

THE RT HON THERESA MAY MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

17 June 2019

Dear Colleague,

Largest Transformation in Mental Health for More than a Generation

From my first day as Prime Minister, I have been determined that mental health should be treated with the same seriousness as physical health. Too many of us have seen first-hand the devastating consequences of mental illness, which is why tackling this burning injustice has always been a personal priority for me.

Over the last three years we have helped put in place the largest transformation in mental health for more than a generation. Not only through investment in mental health services – but also by working with schools and employers as well as supporting campaigns that help to raise awareness and reduce stigma. Our key actions include:

- Committing through the NHS Long-Term Plan to increase spending on mental health by £2.3 billion more a year in real terms, growing the budget for mental health faster than the overall NHS budget – with funding for Children’s and Young People’s mental health rising faster still.
- Commissioning Sir Simon Wessely’s Independent Review of the Mental Health Act 1983, taking forward the first recommendations, and committing to a detailed White Paper by the end of this year ahead of legislation.
- Commissioning the Stevenson Farmer review to help employers know how to better support people to be mentally healthy at work.
- Making mental health education a mandatory part of the school curriculum for the first time; delivering mental health first aid training to 2,000 secondary schools, with another 1,000 due to start training over the coming year; and putting in place world leading mental health support teams into schools.
- Appointing the first ever Minister for Suicide Prevention to reduce the devastating impact of suicide; the publication of the first ever cross government Suicide Prevention Workplan; and investment support for the Samaritans helpline and the Zero Suicide Alliance.

Much of our work over the last three years has rightly focused on those suffering from mental ill-health. But I also believe that the next great revolution in mental health should be in prevention – because we should never accept a rise in mental health problems as simply inevitable.

So today we have announced a set of prevention measures that will make sure at every stage of life, and for people of all backgrounds, preventing mental illness gets the urgent attention it deserves. These measures include:

- Training for all new teachers on how to spot the signs of mental health issues, backed up by updated statutory guidance to make clear schools' responsibilities to protect children's mental wellbeing.
- Providing access to world-class teaching and training materials for all teachers to use in classrooms to meet the new requirements for mental health education for all primary and secondary pupils.
- Encouraging all 1.2 million NHS staff to take suicide prevention training from the Zero Suicide Alliance; and extra funding for a support programme that will help local authorities to strengthen and deliver local suicide prevention plans so that they better meet the needs of the people they serve.
- Updating professional standards for social workers across England to increase their knowledge and skills when helping those with mental health issues; and modernising the support given to new parents from health visitors and other professionals to better support their babies' behavioural and emotional development.
- Confirming the launch of a new public awareness campaign around looking after your mental health, called Every Mind Matters, in October, and that from 2020 parents will also get access through the campaign to targeted advice on how to deal with issues like stress, online bullying and self-harm.
- Creating a £1 million competition, run by the Office for Students, to find innovative new ways to support mental health at universities and colleges.
- Launching a new breathing space scheme to provide respite from debt collection while people seek support to help prevent the onset of mental health problems – with special access for those receiving crisis treatment.

Finally, those with the most severe mental health issues, the most vulnerable of whom are treated under the Mental Health Act, are often those that get least attention. Today I am meeting Sir Simon Wessely and his team to talk about how we can start to take forward some of his review's recommendations ahead of a White Paper later this year. These actions include:

- Piloting the first ever Race Equality Framework to ensure NHS mental healthcare providers work with their local communities to improve the ways in which patients access and experience treatment – making sure services truly meet the needs of the people they support.
- Launching a pilot programme of cultural advocates in partnership with local authorities and others, to identify how best to represent the mental health needs of ethnic minority groups.
- Following the ban on use of police cells for under 18s with mental health conditions, the NHS Long-Term plan will ensure there are sufficient health-based places of safety to

eliminate the inappropriate use of police cells once and for all. We will then ban the use through primary legislation.

- Announcing later this year there will be an open call for research into how different ethnic minority groups experience mental health treatment and how this can be improved, by the National Institute for Health Research.

As Prime Minister, I am proud to have helped set in train the biggest transformation in mental health care in more than a generation. My successor must now build on that work for the good of everyone, in every part of our country.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T. May', with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP