

# More than 1000 mental health patients sent to other boards for care

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More than 1000 mental health patients have been sent to other health boards for treatment in the past three years, new figures have revealed.

Research by the Scottish Conservatives showed patients being sent between NHS boards north of the border, with some even being asked to travel to England.

In Glasgow, there was an example of a patient being sent 480 miles to Tavistock in Devon, and to parts of London.

The Freedom of Information request showed the conditions suffered by those being transferred elsewhere included eating disorders, bipolar, severe depression and learning disabilities.

In total, 1007 mental health patients were asked to travel “out of area” between 2014/15 and 2016/17, the equivalent of 17 a week.

NHS Highland had the highest number of instances with 295, followed by Fife with 229.

Health boards serving large cities like Glasgow and Edinburgh were less likely to send patients elsewhere, the figures showed.

The Scottish Conservatives said while it was understandable some patients had to travel to receive specialist care, the numbers were too high given that mental health is supposed to be a priority issue for the Scottish Government.

The statistics showed 334 people were moved in 2014/15, followed by 370 a year later, and 303 last year.

**Scottish Conservative mental health spokesman Annie Wells said:**

“There will always be cases when it’s in the patient’s best interests to be sent elsewhere for treatment.

“But the scale of these figures suggests some health boards in Scotland just aren’t equipped to deal with a range of conditions.

“All sides of the political debate in Scotland agree that mental health should have a parity of esteem with physical health.

“But if that’s to be the case, people need to be able to rely on their own health board for treatment.

“In cases of exceptionally rare and challenging conditions it can make sense for everyone for a patient to go elsewhere for care.

“However, many of the conditions set out here are not rare, and people would expect at least one of their local hospitals to be able to cope with it.”

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Below is the number of patients sent to other health boards for mental health treatment in the last three years:

NHS Ayrshire and Arran – 73  
NHS Borders – 94  
NHS Dumfries and Galloway – n/a  
NHS Fife – 229  
NHS Forth Valley – 52  
NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde – 17  
NHS Grampian – 151  
NHS Highland – 295  
NHS Lanarkshire – n/a  
NHS Lothian – 14  
NHS Orkney – n/a  
NHS Shetland – n/a  
NHS Tayside – 28  
NHS Western Isles – 54  
**Total – 1007**