

# Mental Health Experts Call On All Political Parties To Back A 10-Year Plan

Submitted by: MQ: Transforming Mental Health

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A group of academics, health practitioners, charity bosses and 'lived experience' experts are calling on the Government to reinstate the cancelled 10-year Mental Health Strategy.

On Wednesday a new Report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on a Fit and Healthy Childhood will be published called 'The Major Conditions Strategy: A 10-year failure for Mental Health'.

In a letter to be hand-delivered to 10 Downing Street on Thursday 20th July, 50 mental health leaders have asked Rishi Sunak to reverse his Government's decision to scrap the 10-year Mental Health Strategy that was scheduled for publication this year.

In 2022, the Government launched a call for evidence to help them produce a long-awaited 10-year strategy to address an alarming rise in mental illnesses across the UK. However, in January 2023, Health Secretary Steve Barclay, in a shock announcement to the House of Commons, stated that the 10-Year Plan was being scrapped. Instead, mental ill-health was to be rolled into a new 'Major Conditions Strategy' which would address several physical health problems such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, dementia, muscular skeletal diseases and respiratory diseases.

This move disappointed the mental health sector, who objected to the abandonment of a much-needed strategy to level up mental healthcare; long considered a 'Cinderella service'.

In February, 14 mental health charities wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister calling for a dedicated strategy for mental health. Now, this Report provides the evidence that shows why this is needed.

"Good mental health is essential if everyone in our living and working society is to thrive and prosper," says Chair of the APPG Steve McCabe, MP for Birmingham.

"This was the resounding message from over 5,000 individuals and organisations in response to the Government's recent Public Consultation on wellbeing and we are proud to present that case in our Report.

Abandoning a ten-year Mental Health Strategy and making mental health just one among others in a new Major Conditions Strategy leaves people who have a mental illness with under-resourced and under-staffed services, and subject to diagnosis and treatment that do not benefit from the well-funded research base supporting many physical illnesses.

Our six-point Plan for Mental Health addresses the inequalities and disparities in mental health provision; banishing centuries of stigma and laying the foundations of a truly 'whole person' health service.

There could be no better way to mark the 75th birthday of our beloved NHS and no better tribute to the ambition of our 21st century United Kingdom if all its citizens, whatever their circumstances, unite in resolve to make that fresh start happen."

The report, authored by 23 experts, makes six recommendations to the Government for what a 10-year strategy to improve mental health should include:

1. Prioritising prevention and increasing public awareness.

As 75% of lifelong mental illnesses begin before adulthood, the provision of evidence based mental health support from a professional in every school can help prevent lifetimes of suffering.

2. Facilitating early intervention and timely access to services.

Reduction of waiting times and improving access to practice and evidence-based treatments and therapies are essential to avoid the escalation of mental health conditions.

3. Promoting integrated, holistic services and addressing health inequalities.

It is essential that a 10-year Mental Health Plan should be cross-governmental and include co-ordinated action to reduce child poverty and inequality.

4. Guaranteeing sustainable funding for research, mental health services and workforce development.

By ringfencing funding for mental health services and research, we can ensure the long-term availability of vital mental health provisions.

5. Growing the workforce and capacity building.

The authors of the report make the case for a focused expansion of the mental health workforce to sit alongside the newly proposed NHS workforce plan announced by the Government.

6. Partnership working and dynamic collaboration between government agencies, healthcare and education service providers and other organisations.

Such a plan will only work if it wins the collective support of policymakers and all stakeholders working together to make it happen.

MQ's CEO Lea Milligan says, "The scale of the impact that scrapping the 10-year mental health plan will have can only be seen as equal to the very scale of the problem it was meant to tackle! Today, I, along with colleagues from across politics, research, frontline services, lived experience and the NHS, call for a response to the state of mental health and the urgent need for a comprehensive and effective 10-year Mental Health Plan in the UK.

Our nation is facing a crisis, with a significant decline in mental well-being over the past decade. To this end, we have set out to comprehensively present the key recommendations for a 10-year Mental Health Plan that can serve as a blueprint for transformative change."

ENDS

Editor Notes:

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High-res photos available on request.

#### About MQ Mental Health Research

MQ is a global charity committed to scientific research into understanding different mental health conditions, developing new interventions and championing prevention of mental illness.

[www.mqmentalhealth.org](http://www.mqmentalhealth.org)

#### About the All-Party Parliamentary Group for a Fit and Healthy Childhood

The APPG for a Fit and Healthy Childhood is chaired by Steve McCabe MP and Co-Chaired by Baroness (Floella) Benjamin of Beckenham OBE

The Vice-Chairs are Julie Elliot MP, Kim Leadbeater MP, Lord McColl of Dulwich, Adam Holloway MP.

The purpose of the group is to promote evidence based discussion and produce reports on all aspects of childhood health and wellbeing including obesity; to inform policy decisions and public debate relating to childhood; and to enable communications between interested parties and relevant parliamentarians. You

can find out more here: <https://fhcappg.org.uk/>