Royal College of Psychiatrists’ Budget 2018 briefing
October 2018

- The long-term plan for the NHS is an opportunity to transform mental health care and reach the much-promised parity of esteem between mental and physical health.
- The promise to increase investment in mental health as a proportion of NHS spending is an important step towards parity of esteem for mental health but the £2 billion investment mentioned in the press will not achieve this by itself.
- When investing in mental health the Government should not ignore the core community services which treat the majority of people with a serious mental illness.
- The £900 million a year cut to spending outside of NHS England including areas such as public health and NHS staff training in 2019/20 is going to make it significantly harder to deliver the promised improvements to mental health care.
- Much more needs to be done to increase the mental health workforce if we are going to give mental health patients the care they need.

What has been promised for mental health in the budget?

The Government made two key promises on mental health spending in this year’s budget:

- Invest investment in mental health by at least an extra £2 billion a year by 2023/24
- Increase spending on mental health as a proportion of total NHS England spend over the next five years

Mental health currently receives around 10.9% of NHS England spending. The £2bn would therefore be insufficient to meet the second commitment, in that it amounts to less than 10% of the additional £20.5bn committed for the NHS by 2023/24.

If we do not increase spending on mental health as a proportion of NHS overall spend then talk of parity of esteem for mental health are just empty words.

When the Long-Term Plan for the NHS is published in December it is important that Government spells out how they will be able to meet their commitment to increase spending on mental health as a proportion of total NHS spend.

How much money does mental health services really need?

Mental health services have long been the poor relation of the NHS. Even after improvements driven by the recent Five Year Forward View for Mental Health we are a long way from the long promised true parity of esteem with physical healthcare.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists has carried out detailed analysis to design a realistic plan for what a Long-Term Plan for the NHS should look like. We have estimated the Government would need to invest around £3.7 billion in real terms by 2023/24 to deliver the necessary access to services and expansion in mental health workforce.

The IPPR has also carried out a similar piece of research. They have estimated that spending on mental health needs to increase by £4.1 billion in 2023/24 to match true parity of esteem for mental health.

Achieving parity of esteem will also require additional funding for workforce development, capital budgets, public health and social care. All these items fall outside of the NHS revenue budget.

What could be achieved with more money for mental health

The budget spelt out some specific policies that can be improved with their extra investment:

1. The NHS will invest up to £250 million a year by 2023-24 into new crisis services, including:
- 24/7 support via NHS 111;
- children and young people's crisis teams in every part of the country;
- comprehensive mental health support in every major A&E by 2023-24;
- more mental health specialist ambulances;
- more community services such as crisis cafes.

2. The NHS will also prioritise services for children and young people, with schools-based mental health support teams and specialist crisis teams for young people across the country.

3. The NHS will expand access to the Individual Placement Support programme to help those with severe mental illness find and retain employment, benefitting 55,000 people by 2023-24.

These proposals are just an indicator of what mental health services could achieve with an extra £2 billion and we will await the new NHS Long Term Plan to see what else has been planned.

The RCPsych have put together our own proposal for a long-term plan for the NHS. We believe with the right investment services could deliver:

- 20% Reduction in the national suicide rate
- 70% of children and young people with a mental health condition are able to access treatment and support
- Every acute hospital can access a psychiatric liaison service 24/7.
- Telepsychiatry (online video consultations) is available throughout the country to make it easier for patients to talk to a psychiatrist
- GPs are able to offer social prescribing for patients who they feel need support with developing mental health problems.
- Appropriately skilled mental health staff working in Cardiovascular Diseases, Respiratory Diseases and Cancer NHS Teams, to support the mental health problems of patients with long term physical health problems.

It is important that when investing in mental health the Government does not ignore the core community services which treat the majority of people with a serious mental illness. Previously mental health investment has focused on specialist mental health services such as those for eating disorders or Early Intervention in Psychosis at the expense of these core community services which don’t grab the same attention.

**Cuts in the small print**

While NHS mental health services are growing, the care they can give will be seriously damaged by the other cuts to health care hidden in the small print of the Budget. Buried in the Red Book the Government has announced that they are cutting the non-NHS England parts of the Department of Health and Social Care by almost £1 billion a year.

This will mean a continuation of cuts in spending on public health care and training for NHS staff. With cuts to public health more people are likely to develop mental health problems and with cuts to training it will be harder to make sure that there are enough well-trained staff to deliver the expanded mental health services.

**The mental health workforce**

To be able to deliver the promised improvements in mental health care we need to make sure there are enough staff.

Latest data from NHSI for the first quarter of 2017/18 shows mental health nursing vacancy rates vary from 9.5% in North to 17.8% in London and for doctors in mental health trusts rates vary from 9.1% in London to 13.6% in South.¹

Between July 2011 and July 2018, the psychiatry workforce at all grades increased by just 2.2%, while all other hospital and community health doctors increased 15.3%. Across the period of the Coalition Government, there was an increase of just 12 additional psychiatry posts at all levels.² We are playing catch up. The consultant psychiatrist vacancy rate, at the last census of 2017, stands at 1 in 10.³

The RCPsych has done a detailed analysis of the workforce needed to deliver improved mental health service in the new long term plan for the NHS. We have estimated that we will need an additional
70,348 staff by 2028/29 (excluding the 8,000 expected to be working within Mental Health Support Teams). From these staff, 4,218 will be psychiatrists.

As doctors specialising in mental health, psychiatrists are uniquely placed to look at a person’s brain, body and background and consider the mental and physical symptoms of conditions such as eating disorders, addictions or life-threatening psychosis.

The number of psychiatrists specialising in older people’s mental health has fallen 8.5% in the last four years (July 2014 to July 2018). The number of CAMHS psychiatrists fell 3.1% across the same period. A shortage of psychiatrists means we cannot intervene when mental health problems first arise despite clear clinical evidence that early intervention gives the best chance of recovery.

The RCPsych Choose Psychiatry campaign aims to encourage more medical students and foundation doctors to specialise in psychiatry. We hope that this will show the rewarding, academically stimulating and medically curious side of the profession – but more must be done.

- Any medical school that wants to expand needs to demonstrate that they are taking action to encourage more students to choose psychiatry
- At least 75% of doctors in the Foundation Programme do a high-quality four-month psychiatry post by 2028/29.
- The Government to fund a collaborative ‘Mental Health Careers’ campaign aimed at secondary school students, and possibly teachers and parents
- The Government to expand the list of shortage specialties, to include specialties such as child and adolescent psychiatry

Questions for the Government

- Will the new long-term plan for the NHS include plans to invest in core community mental health services as well as the crisis care plans mentioned in the budget?
- How is the Government going to ensure that the increased investment in mental health actually reaches front line mental health services and are not diverted to other parts of the NHS?
- What steps are the Government taking to make sure there are enough trained, skilled staff to deliver their promises to improve mental health services?
- What impact does the Government believe the cuts in public health will have on demand for mental health services?
- How does the Government expect to ensure that NHS staff are fully trained to deliver the promised improvements to mental health care when they are cutting the Department of Health and Social Care’s budget by almost £1 billion a year?

4 https://improvement.nhs.uk/documents/3209/Performance_of_the_NHS_provider_sector_for_the_month Ended_30_June_18_FINAL.pdf
6 https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/workingpsychiatry/workforce/census.aspx
8 Ibid.