



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

From Maria Caulfield MP  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for  
Mental Health and Women's Health Strategy

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The Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP  
By email to: [george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk)

15 March 2023

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your correspondence of 10 February to the Secretary of State on behalf of a number of your constituents, about mental health services.

I appreciate your constituents' concerns about the support available to young people with mental health problems.

Children's and young people's mental health is a priority for the Government. We remain dedicated to achieving parity between mental and physical health services and to reducing inequalities in mental health provision across the country. We are making good progress, with investment in NHS mental health services continuing to increase.

The NHS has committed to continuing to improve the experience of mental health support for children and young people by increasing access, reducing waiting times and improving outcomes. As set out in the *NHS Long Term Plan*, by 2023/24 the number of children and young people who will be supported by NHS-funded services every year will double, with 345,000 more able to access mental health support.

In March 2021, the Department of Health and Social Care allocated £79million to be used to significantly expand children's mental health services. This has allowed around 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 a faster increase in the coverage of mental health support teams (MHSTs) in schools and colleges. MHSTs support the mental health needs of children and young people in primary, secondary and further education, using an evidence-based approach to provide early intervention on mental health and emotional wellbeing issues. In May 2021, the Department for Education (DfE) announced £17million of mental health funding for schools and colleges to help them recover from the challenges of the pandemic. The DfE also launched the £7million Wellbeing for Education Recovery programme, which provides expert training, support and resources for staff.

NHS England piloted a four-week waiting-time standard, as committed to in our green paper with the DfE, *Transforming children and young people's mental health provision*, to help assess the merits of introducing such a standard. NHS England then consulted on the definition and introduction of five waiting-time standards. The consultation found that more than 80 per cent of respondents agreed with introducing additional mental health access

and waiting-time measures, including for children and young people. The Government is working with NHS England on the next steps for the proposed measures. The consultation report can be found at [www.england.nhs.uk/2022/02/widespread-support-for-proposed-nhs-mental-health-access-standards-for-patients](http://www.england.nhs.uk/2022/02/widespread-support-for-proposed-nhs-mental-health-access-standards-for-patients).

As your constituents are aware, on 24 January the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care announced that the department will develop and publish a major conditions strategy. The strategy will set out a shift to integrated, whole-person care, building on measures already in place through the *NHS Long Term Plan*. Our approach will use the best evidence for ways to tackle the major conditions that contribute to the burden of disease, including mental ill health, in England. It will combine our commitments on mental health, cancer, dementia and health disparities into a single, powerful strategy. A joined-up strategy will ensure that mental ill health is considered alongside physical health conditions, so that any interactions will be taken into account, and care will be better centred around the patient.

The Government launched a 12-week public call for evidence on what can be done across government in the longer term to support mental health, wellbeing and suicide prevention. We will ensure that the learning from the more than 5,000 responses we received will feed into the development of the mental health and suicide prevention policies that are included in the major conditions and suicide prevention strategies.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Maria'.

**MARIA CAULFIELD MP**