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Letter from Westminster



Steve Brine MP

EARLIER month the Government confirmed it will invest £143m in improving children's mental health services this year. This is terrific news and something I, as a member of the team at the Department of Health since May, have been keen to push from the inside.

The funding is part of £1.25bn which will be allocated to children and adolescents' mental health services in England with an additional £30m to be spent helping people tackle eating disorders. The deal includes a guarantee that, for the first time, we have waiting time targets for mental health just as we do every other illness.

A new report called 'Future in Mind' has been published by the Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce, which was established to consider ways to make it easier for children, young people, parents and carers to access help and support when needed. It looks how to improve the way that youth mental health services are organised, commissioned and provided. I would recommend it to anyone with an interest in this area.

Key themes of the report include promoting resilience, prevention and early intervention, improving access to effective support, care for the most vulnerable, accountability and transparency, and developing the workforce in this field.

This is a very important piece of work and something I have championed since entering Parliament in 2010. Mental health has been the Cinderella service of the NHS for too long and this new Conservative Government is determined to end that. One of the key recommendations from 'Future in Mind' is a joint collaboration between the Department for Education and NHS England, with Clinical Commissioning Groups linking up with schools to operate a new pilot scheme involving CAMHS.

This is very much needed and of great interest to me as I am already in active discussions with local headteachers who are increasingly concerned at the presentation of anxiety related problems among young people and the pressure that is putting on their core work which is, at the end of the day, to provide children with an education.

Returning to eating disorders finally and I recently received a special report on written by Winchester-based FIXERS at the Department for Health. It's as moving as it is impressive and you can access it, as well as links to the other reports I mention above, via www.stevebrine.com/FIXERS

You can find more information about my continuing work as your local MP, in Winchester and Westminster, via www.stevebrine.com or on 01962 791110.

Steve Brine MP

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