

**Minister for Social Care and Mental Wellbeing**  
Ministear airson Cùram Sòisealta agus Sunnd Inntinn  
**Tom Arthur MSP**  
Tom Artair BPA



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Our Reference: 202500467455  
Your Reference: 202500467455

16 June 2025

Dear Wendy Halliday,

Thank you for your letter dated 13 May 2025 to John Swinney, First Minister of Scotland, in which you raise important concerns about the potential impact of the UK Government's proposed welfare reforms on people in Scotland living with mental health problems and mental illness. As the Minister for Social Care and Mental Wellbeing I have been asked to respond on the First Minister's behalf.

I would like to begin by reassuring you that the Scottish Government is absolutely committed to building a fairer, more inclusive Scotland and your letter powerfully reinforces why this commitment, which our recent Programme for Government underscored, is so vital.

We know that poverty is a key driver of poor mental health, and that those already struggling with poor mental health and money worries are likely to be amongst the hardest hit by any potential cuts to welfare benefits. That is why we are taking forward a number of actions to provide support on money worries and mental health, and why we are committed to increasing the awareness and take-up of benefits and other sources of financial and practical help.

To support this, in 2025-26 we have allocated over £15 million for the provision of free income maximisation, support welfare and debt advice. This funding includes our ongoing support for the Advice in Accessible Settings Fund, delivered by Advice UK, to increase the provision of advice within services that people already go to, such as education, health and other community settings. Since the fund was launched in July 2023, it has supported more than 10,000 clients and unlocked more than £19 million in financial gains.

I want to reassure you that the Scottish Government is working across Scotland to reduce stigma and Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

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discrimination around claiming welfare benefits. We want to challenge stigma and the barriers created for people accessing social security entitlements and continue to challenge negative attitudes towards social security, combating damaging narratives, and encourage friends and family to talk and share knowledge about the services and support available.

To develop our understanding of the impacts of stigma on benefit take-up, last year, the Scottish Government commissioned a Citizen's Panel with people with lived experience of poverty. Facilitated by the Poverty Alliance, this Citizen's Panel examined how stigma influences take-up of social security entitlements, and suggested practical steps the Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland could take to address this.

We are continuing to work with a range of partners, including mental health and money advice services, to ensure that people can access the right practical advice and support they need to help them cope with money worries. This includes an advice pack for frontline workers supporting those with mental health and money worries to help guide them to sources of support that they can signpost to or access themselves.

We also recognise that creating workplaces which support and promote good mental health can be beneficial to individuals, and are working with partners including Public Health Scotland and See Me to take forward a number of actions aiming to ensure that employers are supported to create mentally healthy workplaces.

We have provided £5 million to See Me over the last five years to take forward work on stigma and discrimination. We have also invested £66 million since 2021 in our Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults, which includes a focus on supporting those living in poverty and deprivation. Additionally, we have been working with the Mental Health Foundation and the Poverty Alliance to support and build capacity with grassroots community organisations who are working with those living on low incomes who may be experiencing mental health issues.

I would like to thank you once again for raising these important issues with the First Minister, and I hope that this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely



**TOM ARTHUR**

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