



# Young People's Rights Review

## Craig MacAulay MSYP - Mental Health

Hello Everyone, I'm Craig MacAulay, and I have the honour to speak to you today on behalf of the Young People in the Highland council area.

Confidentiality, Convenience and Long Waits. The three main problems I discovered from consultation around young people's access to Mental Health services in the Highlands. I have consulted with 203 people across all 8 areas within Highland by consulting at my youth forum and utilising the help of Youth Development Officers. Through my consultation the theme that repeatedly came up was Mental Health, with 45% saying this is the most important issue. This primarily affects young people's fundamental rights to health, and therefore, life. With recent statistics showing that on average a person takes their lives every 10 days in the Highlands, significantly higher than most other areas in Scotland when compared to the size of the population.

The Highland Council Area has about  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the landmass of Scotland, yet most mental health services are in Inverness, which means, for some; simply accessing mental health services is an ordeal.

**Confidentiality.** Young people living in rural areas reported to me that they do not have enough confidentiality as their families are more likely to know the GP or mental health Nurse than young people who live in central Highland.

**Convenience.** For young people in the North and West Highlands, accessing mental health services could be a 200 mile round trip which can make services seem practically inaccessible and simply inconvenient for young people.

**Long waits.** NHS Highland is one of 6 health boards that, in April to June 2017 failed to meet the 18-week target for wait times for young people to be seen in relation to mental health issues. Numerous respondents to my consultation stated they waited over 30 weeks to be seen about their Mental Health, I feel that that is, quite frankly, a farce.

To improve these problems my constituents and I think there needs to be more staff working in this field. Although between 2006 and 2017 the number of mental health workers per 100,000 young people has almost doubled in Highland, however this still lags behind the Scottish Average, meaning that staff working the highlands are overstretched and could put lives at risk. In short, we feel that it is high time for the Scottish Government to do even more to fix this stark inequality.

**The UN Economic and Social Rights Committee recommended to the UK in its 2016 review, the accessibility, availability and quality of mental health care must be ensured - for everyone regardless of where you live in Scotland.**

I welcome that Action 14 of the Mental Health Strategy is dedicated to increasing the workforce of mental health professionals, but **I urge the Scottish Government to further ensure in its Children and Young People's Rights Action Plan that this provision is proportionate and tailored to the geography of the Highlands.** This can ensure that young people's access to their mental health rights in the Highlands is confidential, convenient, and provided without delay.