Date: 20th July 2023

Dear Prime Minister

Following our national celebration of the NHS on its 75th birthday, we are here to present a Report from the All-Party Parliamentary Group on a Fit and Healthy Childhood on Mental Health provision in the UK.

The NHS is not the preserve of any one political persuasion, and this Report is enriched by the help of professionals, academics, practitioners and voluntary sector organisations in the field of Mental Health who have no party-political allegiance. Their sole priority is to make Mental Health services the best they can be for the benefit of those who use them and those who work within the sector. We all believe that this is an ideal time to address one of the biggest threats our nation faces... for the benefit of the UK as a whole.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the rise in mental illness and the shocking gaps in service provision and research capacity rose to the top of the media agenda. Opinion that ‘the next pandemic will be in mental health’ is now commonplace.

However, as the immediate threat of Covid recedes; thanks in no small part to NHS delivery and the UK impetus behind the vaccine roll-out ‘media noise’ has not translated into affirmative action. Earlier this year, plans for a promised 10 Year Mental Health Strategy were abandoned in favour of Mental Health being ‘lumped in’ alongside a set of physical conditions in a new Major Conditions Strategy.

Far from achieving ‘parity of esteem’ with Physical Health, this reduces the status of Mental Health still further. Just as there are myriad physical diseases, there are multiple complex mental illnesses, deserving of their own comprehensive long term strategy. This was the clear view of over 5,000 individuals and organisations who responded to the Government’s Consultation on wellbeing but unless there is change to a strategy that would actually align with the Government new workforce plan, the Mental Health services will continue to suffer from:

- Serious gaps in the workforce and in training and retention at all levels including people opting to specialise in psychiatry
- Short termism: late in the day clinical solutions preferred over the early and preventative intervention within schools and the community, that have potential to avert lifelong costs to the individual and society over a range of services
- Stigma in all areas of life including employment and disparity in treatment options
- Undue influence of current and future socioeconomic down turn
- An inadequate research base with guaranteed and continued support from the Government to afford patients with a mental illness the benefit of a full range of diagnostic and treatment options.
No time is therefore better to plan for the next stage of NHS progression and that is why the authors of this Report, call for the adoption of a 10 Year Mental Health Plan, incorporating the following evidence-based recommendations:

- Prioritising prevention and increasing public awareness
- Facilitating early intervention and timely access to services
- Promoting integrated, holistic services and addressing health inequalities
- Guaranteeing sustainable funding for research, mental health services and workforce development
- Growing the workforce and capacity building
- Partnership working and dynamic collaboration.

In the NHS’s 75\textsuperscript{th} year, we should all work together to bring Mental Health services and those who need them out of the shadows and into the light where all will benefit to the advantage of each family, each community and the wider society of which we are a part.

Signed by,

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