

MENTAL HEALTH POLICY GROUP

MANIFESTO FOR A NEW
PRIME MINISTER 2022



The Mental Health Policy Group
August 2022

Centre for
Mental Health



Mental Health
Foundation



**Mental Health
Network**
NHS Confederation



FOREWORD

This year the Health and Care Act reiterated the commitment that the NHS and social care should give mental health parity with physical health: setting out an ambition that mental health should always be treated with the same priority and value as physical health. Since the initial commitment to parity of esteem a decade ago, there is no doubt that we have seen significant progress in mental health policy. However, the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent cost of living crisis has put unprecedented pressures on the mental health of the nation, requiring an urgent response.

Our Manifesto for Better Mental Health, published before the 2019 General Election, highlighted where urgent improvements were needed. Since then, we have seen welcome developments and commitments in several of these areas.

This includes:

- Mental health continuing to be a central priority in the NHS Long Term Plan.
- An additional £500m for the Mental Health Recovery Action Plan¹ in the 2020 Spending Review for 2021/22 to reflect increased need as a result of the pandemic.
- The prioritisation of people with Severe Mental Illness and their carers within cohorts 5 and 6 of the Covid-19 vaccination programme.²
- The national rollout of the Community Mental Health Transformation Framework.³
- The publication of the Draft Mental Health Bill and a commitment to pre-legislative scrutiny.⁴
- Consultation on a 10-year cross-government plan for mental health and wellbeing,⁵ for publication by the end of 2022, recognising the role that all parts of government and wider society play in creating good mental health in our communities.
- Provisions in the Health and Care Act⁶ to ensure mental health representation encompassing treatment and prevention on Integrated Care Boards, plus transparency in spending on mental health services.

Mental health is now clearly established as a national priority. However, when fewer than four in ten people who need support are benefiting from mental health services, there is still a long way to go on the road to equality. And the need is greater than ever.

Our country's progress on mental health is fragile. Taking concerted action to improve the nation's mental health is the work of a generation. At a time when more and more people are speaking out about their mental health and demanding better support, the new Prime Minister cannot afford not to listen.

In this manifesto, we set out five areas that the next Prime Minister must address in order to improve the lives of people with mental health problems and improve the mental health of the nation. By addressing these areas, the new Prime Minister will lead the way towards mental health equality and bring us closer to the ambition of a fair deal for mental health.

1) Focus on prevention and disparities

2) Reform the Mental Health Act

3) Expand mental health services to address need

4) Deliver cross-government action

5) Address the shortfall in mental health social care

PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT PRIME MINISTER



1) Prevention and disparities

Preventing mental health problems from developing is good for individuals, families and wider society, while also providing excellent value for public money.⁷ There is a significant and growing number of people with mental health problems in the country, and we cannot use treatment alone to address this. All government policies affect mental health in some way and therefore we need a broader public policy framework in place that reduces risk and protects mental health.

To protect both the mental health of the population and the sustainability of the NHS, the next Prime Minister should work with departments across government to develop a clear plan for preventing mental health problems.

This will require the development and expansion of prevention and early intervention programmes. Such programmes should be culturally sensitive and target communities where there are the highest levels of need, including those that have previously been ignored or further marginalised by services.

This work should be delivered through collaboration between communities, the voluntary sector, local authorities and the NHS.

The fundamental shift we need to see towards prevention can only be delivered if funding made available upfront, to deliver long-term returns. The first step to this is reversing the £1bn real-terms cut to the public health grant since 2015/16.⁸

In June 2022, the former Secretary of State for Health and Social Care reiterated his commitment to a health disparities white paper, which was expected this summer, however as of July 2022 we understand this has been delayed.

We know that health disparities exist in access to, treatment in and outcomes from mental health care. Ethnic inequalities are experienced due to a clear barrier in accessing support rooted in distrust of both primary care and mental health care providers, as well as a fear of being discriminated against in healthcare.

Simultaneously, the growing cost of living crisis represents the greatest emerging threat to mental health and must be addressed to prevent a stark increase in mental illness and widening of disparities.

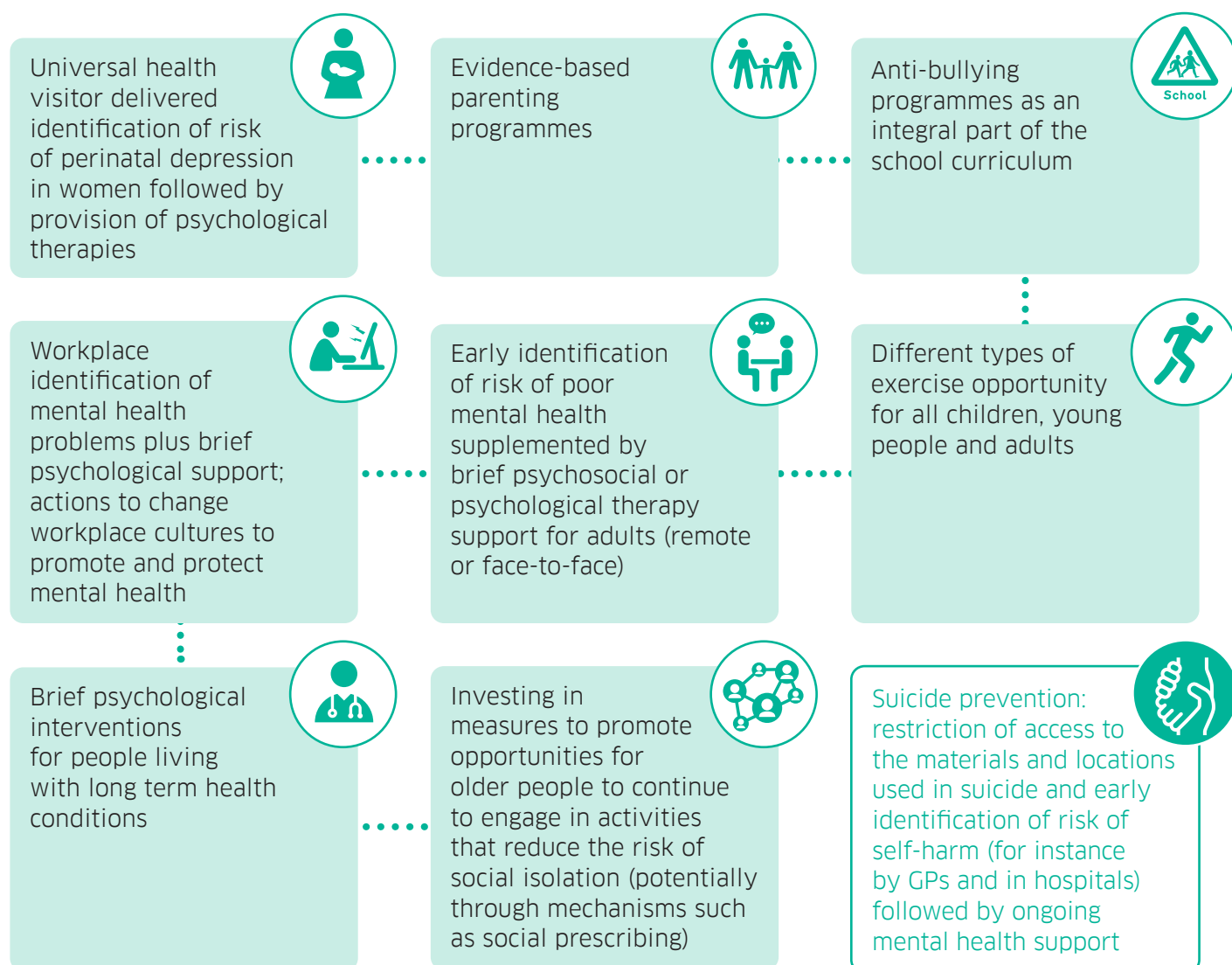
We therefore call on the next Prime Minister to ensure the following:

- Proven prevention programmes should be rolled out immediately. There are a number of public mental health initiatives where the evidence is already strong that they can improve people's mental health in a cost-effective way. These include anti-bullying programmes in schools, parenting programmes and workplace support and interventions.⁹
- For approaches where evidence is still emerging, the Government should set up ambitious piloting and evaluation programmes to develop the evidence base.¹⁰
- Similar principles should inform the Government's forthcoming new suicide prevention strategy, which should have a clear target on lives saved, informed by evidence.
- Establish a network of community-based early support hubs for children and young people, a model which is already working effectively in some parts of the country.¹¹

- Prioritise the health disparities white paper as it represents an opportunity to address inequalities, including those experienced by marginalised communities.
- The Online Safety Bill is returned to Parliament as soon as possible and to ensure that it is amended to:
 - Protect people from suicide-related content. The Bill should regulate legal but extremely harmful content which glorifies or provides instructional material on suicide, across all platforms. As the Bill stands, this content will not be regulated on smaller platforms.
 - Fully protect children. This should include rectifying current omissions from the Bill, in particular giving children control of the content they receive so they can avoid any material that might damage their mental health, including that which damages their body image.¹² It should also address the habit-forming nature of social media platforms, which we know can have a real impact on many children and young people's mental health.
- Adequately support those on the lowest incomes, who are most at risk of poverty and mental health problems as a result of the cost of living crisis.

Selected potential good 'buys' for investing in preventing mental health problems across the life course

The following preventative interventions have been found to be particularly cost-effective.





2) Reform the Mental Health Act

Being detained under the Mental Health Act is one of the most serious and traumatic things that can happen to someone. The independent review, chaired by Professor Sir Simon Wessely, recommended a series of essential reforms to the current legislation and wider mental health services. We welcomed the Government's commitment to taking forward the large majority of the review's recommendations. The Government has now published a Draft Mental Health Bill.

As a matter of urgency, the new Prime Minister should commit to supporting the Bill through Parliament. This includes:

- Agreeing a timetable for implementing the reforms.
- Promoting race equality in how the act is applied, including in mental health services to close the gap in access, experience and outcomes between different ethnic groups.
- Ensure that the NHS, Ministry of Justice and local authorities have the workforce and resources needed to successfully implement the wide-ranging reforms.



3) Mental health services including workforce and CYP

The NHS Long Term Plan and the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health supported the much-needed expansion of mental health services and began to make up for decades of underinvestment. However, the pandemic has significantly increased demand for mental health support and there is still much to do to address the high level of unmet need. NHS England has estimated that at least 1.4 million people are on mental health waiting lists.¹³

The new Prime Minister must take steps to ensure that everyone experiencing mental health problems is able to receive the right support, in the right place, at the right time. Failure to address this will only result in greater pressure on services, with adverse cost implications.

There needs to be a dedicated national recovery plan that tackles the backlog in mental health, just as there is for addressing the physical health backlog.

The commitments must then be translated into effective local implementation plans, with funding reaching the front line to enable significantly improved access and choice of the full range of mental health services close to home.

Children and young people are particularly under-served, with only around 30 percent of those needing treatment able to access it. One in six children and young people are now showing signs of a mental health problem, compared to one in nine before the pandemic.¹⁴ This has been reflected in referrals to children and young people's mental health services in 2021/22 being more than double that of 2019/20¹⁵ and the number of urgent eating disorder cases for under 19-year-olds being 92% higher in 2021/22 than 2019/20.¹⁶

In the mental health sector, recruiting enough skilled staff to meet the needs of patients was already an urgent and substantial challenge before the pandemic. The recruitment and retention of staff has been recognised as the most significant risk to the delivery of mental health commitments in the NHS Long Term Plan and achieving parity of esteem. Therefore, the next Prime Minister must take the lead on building a sustainable mental health workforce, across the mental health and social care sectors, which can deliver the mental health services we deserve.

To expand mental health services, the next Prime Minister should take action to ensure that:

- There is a renewed Covid-19 mental health and wellbeing recovery action plan to address this increased need for services, supported by additional resources.
- The commitments made in the Health and Care Act around mental health funding, parity of esteem and mental health representation on Integrated Care Boards are implemented fully.
- The Long Term Plan commitment to new mental health services access and waiting time targets through the clinical review of standards is implemented and supported with additional resource within this Parliament.
- Expensive inappropriate out of area placements are eradicated for adults, children and young people.
- Progress against the commitments in the Long Term Plan, including funding, continue to be publicly tracked, so that both national bodies and local areas can be scrutinised and held accountable for delivering better mental health services.
- Vital capital funding for effectively delivering the Long Term Plan and the Mental Health Act reforms is provided as part of future Spending Reviews.
- There is increased investment in mental health research to identify the most effective interventions, including preventive programmes.
- The capacity of vital and expert mental health teams in the civil service and NHS England are not reduced.

To support children and young people's mental health, the next Prime Minister should take action to ensure that:

- Targeted funding is allocated to children and young people's eating disorder services so existing targets can be met.
- All pupils in England have access to a Mental Health Support Team, pending ongoing rigorous evaluation.
- Deliver the establishment of a nationwide network of community-based early support hubs for children and young people.
- Commit the necessary workforce and investment to deliver the new access and waiting time standards.

Alongside the essential development of a long-term workforce strategy, the next Prime Minister should also take action to:

- Grow the NHS workforce by increasing the number of medical school places to 15,000 by 2029. They should also: expand the number of places available at nursing school; urgently review the impact of tuition fees on mental health nursing; and work with secondary schools and universities to actively promote mental health career options.
- Ensure the workforce strategy utilises the full breadth of the mental health workforce and makes use of the expertise in the voluntary and community sector. This should include expanding the use of peer support workers and the availability of independent advocates.
- Ensure the mental health social care workforce is resourced to meet the level of need for mental health social care.
- Support the mental health and wellbeing of staff across the health and care workforce including maintaining investment in mental health hubs and taking action to encourage more staff working in mental health services to stay in the NHS and social care.

- Ensure resources are made available to recruit the additional workforce deemed necessary to deliver the clinical review of standards and the Mental Health Act reforms in due course.
- Utilise the benefits that digital provision can bring to patients and the workforce, ensuring there is a blended approach which allows for patient choice.
- Make it easier for psychology graduates and psychological therapists to become part of the mental health workforce.
- Urgently deliver the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health recommendation to consider how to introduce regulation of psychotherapists.



4) Cross-government action

Improving the nation's mental health cannot be achieved through a focus on health services alone and requires action across government departments. People with mental health problems face numerous injustices and disadvantages in life: with higher levels of physical health problems, disability, unemployment, poverty, debt, homelessness, poor housing, drug or alcohol dependency, crime victimisation and contact with the criminal justice system. It will only be possible to address these injustices if mental health is put at the heart of all government policy.

We have therefore warmly welcomed and engaged substantially with the Government's extensive work to develop a 10-year cross-government mental health and wellbeing plan, due to be published later this year. The new Prime Minister must champion the 10-year Plan for Mental Health and Wellbeing, and especially champion its cross government departmental nature.

This plan should set out how all public authorities and services will work to improve the mental health of the nation, particularly in relation to social care, housing, education, the social security system and the criminal justice system. As part of this plan, the Government should introduce a 'mental health in all policies' approach, overseen by a Mental Health Cabinet Committee, to ensure that all new and existing policies are designed to benefit everyone's mental health and improve the lives of people with mental health problems. This will be assisted by the mental health policy tool currently under development. It is critical that all work identified as needed through the plan be adequately funded.

Examples of what could be achieved through this approach include:

- Promoting good mental health in schools and colleges by taking a Whole School/College Approach.
- Investing more in preventive social care-led work with children, young people and families experiencing relationship difficulties, abuse and other adversity known to increase their risk of poor mental health, including families in which a parent has a mental illness.
- Supporting employers to promote wellbeing for all staff, tackling the causes of work-related mental health problems, and supporting staff experiencing mental health problems.
- Reform of the criminal justice system to make prisons safer and to divert more people to community options.
- Reforms to the social housing system so it better meets the needs of people with mental health problems and a sustainable funding model for supported housing to ensure everyone who needs supported housing is able to access it.

- A guarantee that anyone with a serious mental illness who wants help with employment is able to access Individual Placement and Support (IPS).¹⁷
- The welfare system acknowledges the links between financial stress and anxiety and mental health, ensuring that the promotion of good mental health underpins all welfare policy.



5) Mental health social care

Mental health social care has an important role to play in maintaining the nation's mental health, however this role is not well understood or recognised. Mental health social care supports people of all ages who live with a severe mental illness. This support helps people get appropriate aftercare after a stay in a mental health hospital, and to stay well, live independently and contribute within their local communities.

It is important to recognise the positive ambitions of the recent white paper on adult social care.¹⁸ The white paper recognised the role of mental health social care and set out welcome action in a number of key areas alongside a commendable vision for the future of social care. However, it will take significant work to bridge the gap between these longer-term aspirations and the current picture. Local authorities and mental health social care providers are still awaiting the investment needed to deliver the vision set out in the recent white paper, to address the breadth and depth of challenges currently facing the sector and properly deliver their duties under the Care Act, Mental Health Act and Mental Capacity Act.

While the Government has committed £5.4bn of funding from the new Health and Care Levy over the next three years to social care, the vast majority is allocated to roll out the new cap on care costs for individuals. The most recent Spending Review provided an additional £1.6bn per year of grant funding to local authorities over the next three years to provide immediate stability, but this must be shared across local authority priorities and falls short of what is needed by the system. Local authorities also lack dedicated funding to participate in the current rollout of the Community Mental Health Framework alongside the NHS and VCSE organisations, which undermines NHS England's ambitions for joined-up mental health support in the community.

Mental Health Social Care includes supporting people with advice and support on their personal finances and there is increasingly – at this time of escalating cost of living crisis – a need for more integrated support with money and mental health. There are good practices to build on such as the existing Mental Health and Money Advice service.¹⁹

To achieve the Government's ambitions for social care, including integration with health services, the next Prime Minister must:

- Take a long-term sustainable approach to social care funding for people of all ages, including working age adults with mental health needs.
- Expand the remit of the Better Care Fund to include ringfenced funding to support integration in mental health.
- Ensure greater provision and integration of financial support with mental health services.

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- ¹ Department of Health and Social Care. [Mental health recovery plan backed by £500 million](#). 27 March 2021.
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- ² NHS England. [Vaccination of JCVI cohorts 5-6 and additional funding for vaccination in residential settings](#). 13 February 2021.
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- ³ NHS England. [The community mental health framework for adults and older adults](#). 29 September 2019.
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- ⁴ Department of Health and Social and Ministry of Justice. [Draft Mental Health Bill](#). 27 June 2022.
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- ⁵ Department of Health and Social Care. [Mental health and wellbeing plan: discussion paper and call for evidence](#). 12 April 2022..
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- ⁶ HM Government. [Health and Care Act](#). 2022.
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- ⁷ Mental Health Foundation. [The economic case for investing in the prevention of mental health conditions in the UK](#). 2 March 2022.
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- ⁸ The King's Fund. Public health: our position. 14 October 2021.
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- ⁹ Ibid.
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- ¹⁰ An example of an approach where the Government could usefully develop such evidence is in the development of programmes to prevent loneliness to tackle depression. Further examples are set out in Mental Health Foundation. [The economic case for investing in the prevention of mental health conditions in the UK](#). 2 March 2022.
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- ¹¹ Youth Access. [The case beyond Covid](#). May 2021.
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- ¹² The recent report of the Health and Social Care Select Committee made a number of welcome recommendations as to how young people can be protected from online material that damages their body image. Health and Social Care Committee. [The impact of body image on mental and physical health](#). 19 July 2022.
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- ¹³ NHS England. [Update on Mental Health Services](#). 25 November 2021..
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- ¹⁴ NHS Digital. [Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2021 - wave 2 follow up to the 2017 survey](#). September 2021.
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- ¹⁵ NHS Digital. [Mental Health Monthly Statistics](#), Dataseries CYP32. 2019-2022.
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- ¹⁶ NHS England. [Children and Young People with an Eating Disorder Waiting Times](#). 2019-2022.
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- ¹⁷ Individual Placement and Support (IPS) supports people with severe mental health difficulties into employment. It involves intensive, individual support, a rapid job search followed by placement in paid employment, and time-unlimited in-work support for both the employee and the employer.
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- ¹⁸ Department of Health and Social Care. [People at the Heart of Care: adult social care reform white paper](#). 1 December 2021.
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- ¹⁹ <https://www.mentalhealthandmoneyadvice.org/en>

ABOUT THE MENTAL HEALTH POLICY GROUP

The Mental Health Policy Group is an informal coalition of six national organisations working together to improve mental health, comprised of the Centre for Mental Health, Mental Health Foundation, NHS Confederation Mental Health Network, Mind, Rethink Mental Illness and the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Together we represent providers, professionals and the hundreds of thousands of people who use mental health services, and advocate for cross-government approaches to improve services and support early intervention and prevention of mental health problems.

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