Thank you for your letter dated 1 December 2008 setting out the Committee’s call for written evidence to inform its enquiry into child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). As you know Audit Scotland is currently carrying out an overview of mental health services. This is our first national review of mental health services since our previous report in 1999 A shared approach—developing adult mental health services.

I understand that my team have supplied you with a copy of the project brief for our current mental health overview, which sets out the objectives and methodology. In summary, the study objectives are to:

- Assess the equity of access and availability of mental health services across Scotland.
- Evaluate national and local planning arrangements for mental health services.
- Review the performance of mental health services in meeting the needs of the population.
- Identify total expenditure on mental health services and provide a breakdown.

As part of the scoping the project, the team have talked to a wide range of people working in mental health services and people involved in monitoring and managing these services. The team have also analysed available data and reviewed published research. When scoping the project the team found evidence of concerns about access to services for children and adolescents, and we noted in the project brief “It has been reported that the provision of specialist CAMHS is inconsistent across Scotland and there can be long waits for referrals and access to services, particularly highly specialised inpatient units”.

We will publish our overview of mental health services in Scotland in April 2009. However as the audit is still in progress, I am unable to give you any details of key findings or conclusions at this stage. This audit is an overview of all mental health services in Scotland and will comment on services for children and adolescents.

I hope that this outline of our work relating to mental health services is helpful but please get in touch if you have any further questions.

Robert W Black
Auditor General for Scotland
6 January 2009