



Department
of Health &
Social Care

From Nadine Dorries MP
Minister of State for Patient Safety,
Suicide Prevention and Mental Health

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Ms Mo Stewart
Centre for Welfare Reform
By email to: mozzas01@gmail.com

22 April 2021

Dear Ms Stewart,

Thank you for your correspondence of 11 January about the effects on mental health of work capability assessments. I apologise for the delay in replying, which has been caused by an unprecedented volume of correspondence throughout the pandemic.

The Government wants to make sure that people get timely access to health support and employment support so that they avoid long-term worklessness wherever possible. For that, we need tailored and timely access to appropriate employment and health advice and support, through better alignment and integration of the health, work and care systems.

In 2017, the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) jointly published *Improving Lives: the Future of Work, Health and Disability*, which sets out how the Government is working with employers, charities, healthcare providers and local authorities to break down employment barriers for disabled people and people with health conditions. This is being delivered through in-work programmes, personalised financial and employment support, and specialist healthcare services to help more people go as far as their talents will take them.

This strategy will help shape the future for hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities and mental health issues as the Government continues to tackle the stigma that so many people face when trying to get into and progress in work. Ensuring that more people with disabilities or long-term health conditions can get into and stay in work would not only enhance their lives, but also enrich the economy.

Meanwhile, we are working closely with the DWP to ensure that people with health problems who receive welfare are given the correct level of support. We are committed to supporting everyone's mental health and wellbeing and to ensuring that the right support is in place. The NHS has issued guidance to services to support them in managing demand and capacity across inpatient and community mental health services and keeping services open for business, and all mental health trusts have established 24-hour urgent mental health helplines where people experiencing a mental health crisis can access support and advice.

In 2019, we published the first Cross-Government Suicide Prevention Workplan, which sets out an ambitious programme across national and local government and the NHS. It is seeing every local authority, mental health trust and prison in the country implementing suicide prevention policies.

Last November, we brought forward our *Wellbeing and Mental Health Support Plan for COVID-19*, which sets out the support available for people who are struggling in the context of the current wave.

Also in November, the Chancellor announced that the Government will go further to support people in the longer term. In 2021/22, the NHS will receive around £500million more to improve waiting times for mental health services, give more people the mental health support they need and invest in the NHS workforce. This will be done through the *Mental Health Recovery Action Plan*, published on 27 March. The Plan responds to the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of the public, specifically targeting groups that have been most affected, including those with severe mental illness, young people, and frontline staff.

We are also expanding and transforming mental health services, backed by the largest funding increase in NHS history of £2.3billion more a year by 2023/24.

I hope this reply is helpful.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'ND', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

NADINE DORRIES