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## Press release

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### Some people have difficulty getting the mental health services they need

Mental health problems cause considerable poor health in Scotland and much has been done to move services from institutions into the community. There now needs to be a better understanding of the care people receive and how resources to support this are best used.

An Audit Scotland report published today, *Overview of mental health services*, says up to 850,000 people experience mental health problems at any one time in Scotland. Mental health problems can affect anyone, but some people are at higher risk, such as those living in deprived areas.

The NHS spends about £930 million a year on mental health services but this is likely to be an underestimate, and it is not known how much councils spend. The wider costs to society of mental health problems, such as people not being able to work, bring the total estimated cost to over £8 billion a year.

Mental health care has changed significantly in the past ten years, with more people receiving treatment in the community and a greater focus on helping people to recover from mental health problems. The report shows that there are long waits to access certain services, particularly services for younger and older people, and there is a lack of out-of-hours and crisis services in some areas.

Deputy Auditor General for Scotland Caroline Gardner said: "Mental health problems are significant issues for Scotland; about 850,000 people, or one in six of the country's population, are experiencing these problems at any given time. Therefore it is important that comprehensive services are provided across Scotland that are easy to access and meet people's needs.

"There have been programmes to reduce the stigma of mental health problems but more needs to be done. There is also a need to ensure that people can access the services they need as quickly as possible and that they can get help out-of-hours or at times of crisis."

Accounts Commission Chairman John Baillie said: "In parts of Scotland there are examples of where health boards, councils and other partners are working well together to deliver mental health care. But more can be done at a local level to provide a more joined up service to support people with mental health problems. This is not just about the work of NHS boards and councils. There is an important role for voluntary organisations and other services such as leisure, education, police and prisons to further improve the mental health care people receive. Partners need to work together more effectively to identify gaps in services and share information."

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#### Notes to editors:

1. This report provides an overview of mental health services across Scotland and is the first in a planned series of reports in this area. We plan to start our next mental health study in 2010 and we will consider the evidence in this report and any further developments to help determine the focus of the study.
2. There is a wide range of mental health conditions with varying symptoms and severity. These include depression and anxiety, eating disorders, bipolar disorder, dementia, schizophrenia, and emotional, behavioural and hyperactivity disorders in children. People can have mental health problems for a short period of time, can relapse repeatedly over long periods of time or have severe mental illness for most of their lives.
3. In the report we use the term 'mental health problems' to cover the full range of conditions. The term 'mental illness' refers to severe and enduring problems, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and clinical depression.

4. The most common mental health problem is depression and anxiety together, with 108 women per 1,000 and 68 men per 1,000 reporting this condition in the UK. There are up to 66,000 people in Scotland with dementia and this is expected to rise by 75 per cent by 2031. There are just over 43,000 people in Scotland with severe and enduring mental illnesses such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.
5. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 can be found on Audit Scotland's website [www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk)
6. Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000, under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act, 2000. Audit Scotland has prepared this report jointly for the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission for Scotland:
  - The Auditor General is responsible for securing the audit of the Scottish Government and most other public bodies in Scotland, except local authorities. He investigates whether spending bodies achieve the best possible value for money and adhere to the highest standards of financial management. The Auditor General is independent and is not subject to the control of the Scottish Government or the Scottish Parliament.
  - The Accounts Commission for Scotland was set up in 1975 and is independent of both central and local government. The commission checks whether local authorities, fire and police boards spend £19 billion of public money properly and effectively.