

Dear MP,

I am writing to you regarding numbers of young people struggling with poor mental health today, it is a crisis that existed well before the pandemic and I hope you agree it is time for this to change.

On the 5th March, the Government announced that £79 million of the previously announced £500 million has been allocated to support children and young people's mental health, this equates to approximately £5 per head when divided between 13 million children and over 2 million higher education students. So, the question must be asked: is £79million really enough?

2019/20 saw a 35% increase in referrals to children's mental health services with no signs of this reducing in 21/22. Today, 1 in 6 school aged children have a mental health problem, an alarming rise from 1 in 10 in 2017, yet 70% of children and adolescents who experience mental health problems have not had appropriate interventions at a sufficiently early age, resulting in high numbers of young people entering higher and further education with unresolved and unmet mental health needs, placing them at greater risk of death. University Student suicides have risen by 75% since 2015 and research tells us that less than 50% of the 80% of students reporting mental health issues seek help.

Where is the investment in Primary Prevention? We cannot rely on campaigns that encourage people to #BeKind or slogans that convince young people to accept that it is OK to not be OK.

Whilst increased investment in secondary intervention and crisis intervention is welcome, unless we seek to address the reasons behind so many young people reporting poor mental health the numbers seeking access to secondary services will continue to rise, as it stands, there are only very limited secondary interventions and crisis prevention strategies in places, meaning many children and young people do not get the help and support they need until they have already reached a point of crisis.

Preventative strategies would educate children and young people, making them more aware of their emotions and their ability to identify when they may be suffering; if partnered with robust therapeutic support within the education system, with no waiting times, it would be highly likely to reduce the number of people needing access to an already overwhelmed mental health service. Many schools in the UK have already begun to embed mental health education within their school curriculum but too many have not and are not required to do so under the current system

I am calling on you and your colleagues to take action now, you must agree that prevention is better than cure, and what is needed is a government led Primary Prevention strategy that is mandated in law in the same way that treatment and crisis interventions are. It's hard to know how to raise this issue with the House of Parliament so I'm asking for your help as my MP. Please raise this with your colleagues in the House of Lords and help implement a guidance statute.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely,