The role of academia in improving child and adolescent mental services
Scottish academic institutions can play a fundamental role in development of better systems for identification and treatment of child and adolescent mental health problems:

Development of assessment technologies
Improved detection may be enabled through the use of enhanced screening methods and implementation of new technologies such as the ‘CKAT’ technology for autistic spectrum disorder being developed at the University of Aberdeen.

Therapeutic research
Treatments for child and adolescent mental health problems are highly variable and range from parent education programmes and social work interventions to drug therapies. The evidence base for most of these interventions is weak, and where evidence does exist much research is still required to identify optimum treatment regimes for young people. In this context the establishment of the Scottish Medicines for Children Network (http://www.scotmcn.org/) and which operates within the context of NIHR is welcome.

Educating professionals
Effective mental health care for children and adolescents depends upon a high level of skill, knowledge and understanding. An important obstacle to improved services remains the lack of an appropriately trained workforce. Academic institutions are necessary for training frontline clinical practitioners including doctors, nurses, psychologists and social workers, as well as other professionals who work closely with children. Teachers constitute a potentially invaluable resource for the detection of mental health problems in children, and educating the teaching profession in mental health could also play an important role in a programme of early detection and effective intervention.

Public health measures
Interventions at the public health level are another potentially important focus for a programme being devised to improve child and adolescent mental health. Public health may be important in devising direct measures that reduce problems such as substance misuse or social exclusion and indirect measures that impact upon risk factors such as family disintegration, poverty, teenage pregnancy, criminality.

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