charities could have a tie-in

Legislation to prevent children and young people from accessing spiritually dark media. The Government should commission further research on the link between violent video games, TV programming (even more insidious due to its being mainstream), and violence in our communities. The boundaries over what is morally acceptable have been gradually stretched over the past 40 years or more. These types of media snare vulnerable young people, and their influence could be restricted firstly by legislation, and secondly by ensuring only spiritually nourishing material reaches our schools and libraries.

More investment in community 'beat' policing, and the detection of shops selling to, and adults purchasing alcohol for, children. Increased tax upon alcohol. Alcohol is so cheap, that full cans of beer are abandoned by local youths in the fields.

All the above promote resilience and positive mental health, much more effectively than classes attempting to teach these concepts (although these too have their place).

The funding for such programmes should be obtained by diversion from unsustainable policies such as road-building. To take one example, there is a proposal for a Maybole bypass, which I understand will cost £30 million. There are other less costly ways of dealing with excessive traffic through the town. Maybole has suffered from years of under investment, and has no attractive youth venue, little significant cultural programme, and no sports centre. This leads to youths drinking cheap alcohol in all weathers, on the edge of the town. The rising teenage pregnancy rate and STI rates across Scotland speak for themselves. Others may be sitting hunched over computer games, and brain-dead or violent TV programmes. Not very healthy. The question is whether the quest for a 'wealthy' Scotland, when it is directed to creating yet more wealth, and consumerism, may actually detract from the opportunity to make a healthier, greener, fairer, and safer Scotland.

I suspect that the health promotion component overlaps significantly with prevention of mental illness. While the latter has its place, the evidence base (for instance on suicide prevention) is very limited, and I believe that the majority of funding should go into Government-funded social programmes. I do however support the identification of children and young people who are distressed or delinquent, and having programmes in place to support them.

Suicide is most often the final act of someone who has been alienated, feels worthless, and with limited resilience, for many years. As a psychiatrist, I am struck by the dialectic of distress: we talk about depressive disorder (and we do see a fair proportion of patients with a 'biological' illness), but our patients so often present with social chaos: alcoholism, isolation, alienation, victimisation, inexpressible conflicts, loss, and ultimately despair. The other route is towards anger, delinquency, and a loss of shared values. The task of fixing a broken society lies not with doctors or social workers, but with a fundamental review of our priorities. We must learn to distinguish financial poverty (now rare), from spiritual poverty (now common, and affecting all social classes).

I fully agree with the Support component, and rehabilitative aspects of achieving a mentally flourishing state,, but note that funding for an existing programme in Ayrshire (the Compass Centre), has been under threat.

In summary, the document's proposals are positive, but do not go nearly far enough in promoting the health of individuals and communities, which should be the top priority for Government attention and spending.

Thank-you for attending to my feedback.