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**Mental Health**

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# Mental Health

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Everyone knows someone who is suffering or has suffered from mental illness. The figures speak for themselves:

- 1 in 4 people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year
- 3 children in every classroom have a diagnosable mental health condition
- 2.3 million people with a mental health condition are out of work
- 8-12% of the population experience depression

The economic costs of mental illness are huge: up to £100bn a year through lost working days, benefits and treating preventable illness.

The personal costs are incalculable.

Britain has a mental health crisis, and this government is making it worse.

Government rhetoric about improving mental health provision has been accompanied by cuts in funding, services and support for people with mental health needs.

This government is making Britain a more stressful, anxious and insecure society.

Tory Britain is increasingly a society defined by growing inequality, job insecurity, materialism, indebtedness, and the ugly scapegoating and stigmatising of those less fortunate through government and media 'anti-scrounger' rhetoric.

I share the concerns of those hundreds of mental health professionals who have publicly expressed their alarm that austerity is having a "profoundly disturbing" impact on the nation's psychological wellbeing.

If elected Labour Leader I will work with mental health practitioners, people who have mental health issues, campaigns and organisations to work out what is the best course of action. I would look to propose:

- Growing rather than continuing to cut mental health service budgets. They have been cut in real terms by 8% while demand for services has risen by almost 20%.

- Challenging the stigma around mental health and ending the second class treatment of mental illness in the NHS – mental illness should be treated on a par with physical illness. Mental health conditions make up 21.9% of conditions faced by the NHS but receive only 11.9% of the overall budget.
- Increasing the numbers of mental health professionals – in England there is only one mental health specialist per 30,000 young people under 20, compared with one per 5,300 in Switzerland, 6,000 in Finland and 7,500 in France.
- Looking to increase investment in children’s mental health - £80m has been cut from the NHS mental health budget for children and adolescents in the past four years, including £35m in the last year alone. Only 6% of spend on mental health services is directed towards children and adolescents despite evidence that 50% of lifetime mental illnesses, excluding dementia, start by the age of 14.
- Ensuring mental health education to be taught in UK schools and that all schools can access school-based counselling or therapy if they need it. The largest UK study ever on eating disorders in children found that self-esteem in eight-year-olds is a critical factor for later problems in their teens.
- Introduce into the school curriculum course on life skills, emotional intelligence and parenting to better equip our children and young people to the challenges of modern living.
- Undertake a national study into the mental health of children and young people - the last national study was done 10 years ago and there is an urgent need for up-to-date information on the extent of mental health problems among children and young people.
- Launch a national campaign to tackle loneliness and the stigma around it – there is a strong relationship between chronic loneliness and mental illness.
- Challenge the high rates of mental illness among women. Misogyny, sexism and sexual objectification undermine women’s psychological well-being and personal safety - women are 70% more likely than men to experience depression and twice as likely to have an anxiety disorder. Due to cuts to support services up to 10,000 victims of sexual abuse are estimated to be waiting more than a year for counselling.
- Tackling the enormous over-representation of people from black and minority ethnic communities in long-stay institutions - black men in Britain are 17 times more likely than white counterparts to be diagnosed with a psychotic illness.
- Ensure greater action on homelessness – 70% of the homeless have mental health problems and almost half have attempted suicide.
- Scrapping the work capability assessment. It is failing people with mental health issues, leading to the withdrawal of benefits, poverty and in some cases even suicide.
- Ending the stigmatising language of ‘benefit scroungers’, and rebuild a welfare state that cares for all. The current agenda is increasing poverty, exclusion and disability hate crime.

- Review how reasonable adjustments work for people with mental health issues and backing equal pay audits so that employers can be monitored and the disability pay gap addressed. Trade unions also have a role of play in raising awareness and increasing support to workers.
- Addressing the disproportionate numbers of people with mental health conditions in our prison system, and too many of them commit suicide while in prison (833 prisoners committed suicide in the decade up to 2011). We need a fundamental review of how our whole criminal justice system deals with mental health, as well as the support available to those in prison.

I am committed to a holistic approach that sees emotional well being as fundamentally connected with a society less atomised and individualistic and more socially connected, more caring, more inclusive and more equal.

