The Care Commission has an interest in the mental health of children and young people who use registered care services, and in particular those children (and adolescents) who are looked after and accommodated (LAAC).

Through our key role in registering, inspecting, investigating complaints and enforcement of such services as well as through focused inspections we have amassed a wealth of information on the mental health needs of children and adolescents.

In response to the questions posed by the Sports and Health Committee, the Care Commission wishes to submit the following evidence:-

1. LAAC children have greater mental health needs than the general population, due to significant trauma, untoward life events, lack of nurturing and positive parenting skills, as well as relationship breakdowns with parents, siblings and peers.

2. We found that 56% of residential services did not have young people's mental health needs assessed prior to admission.

3. Young people leaving care were particularly vulnerable to mental health problems, we found 50% were not properly supported to leave care appropriately.

4. Care planning reviews of LAAC young people rarely include specialist mental health input.

5. It is difficult for some secure services to access primary health care services, and even more difficult to access specialist mental health services.

6. The separation of health and care means it is difficult to access mental health services and vice versa, (this is particularly true when young people are detained under mental health law, for example either in a health secure facility in England or in (on occasion) an adult ward in Scotland).

The Mental Health of Children and Young People: A framework for Promotion, Prevention and Care, (SE 2005) provided an ideal framework for identifying mental health problems in children and young people in general but in particular those who were looked after and accommodated.

The document also detailed the key detriments to good mental health in children and young people and the supports required to identify, assess and create a plan of care for each young person.

The Care Commission supports this document and in conjunction with Commitment 10 of the Delivering for Mental Health agenda (SE 2006), would
advise that a review of the extent of how these have been implemented across Scotland would provide a clearer picture of what has been achieved and what remains to be done in relation to providing a mental health service which is fit to meet the needs of Scotland's children and young people.

References:

- Protecting children and young people in residential care: are we doing enough? Care Commission (2007)*
- Quality of adoption and fostering services in Scotland Care Commission (2007)

Ronnie Hall
Director of Children's Service Regulation
The Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care
15 January 2009