



Department
of Health &
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Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown
Chair of Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 9NA
Sent via email to: pubaccom@parliament.uk

10th April 2025

Dear Sir Geoffrey,

Re: Public Accounts Committee, Sixty-fifth Report of Session 2022-23, Progress in improving NHS mental health services (Recommendation 3).

As of the January 2025 Treasury Minute Progress Report (TMPR), one of the two remaining recommendations in relation to progress in improving NHS mental health services is: *'NHS England and the Department should evaluate how well the new integrated care boards and partnerships are supporting mental health services and how well their own support arrangements work to address variation between, and poorer performance in, local areas.'*

The previous government agreed with this recommendation and was working towards a Summer 2024 target implementation date.

Following the change of Government, we needed to establish with the new Government what their approach was to setting direction for Integrated Care Boards and overseeing delivery.

The implementation date was revised to January 2025 to align with the publication of the mandate for NHS England, [Operational Planning Guidance for 2025-26](#) and [a new operating model](#) on 30 January 2025. These documents provide a critical framework for programme delivery. As such, clarity on this recommendation could not be provided until after publication of Planning Guidance and associated documents for the coming financial year.

The Planning Guidance set out that ICBs must continue to meet the mental health investment standard, and use the additional resources that come from that to:

- Expand mental health support teams consistent with the Government's aim of reaching 100% coverage by 2029/30;
- Reduce average length of stay in the adult acute mental health pathway;
- Reduce waits longer than 12 hours in A&E;
- Improve productivity in mental health services and reduce unwarranted variations in access to CYP mental health services; and

- Reduce local inequalities in access to CYP mental health services.

To support this, ICBs will be required to include a statement of their mental health spend as a note to their financial statements where it will be subject to audit. These will be tracked via in-year and monthly regional reporting submissions and monitored through nationally led regional accountability meetings (RAMs), and national programme board and programme delivery board forums. NHS England will continue to work with regions to understand factors driving regional variation to inform how to address variation between systems. Secretary of State will shortly make a statement to Parliament setting out the expected share of NHS spend to be spent on mental health in 2025/26.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. Whitty', written in a cursive style.

Professor Chris Whitty KCB FRS FMedSci
Interim Permanent Secretary
Department of Health and Social Care