



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From the Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care*

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
House of Commons
Westminster
London
SW1A 0AA

18 November 2021

By email:

Dear Jeremy,

Thank you for your letter of 29 October 2021, setting out your concerns about the mental health settlement in the Chancellor's spending review.

I have the same concerns as you set out in your letter about the increased prevalence of mental illness during the pandemic, and the impact on children and young people's mental health. The COVID-19 pandemic has been the biggest challenge in a generation. Not surprisingly, this has translated into an increase in demand for mental health services, and in particular as your letter sets out, eating disorder services for children and young people.

The young people of this country continue to demonstrate their resilience and determination. But we must acknowledge that they have experienced unprecedented levels of disruption to their daily lives. Despite vital mental health services remaining open throughout the pandemic, we are aware that many children and young people are facing lengthy delays in accessing appropriate mental health support. This is particularly true of eating disorder services where an increase in demand was being reported prior to the onset of the pandemic. Services have seen the number of children and young people entering urgent treatment for an eating disorder increased by 73% in 2020/21 compared to 2019/20.

I can assure you that we have plans in place to recover from the pandemic as quickly, and safely, as possible. As you will be aware, in March this year we published the COVID-19 mental health and wellbeing recovery action plan, backed by an additional £500m for the 2021/22 financial year aimed at responding to the impact of the pandemic on the

population's mental health. The plan targets groups which have been most affected including those with severe mental illness, young people, and frontline staff. This is in addition to the NHS Long Term Plan aim of investing at least £2.3bn extra per year in mental health services by 2023/24.

I also wish to assure you that we are working with our arms-length bodies to understand issues such as increase in wait times and how performance can be recovered. We have allocated £79m of the £500m Mental Health Recovery Fund for 2021/22 to accelerate the expansion of support in children and young people's mental health services. This extra funding will support 22,500 more children and young people to access community health services, 2,000 more children and young people to access eating disorder services and will aid services in working to recover waiting time standards.

Turning to your specific queries. The Spending Review confirms the overall settlement available for My Department's budgets, including the proportion of that which will go to the NHS for three years – 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25. Spending plans for those years will be subject to a detailed financial planning exercise and finalised in due course. It is through this planning exercise that we will determine the precise allocation of extra resource spending that will be spent on mental health, including on children and young people's mental health.

The settlement does provide funding for the pipeline of trained mental health professionals supporting the ambitious goal of the NHS Long Term plan to expand mental health workforce. And, recognising that good mental health starts at birth, we are providing £100m across the Spending Review period to rollout bespoke parent-infant mental health support. Public Health England report that "10 – 20% of women develop a mental illness during pregnancy or the first year after having a baby". Through investment in staffing, training and interventions, this package will nurture infant-parent-infant relationships and improve access to bespoke parental mental health support.

Regarding vital capital funding, this year's Spending Review confirmed a capital budget of £448m until 2025 for mental health. This is compared to a budget of £165m for 2021-2022. This includes the remaining £298m needed to finish the job of eradicating mental health dormitories. Replacing these dormitories with single en suite rooms is vital to improving inpatient accommodation in mental health wards across England and will provide a safer and more therapeutic environment for patients. It also includes a new allocation of £150m aimed at better mental health facilities linked to A&E and enhancing patient safety in mental health units. The mental health estate will also benefit from significant investment in NHS operational capital, which will allow trusts, including mental health trusts, to refurbish and maintain their estate.

You asked how much of the funding to tackle the elective care backlog will be allocated to mental health services. We are working with the NHS to allocate the headline budgets allocated at the Spending Review, before funding is made available in April 2022. We know that people with a long-term illness have twice the risk of common mental disorders such as depression and anxiety and so a focus on preventing and treating poor physical

health can help prevent mental health problems. I'm sure you will acknowledge the indirect impact that this funding will have on improving people's mental health. I do also expect some of the funding for COVID impacts and the recurrent funding will go towards funding growth for mental health services.

I can assure you that I remain committed to the need for parity of esteem between mental and physical health, which has never been more important. Within a difficult fiscal environment, we are continuing to ensure through NHSEI's assurance processes that every CCG - and integrated care boards once operational - meet the Mental Health Investment Standard so that the spending on mental health increases at least in line with the growth in their overall funding allocations.

The shared feeling that we must build back better from this pandemic provides fertile ground to lead a national conversation about how we can do things differently to better support people's mental health, which is why I have asked the Minister for Care and Mental Health to drive forward this priority.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Javid.', is centered on the page.

RT HON SAJID JAVID MP