

Local Government Association Briefing

Opposition day debate on mental health

House of Commons
13 November 2018



Key Messages

- Despite rising demand, mental health services have been reduced for many years at all levels. We therefore fully support the Government's aim of ensuring parity of esteem between mental and physical health. To achieve this, significant investment in mental health services is needed, with a focus on early intervention and support for recovery through integrated community based services.
- Improving and maintaining good mental health for residents is a key priority for councils. Poor mental health can affect any of us at any stage of our lives. Intervening early to help prevent issues from escalating can dramatically improve an individual's life chances and save money in the longer term. Councils therefore support the Government's recently announced prevention vision.
- We welcome the provision of funding for mental health in the Chancellor's Budget which we understand is part of the £20.5 billion announced as part of the NHS funding deal. If prioritised for mental health, it will ensure that people experiencing a mental health crisis can access timely, effective and integrated services.
- Councils are key to the mental wellbeing of our communities and it is important that the Government provides a long term commitment to invest in local government to help address and prevent mental illness. Councils face a £7.8 billion overall shortfall by 2025. A range of services that contribute to the wider determinants of mental health are currently underfunded, these include housing, leisure, green spaces, and culture. This makes it more difficult to promote mental wellness within communities.
- Increased investment in children and young people's mental health services is urgently needed. In particular, local areas need to receive the full £1.7 billion of funding promised for the implementation of Future in Mind and the reforms stated in the Government's green paper *Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision*.
- The LGA's [Bright Futures](#) campaign highlights the early intervention and prevention work that councils across the country are doing to support our children and young people.
- We welcome the new ministerial responsibility for suicide prevention. Councils take their responsibility to prevent suicide seriously. As part of their work with health partners and the voluntary and community sectors, all councils in England now have a local suicide prevention strategy prepared or in development.

Briefing

Background

Role of councils in tackling mental health

Good mental health is essential for a healthy and prosperous society. Unfortunately, it is easier to focus on what happens when a person becomes mentally ill, and how the health service intervenes, rather than how to keep our communities mentally well in the first place. It is essential to prevent mental health issues arising, intervening early if problems do start surfacing, and helping people manage their lives going forward.

It is important that we focus on prevention and intervention at an early stage, particularly for children and young people. By doing this we will help prevent poor mental health blighting peoples' lives and improve the well-being of our communities. We therefore welcome the Government's recently announced prevention vision.

For many people, mental health may be the cause or effect of a wider set of issues within their lives. This could include relationship break-downs, domestic violence, homelessness or housing difficulties, missed education opportunities, unemployment, financial difficulties, debt, ill health, substance misuse and interaction with the criminal justice system. Councils have a unique role in making the links between these sets of issues and can tackle the underlying causes, rather than waiting to deal with an individual crisis.

Local government needs the right funding and the right levers to use their position as local leaders, place-shapers, commissioners and deliverers of services across all these areas to really improve the mental health and wellbeing of our community and stop people falling into a mental health crisis.

A key role for joint NHS/local government community mental health services is to support people to regain their place in mainstream activities and opportunities along with everyone. This also includes sufficient availability of 'step down' care and support in the community so that people can live safely in communities and are not faced with long hospital stays, sometimes many miles from their homes.

For mental health services to be sustainable in the long term, local government and the NHS need to work together in equal partnership. The NHS Long term plan should recognise and encourage the need for the NHS to join-up with councils and other partners, including the voluntary sector, in delivering place based person-centred and preventative mental health support.

We are working with NHS England, NHS Confederation and other NHS stakeholders to develop a system-wide leadership development offer to help sustainability and transformation partnerships and HWB leadership work more effectively together.

Funding for local government

We welcome the provision of funding for mental health in the Chancellor's Budget. We understand that this funding is part of the £20.5 billion that the Chancellor previously announced as part of the NHS funding deal.

If prioritised for mental health, the additional funding will ensure that people experiencing a mental health crisis can access timely, effective and integrated services. The NHS should work closely with councils and local partners to ensure that crisis care funding is joined-up with wider mental health community support and locally-led suicide prevention strategies.

English local authorities will have seen reductions of £16 billion to core central government funding during the course of this decade. By 2019/20, more than half of all English councils, including three quarters of district councils, will no longer receive the revenue support grant. In order to continue to meet their range of statutory duties and non-statutory duties related to the provision of mental health services and ensuring mental wellness for the communities, councils have understandably prioritised social care and support services.

Last year, the LGA wrote to the Department of Health and Social Care calling for Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWBs) to be included in the allocation of funding to Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and the delivery of Local Transformation Plans. Councils were not informed that funding for mental health services had been released to CCGs. As system leaders of local health, care and wellbeing systems, Health and Wellbeing Boards should play a key role in local transformation plans and funding for services.

Councils support the Government's recently announced prevention vision. The current social care and health system is unsustainable and will buckle under the weight of demand unless we urgently re-engineer our services to promote and protect mental health. To maximise this prevention vision and support the NHS even more effectively, government needs to ensure that councils' prevention work is adequately funded by reversing the £600 million in reductions to councils' public health grants.

Working with the voluntary and community sector

The voluntary and community sector (VCS) are key partners in helping our communities keep mentally well, and in supporting people when they become mentally ill. Locally based voluntary groups that provide specialised support, and are based on the uniqueness of local circumstances, are invaluable partners in providing targeted support in the mental health system, including for BAME groups. In our publication last year on the role of local government in mental health and wellbeing, '*Being mindful of mental health*'¹, we provide a number of examples of the work the VCS are undertaking to improve mental health and mental wellness across the country.

Linked to this Councils also work with partners to help veterans and their families, who for a variety of reasons may have additional needs arising from their service and, who may also experience a period of crisis that requires intensive support from a number of public agencies as well as the voluntary and community sector. We welcome the additional funding for the mental health of veterans announced in the Chancellor's Budget last month which will help to ensure that veterans in need of mental health support can access timely, effective and integrated services. The funding should be available to veterans through councils who want to work with armed forces charities, health and other local partners to further strengthen mental health support for veterans and ensure it links to wider mental health activity.

Children's mental health

Supporting child and adolescent mental health and wellbeing continues to be a priority for councils. At least one in 10 children and young people have a diagnosable mental health condition and the unreported figures are likely to be higher. Looked after children are four times more likely to experience mental health issues than their peers. Despite the increasing demand, funding for children's mental health has stagnated and only 6.7 per cent of mental health spending goes to children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).

Unfortunately a lack of funding means around 75 per cent of young people experiencing a mental health problem are unable to access any treatment. By 2020 spending reductions will mean that schemes supported by the Early Intervention Grant will have lost £683 million since 2010. Councils in 2015/2016 spent £8.3 billion in children's services; and they are facing a funding gap of £3 billion by 2025. This is not sustainable if we are serious about tackling mental health in young people.

The Government must ensure there is accountability at national level for the investment so it reaches the right services. There must also be improved accountability and oversight of the reforms and funding at local level, this should be overseen by Health and Wellbeing Boards.

It is crucial we focus on prevention and intervention at an early stage, particularly for children and young people. By doing this we will help prevent poor mental health blighting peoples' lives and improve the well-being of our communities.

In our response² to the Government's children and young people's mental health green paper, we highlighted that measures to tackle the crisis in children and young people's mental health are long overdue and we are pleased the Government's response confirmed it is taking steps to address this.

Our Bright Futures campaign includes a call to prioritise CAMHS and calls on the Government to properly fund councils' children's services departments. We recommend that Government:

- Releases the promised £1.7 billion for CAMHS to ensure adequate and sustainable funding.
- Improves standards and makes sure funding is spent wisely. This includes strengthening the governance over how funding is spent and recognising the expertise of health and wellbeing boards locally.
- Prioritises prevention and early intervention funding to councils to allow them work with schools to commission independent school based counselling.

Suicide Prevention

Suicide is a national tragedy. Every day some 13 people take their own life. Each death can also impact upon another 6 to 60 people with devastating emotional consequences and consequent effect on their mental health. In 2017 there were 5,821 suicides registered in the UK³, of that total, three quarters were men.

The most prevalent age group for suicide are men aged 45-49. Men living in the in the most deprived areas are 10 times more at risk of suicide than those living in the most affluent areas. Suicide rates for women, though below men, have risen.

In 2012, the Government launched the *Preventing Suicide in England* strategy which placed responsibility on councils to draw up voluntary suicide prevention action plans in partnership with Health and Well-Being Boards (HWB). By July 2018, all but four councils had a plan in place with the remaining in development⁴.

Councils work with local partners such as CCGs, the Coroner's Office, criminal justice system and third sectors to ensure a co-ordinated approach and collation of data to produce holistic understanding of suicide occurrence so to help shape prevention strategy.

We have launched a Suicide Prevention guide for local authorities stressing the need for a co-ordinated multi-agency approach including targeting people most at risk of suicide, embedding mental health awareness in schools. The guide also shares examples of locally-led initiatives.

The LGA is pleased to be working with the Department of Health and Social Care, the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) and Public Health England (PHE) on a joint sector-led improvement offer that will spread good practice and help places to further drive down suicide rates and save lives.

Loneliness

The development of the Government's loneliness strategy announced earlier this month is welcome. Loneliness can have a devastating effect on peoples' mental and physical health, and impact our health and care services. We welcome the joined-up approach, in particular the collaboration between primary and community based care services. It is essential that services which are already under pressure are able to cope with demand.

Community connectors provide valued support to individuals on the ground to make the most of community opportunities. Connector-style services are often the first to be cut despite their importance in tackling loneliness. The announcement that £1.8 million will be available for more community spaces is an encouraging move, but it is also essential that the Government delivers more funding for essential services like social care and public health, in the upcoming budget.

Mental health statutory duties on local government

The Mental Health Act is currently being independently reviewed. Our submission argued that any reform of mental health legislation should establish a coordinating role for councils on mental wellness and health, with the devolution of associated services and funding to strengthen early intervention and prevention.

The Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005 seeks to promote autonomy for those who may lack mental capacity and ensures that decisions made on their behalf are made in their best interests and with the least possible restriction of freedoms. A process to amend this important piece of legislation, including for the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) process is currently underway via the Mental Capacity (Amendment) Bill currently in parliament. We support the Bill however, we would like to see a number of changes to ensure it is workable in practice.⁵

The LGA has been working with Parliament, Department of Health and Social Care and the wider care and support sector to agree and discuss changes which could ensure that the Bill is fully implementable. These proposed changes should underpin the Bill's aim to be enabling legislation which highlights both the rights of individuals to be consulted in decisions and to ensure that they, their families and carers, and the sector as a whole has confidence that there will be independent oversight of those decisions when appropriate. It has been proposed that the Bill seek to re-inforce the existing role of care home managers in identifying the need for and arranging assessments, re-assessment and seeking reviews but not in undertaking these reviews. This should serve to address concerns around conflict of interest, independent oversight and potential new burdens that some care home providers have expressed. We are keen to work with Government and Parliament on the Bill and any future code of practice, particularly given the changing role of councils. There will need to be some changes to existing requirements under the Care Act and some training of staff in councils to deliver on this and this will need to be co-produced and resourced.

The Care Act 2014 gives councils a duty of care to prevent, reduce or delay the need to use care or support services. This includes providing advice and advocacy services to those with mental health issues through independent mental health advocates.

Councils have a number of duties towards young people including statutory responsibilities for all vulnerable children including looked after children (LAC), children involved with youth justice and children with SEND. The Children's Social Act 2017 defines local authorities as a 'corporate parent' to children in social care. In addition, there are duties across public authorities including the Children's Act and Prevent duty.

¹ LGA, Being mindful of mental health

https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/22.6_Being%20mindful%20of%20mental%20health_08_revised_web.pdf

² LGA response to Government response on children's mental health Green Paper,

<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/lga-responds-childrens-mental-health-green-paper-consultation-response>

³ ONS Suicides in the UK: 2017 registrations,

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/suicidesintheunitedkingdom/2017registrations>

⁴ Public Health England, [https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/topic/suicide-](https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/topic/suicide-prevention/comparisons#par/E92000001/ati/102/iid/92607/sexId/-1/qid/1938132762/pat/102)

[prevention/comparisons#par/E92000001/ati/102/iid/92607/sexId/-1/qid/1938132762/pat/102](https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/topic/suicide-prevention/comparisons#par/E92000001/ati/102/iid/92607/sexId/-1/qid/1938132762/pat/102)

⁵ LGA Briefing, Mental Capacity (Amendment) Bill, [https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-](https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/lga-briefing-mental-capacity-amendment-bill-committee-stage-day)

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