



Department of Health & Social Care

From the Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
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The Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt, MP
Chair, Health and Social Care Committee
House of Commons
London
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26 March 2020

Dear Jeremy,

Government Commitments on Child and Adolescent mental health and Maternity Services

Thank you for your letter of 17 March. I welcome your decision to focus on the very important areas of children and young people's mental health services and maternity services as one of your priorities as Chair of the Committee.

As requested, to help with targeting your work, I have provided information on what the Government is doing to improve children and young people's mental health services and maternity services so that we can give our children and young people the best possible start in life.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health

As you know, since enshrining parity of esteem for mental health in legislation through the Health and Social Care Act 2012, the Government and NHS England and NHS Improvement are leading a significant body of work which is transforming mental health services and making a real difference to the lives of people experiencing mental health problems and living with mental health conditions. We remain fully committed to progressing the mental health agenda.

I agree children and young people's mental health services should be a priority for Government to improve access in this area. A series of commitments on children and young people's mental health have been made in a number of key documents as detailed below.

We are continuing to implement the recommendations from *Future in Mind* (March 2015)¹ and the *Five Year Forward View for Mental Health* (February 2016)² and I'm sure you will agree that the implementation of *Transforming Children and Young People's*

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414024/Childrens_Mental_Health.pdf

² <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Mental-Health-Taskforce-FYFV-final.pdf>

Mental Health Provision: a Green Paper (December 2017)³ will improve the provision of mental health services in the community and in schools.

The proposals in this Green Paper are now being implemented as follows:

- we are incentivising every school or college to identify and train a senior lead for mental health;
- we are creating new mental health support teams in and near schools and colleges. The 25 trailblazer sites which will run the first wave of 59 mental health support teams were announced in December 2018 and these are now becoming fully operational. In July 2019, we announced that a further 124 Mental Health Support Teams are to be set up across 57 sites during 2020; and
- we are piloting a four-week waiting time in 12 of the 25 trailblazer sites will pilot a 4-week waiting time) to allow swifter access to specialist NHS services for those children and young people who need them.

All *Five Year Forward View for Mental Health* ambitions are expected to be met by the end of 2020/21, forming the basis of further growth and transformation. Much progress has been made including:

- at least 70,000 additional children and young people each year will receive evidence-based treatment. This represents an increase in access to NHS-funded community services to meet the needs of at least 35% of those with diagnosable mental health conditions;
- joint agency Local Transformation Plans aligned to sustainability and transformation partnership plans are in place and refreshed annually;
- there will be a crisis response services that meets the needs of under 18-year olds;
- ensuring 95% of children and young people with eating disorders should be able to access treatment within 1 week for urgent cases and 4 weeks for routine cases. These waiting times standards are being achieved or on track for delivery.

The *NHS Long Term Plan* (January 2019)⁴ will transform services further by ensuring an additional 345,000 children and young people aged 0-25 will have access to support via NHS-funded mental health services and school- or college-based mental health support teams. Departmental officials are working with NHS England and NHS Improvement to ensure a smooth transition from implementation of the *Five Year Forward View for Mental Health* to implementation of the *NHS Long Term Plan*.

As set out in the *NHS Mental Health Implementation Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24* (July 2019)⁵:

- there will be 24/7 mental health crisis provision for children and young people that combines crisis assessment, brief response and intensive home treatment functions;
- there will be a comprehensive offer for 0-25 year olds that reaches across mental health services for children and young people and adults;
- the children and young people waiting disorder referral to treatment time waiting times standard will be maintained after 2020/21; and

³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/728892/government-response-to-consultation-on-transforming-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health.pdf

⁴ <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/nhs-long-term-plan-version-1.2.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/nhs-mental-health-implementation-plan-2019-20-2023-24.pdf>

- from 2022/23, children and young people's mental health plans will align with those for children and young people with learning disability, autism, special educational needs and disability (SEND), children and young people's services, and health and justice.

To support this, we remain fully committed to increasing investment in mental health services. Local Sustainability and Transformation Partnership areas and Integrated Care Systems are developing their transformation plans to invest the additional £2.3 billion a year for mental health by 2023/24 and every clinical commissioning group is on track to achieve the Mental Health Investment Standard this year as they did for 2018/19. I am also delighted the NHS Funding Bill achieved Royal Assent this month to lock-in our commitment to the NHS funding settlement moving forward.

Maternity Services

We are now approaching the fifth year of the Maternity Transformation Programme, which has been working to deliver the vision set out in the National Maternity Review's report, *Better Births* (February 2016)⁶ to provide safer and more personalised care. This includes delivering the National Maternity Ambition (November 2015) and the initiatives set out in the Government's Maternity Safety Action Plan (October 2016)⁷ and Maternity Safety Strategy (November 2017)⁸, which provided support and actions focussed on better care, better investigations, better learning and improvement and better outcomes for mothers and babies. There has been significant work across the entire maternity system to drive improvement in services to deliver the *Better Births* Vision and the National Maternity Safety Ambition. NHS England and NHS Improvement published *Better Births Four Years On: A review of progress*⁹ on 4 March.

One of the recommendations in *Better Births* was for the Government to introduce a Rapid Resolution and Redress (RRR) scheme for severe avoidable birth injuries. From March 2017, the Department of Health ran a public consultation into the potential parameters of a RRR scheme and following consultation, we decided not to introduce the RRR scheme but instead to pursue the objectives as part of broader, cross-system work to improve the safety culture in maternity services and to provide rapid information and care to families who have experienced an avoidable fatality or injury of their baby during birth.

This cross-system work includes, the Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch, which is now investigating all cases in which a term baby was considered to be alive and healthy at the onset of labour, but the birth outcome was severe brain damage, stillbirth, or neonatal death, as well as maternal deaths, to identify common themes and influence systemic change.

NHS Resolution's Early Notification scheme is providing a more rapid, caring response to families in cases of severe harm, supporting a learning culture, and providing support for staff involved in traumatic births.

⁶ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/national-maternity-review-report.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safer-maternity-care>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safer-maternity-care-progress-and-next-steps>

⁹ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/better-births-four-years-on-progress-report.pdf>

Work is ongoing to deliver the *NHS Long Term Plan* which sets out new measures to improve safety, quality, continuity of carer and to reduce inequalities in health outcomes and experience of care. This includes a focus on reducing pre-term births, more postnatal physiotherapy care for women who experience incontinence after childbirth, and a major redesign of neonatal services, led by an expansion in staff numbers. In February, it was agreed that from 2020/21, the GP contract will require all practices to deliver a maternal check at six to eight weeks after birth (live and stillbirth), as an additional appointment to that for the six- to eight-week baby check as an essential service.

I hope this gives you and the Committee a good overview of the Government's work to expand and transform mental health services for children and young people and maternity services

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matt". The signature is stylized with a large 'M' and a cursive 'att'.

MATT HANCOCK