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10-Year Mental Health Plan:

For too long, mental health has not been afforded the same priority, funding, or resource as physical health. Patients, and NHS staff, deserve better.

Across England, 1.2 million people are waiting for mental health treatment and far too often help depends on your postcode, not your need. The Government said it is delivering record levels of investment. But a Royal College of Psychiatrists survey finds almost a quarter of people are waiting more than 12 weeks to start treatment; 43% say long waits lead to their mental health getting worse; and 78% of mental health patients resort to A&E because they cannot access the services they need.

As you know, Ministers had promised a standalone 10-year plan for mental health. But earlier this year, the Health Secretary said this would be scrapped and replaced by a new 'Major Conditions Strategy'. I am concerned the record of this Government on mental health is delayed reviews and endless consultations when patients need action now.

Too many people cannot access support early, resulting in more people – particularly young people - presenting to A&E having self-harmed or experienced suicidal thoughts after their mental health has reached crisis point. I believe mental and physical health should be put on an equal footing. I support a whole-Government plan to improve mental health outcomes, make early intervention a reality, and broaden the range of services to those with severe mental health illnesses.

I am pleased the Opposition has set out a plan to guarantee NHS mental health treatment within a month, expand the mental health workforce – recruiting 8,500 more staff - provide access to specialist mental health support in every school, and establish mental health hubs for young people in every community with no need for referral. And it is fully costed, by ending tax exemptions for private schools and closing tax loopholes for private equity fund managers.

This will form part of a wider, transformative package to tackle pressure on staff and ensure patients are seen on time again by doubling the number of medical school places and training 10,000 extra nurses and midwives every year, paid for by abolishing the non-domiciliary tax status. Transforming mental health services – and ensuring parity of esteem between mental and physical health – must be a priority.

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