

Fixing Mental Health Services

Physical and mental health should be treated equally in the NHS. In government, we fought tirelessly to bring this about and are proud of the strides forward that we made by legislating to give mental and physical health equality under the law. But we know that not enough resources reach front line mental health services and that in the fight for parity of esteem, there is still a very long way to go to achieve real equality for mental health. Our plan prioritises early intervention to prevent people from experiencing a mental health crisis and to minimise the number and duration of in-patient stays. This means ensuring all young people can access support quickly. We will:

- Ring-fence funding from the 1p Income Tax rise to provide additional investment in mental health.
- Introduce further mental health maximum waiting time standards, starting with children's services, services for people with eating disorders, and severe and enduring conditions. We want to ensure that all children and young people with a diagnosable condition receive NHS treatment (currently only 35 per cent do).
- Increase access to a broader range and number of clinically effective talking therapies so that hundreds of thousands more people can receive this support, with equal access for older people, BAME and LGBT+ patients, and people with autism or learning disabilities.
- Make prescriptions for people with chronic mental health conditions available for free on the NHS, as part of our commitment to review the entire schedule of exemptions for prescription charges, which has not been fully updated since 1968 and contains many anomalies.
- Transform perinatal mental health support for those who are pregnant, new mothers and those who have experienced miscarriage or stillbirth, and help them get early care when needed.
- Ensure every new mother gets a dedicated maternal postnatal appointment as well as introducing other measures to tackle under-diagnosis of maternal physical and mental health problems.
- Implement all the recommendations of the Wessely review of the Mental Health Act, including bringing forward the necessary investment to modernise and improve inpatient settings and ambulances. We will apply the principle of 'care not containment' to mental health, while ensuring an emergency bed is always available if needed.
- Ensure that no one in crisis is turned away, improving integration between mental health trusts, local authorities and hospitals, to promote a holistic approach to improving mental health services. We will work to make mental health crisis services 24-hour, including mental health liaison teams in all hospitals, and ending the use of police cells for people facing a mental health crisis.
- Ensure those admitted to hospital for mental ill-health are able to be treated close to home for all but the most specialist mental health services,

minimising the use of hospital admissions through high-quality community and housing support for people who don't need an admission.

- Ensure that all frontline public service professionals, including in schools and universities, receive better training in mental health, and add a requirement for mental health first aiders in the Health and Safety First Aid Regulations.
- Fully introduce Sir Stephen Bubb's 'Time For Change' report recommendations and ensure that Assessment and Treatment Units are closed urgently. Too many people with profound learning disability or autism are being detained in unacceptable institutions and it is disgraceful that the Transforming Care closure programme has not been implemented by the Conservatives.
- Stop the cliff edge of young people transitioning to adult services and ensure uninterrupted care.
- Establish a Student Mental Health Charter which will require all universities and colleges to ensure a good level of mental health provisions and services for students.
- Tackle stigma against mental ill-health through investment in public education including Time to Talk.
- Require that a fair proportion of all public funding for health research should be focused on research into mental ill-health, including research into the different mental health needs of different communities within the UK such as BAME and LGBT+ people.
- Improve mental health support and treatment within the criminal justice system and ensure continuity of mental health care and addiction treatment in prison and the community.
- Regard every suicide as preventable. We will take an evidence led approach to prevention, making it easier for people at risk to get the help they need, and equipping more members of the public with the skills and confidence to talk about suicide.
- Ensure that LGBT+ inclusive mental health services receive funding and support.
- Develop a scheme to reward employers who invest in the mental wellbeing of their employees, piloting reduced business rates for employers who support employees' mental wellbeing and provide mental health first aid training to staff.

We know that there is a strong link between financial debt and suicide, with over 100,000 people in problem debt attempting suicide every year. A Liberal Democrat government will build a more compassionate culture towards those in debt by ending threatening debt collection practices and stopping firms profiting from consumers' poor mental health.

There are 340,000 problem gamblers in the UK including some 55,000 children aged 11 to 16. The Liberal Democrats will introduce further measures to protect individuals, their families and communities from problem gambling. We will:

- Introduce a compulsory levy on gambling companies to fund research, education and treatment of problem gambling.
- Ban the use of credit cards for gambling.
- Restrict gambling advertising.

- Establish a Gambling Ombudsman.