

Liberal Democrats' 12 Point Plan for Mental Health, Learning Disabilities and Autism

"The Liberal Democrats are committed to ending the historic injustice against people with mental ill health.

"From trebling the number of people accessing psychological therapies, to introducing the first ever access and waiting time standards for mental health care, to halving the number of people with mental health problems detained in police cells, we have a proud record of improving support for the one in four people who will experience a mental health problem each year.

"But this fight is far from over. Under the Conservative Government, services have been stretched to breaking point due to under-investment, at a time when the prevalence of mental ill health appears to be rising. Promises made under the coalition government have been broken. Now there is a real risk that the progress we made will come undone. That's why we're outlining our priorities for mental health in the next parliament.

"Neither Labour nor the Conservatives have outlined how they will fund mental health services, but we've made it clear our priorities will be funded with help from our ambitious plan to inject £6bn a year into the NHS with an additional penny on income tax.

"Today, I am announcing that £1bn of this will be ring-fenced as dedicated funding for mental health services, helping us to deliver on twelve key priorities which build on our record of action in government and in opposition.

"The Liberal Democrats are the real opposition to the Conservatives, and the only party fighting for genuine equality for those who suffer from mental ill health."

Norman Lamb, Liberal Democrat Shadow Health Secretary

1. Access and Waiting Time Standards – We will invest in comprehensive access and waiting time standards for mental health care in the NHS.

A Record in Government: We introduced the first ever access and waiting time standards for mental health care – for people who require treatment for psychosis and for common mental health conditions like anxiety and depression. When the Labour governments introduced access standards for people with physical conditions, mental health was left out.

A Record in Opposition: We exposed the flawed implementation of the new access standards for psychosis, with many areas failing to invest in the full treatment programme and placing arbitrary age restrictions on access to treatment. We led a debate in Parliament and challenged the Government to ensure that fully-funded psychosis services are available in all parts of the country.

A Promise for the Future: We are committed to delivering the Coalition Government's vision for comprehensive access and waiting time standards in mental health, as endorsed by NHS England's mental health strategy. The Conservatives accepted this objective but have not committed the resources to make it happen.

2. Children and Young People's Mental Health – We will tackle the growing mental health crisis among children and young people, and ensure timely access to high-quality support.

A Record in Government: We published a bold five-year strategy, *Future in Mind*, to modernise children's mental health services, with a focus on prevention and the critical role of schools in supporting mental wellbeing. This was backed by £1.25bn in additional funding over five years.

A Record in Opposition: We have repeatedly challenged the Government over its failure to deliver all of the promised extra funding for children's mental health care, at a time when mental health problems among young people seem to be on the rise. We have also highlighted unacceptably high thresholds for treatment, uncovered by Norman Lamb in his role as chair of an independent commission set up by the Education Policy Institute, meaning that many children do not receive support until they are severely ill.

A Promise for the Future: We are committed to implementing the *Future in Mind* vision in full, investing the full £1.25bn pledged by the Coalition Government. We will establish a stronger role for schools in promoting good mental health – by ensuring all teaching staff have the training to identify mental health issues, by ensuring that schools provide immediate access to support and counselling for pupils, and by making mental health education a mandatory component of the national curriculum. We examine the case for introducing a dedicated service for children and young people based on the Australian 'headspace' model, and building on many excellent Youth Information, Advice and Counselling Services.

3. Eating Disorder Services – We will guarantee that children and young people struggling with an eating disorder get fast access to evidence-based treatment, close to home.

A Record in Government: We secured £150 million investment to transform eating disorder services for children and young people, to pave the way for the introduction of the first access and waiting time standards for the treatment of eating disorders.

A Record in Opposition: We have been holding the Government to account on the implementation of maximum waiting time standards, and have urged ministers to publish local-level data on performance against the national targets.

A Promise for the Future: We will deliver rapid access to effective treatment for eating disorders, with a focus on early intervention and stronger provision of community-based services. We will

ensure that maximum waiting times are implemented across the country, and end long-distance admissions for acute treatment.

4. Perinatal Mental Health – We will transform mental health support for pregnant women, new mothers and those who have experienced miscarriage or stillbirth, and help them get early care when needed.

A Record in Government: We secured additional investment in the March 2015 Budget to improve support for women experiencing mental health problems during and after pregnancy.

A Record in Opposition: We have challenged NHS England on the distances that some women must travel to their nearest perinatal mental health Mother and Baby Unit. In some cases, they face being separated from their child or going without the specialist mental health care they need.

A Promise for the Future: We will ensure that every new mother experiencing mental ill health has access to community-based and specialist perinatal mental health services when needed. We will set a new ambition for every part of the country to have preventive services in place to prevent perinatal mental health problems from arising.

5. Out of Area Placements – We will end the scandal of people with mental ill health being shunted across the country because there is no support available close to home.

A Record in Government: We instructed the NHS to collect, for the first time, robust data on ‘out of area’ placements to identify where this unacceptable practice continues and where improvement is needed. We commissioned the planning work needed to implement a ban on this practice.

A Record in Opposition: We exposed a rise in ‘out of area’ placements and led a debate in Parliament to highlight the problem. We challenged the government to end the scandal by October 2017, as recommended by an expert commission set up by the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

A Promise for the Future: We will eliminate all inappropriate ‘out of area’ placements to acute mental health, perinatal and eating disorder care by the end of 2018. We will prioritise investment in community mental health care to reduce admissions to hospital, and ensure that every part of the country has enough beds to treat patients locally when acute care is needed.

6. Learning Disabilities and Autism – We will ensure that people with learning disabilities and autism are treated with the same dignity, rights and respect that we would demand for anyone else.

A Record in Government: We published a green paper proposing new legal rights for people with learning disabilities and autism, to challenge decisions made about how and where they are cared for, and more control over how the money available for their care is spent. We set an ambition to reduce the number of people stuck in hospital by investing in local, personalised care in the community.

A Record in Opposition: We challenged the Government over their failure to legislate for these rights and to invest in community support, meaning that thousands of people are still stuck in hospitals where they are often treated as second class citizens and their basic rights are often abused.

A Promise for the Future: We will invest in community support to get people out of institutions and ensure that they are able to live as full members of their community, close to their family and friends, with opportunities to work wherever possible. We will prioritise autism diagnosis and early intervention, to end the scandalous situation where many people are left waiting for years for a diagnosis without any real support. We will ensure that all new policies have an assessment of how they impact pupils who have special educational needs, and ensure they adhere to duties under the Equality Act.

7. Stigma and Awareness – We will build on recent progress in tackling the stigma and raising awareness of mental health issues.

A Record in Government: We invested in the *Time to Change* campaign to end the stigma and discrimination faced by people with mental ill health, and put mental health firmly on the agenda in government and in Parliament.

A Record in Opposition: We launched the cross-party *Equality for Mental Health* campaign, bringing together high-profile individuals from across society to demand that the government makes mental health a national priority.

A Promise for the Future: We will continue to tackle stigma against mental ill-health, including by building on the good work done by organisations like Heads Together. We will change the standard of proof in suicide conclusions in the Coroner's Court from the criminal standard ('beyond all reasonable doubt') to the civil standard ('on the balance of probabilities'), to ensure the accurate collection of statistics on suicide and tackle the stigma that prevents many people from seeking help. We will ensure that LGBT+ inclusive mental health services receive funding and support.

8. Mental Health in the Workplace – We will ensure that employers take active responsibility for improving the mental health and wellbeing of their staff, by developing a Wellbeing Premium.

A Record in Government: We challenged Britain's biggest companies to become exemplar employers under the *Time to Change* scheme, by committing to take steps to improve the mental health of employees, and succeeded in persuading every government department to sign up to this pledge.

A Record in Opposition: We challenged the Government to amend Health and Safety at Work legislation to require every organisation to have trained Mental Health First Aiders, enshrining in law the principle that employers' obligations relate to the mental as well as the physical health of their staff.

A Promise for the Future: We are advocating the introduction of a 'Wellbeing Premium', a discount on business rates or National Insurance for companies that take clear action to improve the wellbeing of their workforce. This is scheduled to be trialled in the West Midlands with Government and NHS England funding, and was proposed by Norman Lamb as Chair of the West Midlands Mental Health Commission.

9. Specialist Employment Support – We will accelerate the roll-out of Individual Placement and Support, a proven approach to getting people with severe mental ill health back into work.

A Record in Government: We promoted pilot projects aimed at helping people to find work by linking up mental health and employment services.

A Record in Opposition: We advocated the use of Individual Placement and Support – an evidence-based approach to helping people with severe and enduring mental ill health back into work. This formed part of the action plan of the West Midlands Combined Authority's Commission on Mental Health, chaired by Norman Lamb.

A Promise for the Future: We will improve the life prospects of people with severe mental ill health by accelerating the roll-out of Individual Placement and Support across the country, so that people with severe mental health problems are supported to find and stay in employment wherever possible.

10. The Use of Force – We will end the scandalous and inappropriate use of force against people with mental ill health.

A Record in Government: We halved the number of vulnerable people detained in police cells under the Mental Health Act. We issued new guidance to substantially reduce the use of physical restraint against mental health patients in the NHS, and to eliminate the use of face-down restraint entirely.

A Record in Opposition: We demanded an urgent investigation by the Health Secretary after our Freedom of Information survey revealed that the use of face-down restraint remains widespread in the NHS, and that the overall use of physical restraint in mental health trusts has increased despite the guidance issued under the Coalition Government. We tabled amendments to the Policing and Crime Bill to prohibit the use of Taser guns – condemned by the U.N. Committee Against Torture as a form of torture – in psychiatric wards.

A Promise for the Future: We will finish the job of ending the use of police cells for people experiencing a mental health crisis. We will promote public health initiatives to prevent people from

reaching crisis point; improve crisis care in Accident and Emergency, in the community and via phone lines; and invest more resources in health-based places of safety to ensure that everyone receives the appropriate therapeutic support. We will make it a national priority to radically reduce the use of force in mental health and learning disability/autism units.

11. Suicide – We will prioritise a national ambition to dramatically reduce the number of people who take their own lives.

A Record in Government: We issued a call for every NHS organisation to commit to a new ambition for 'Zero Suicides'.

A Record in Opposition: We exposed a dramatic rise in unexpected deaths and suspected suicides in mental health trusts, and challenged the government to make a success of the 'Zero Suicide' ambition.

A Promise for the Future: We will commit to a Zero Suicide ambition for NHS organisations, while pursuing whole community approaches to suicide reduction which involve the NHS, local authorities, the criminal justice system, transport, and housing services. We will learn from national and international best practice in mental health care such as Perfect Depression Care in Detroit – which has succeeded in substantially reducing suicide in inpatient care – and the Mersey Care's zero suicide policy.

12. Mental Health Research – We will ensure that a fair proportion of public funding for medical research is focused on research into mental health

A Record in Government: We proposed a £50 million mental health research fund ahead of the 2015 General Election.

A Record in Opposition: We have challenged the Government on the inadequate funding of research into mental health compared to physical health, despite accounting for around 23% of the national burden of disease.

A Promise for the Future: We will address the disadvantage in public funding of mental health research, with the aim of progressively increasing its share of funding to support the development of more effective approaches to prevention, diagnosis and treatment.