

Healthwatch Sheffield
The Circle
33 Rockingham Lane
Sheffield S1 4FW
Tel: 0114 253 6688
Fax: 0114 253 6601
info@healthwatchsheffield.co.uk
www.healthwatchsheffield.co.uk



Rt Hon Theresa May MP
10 Downing Street
London
SW1 2AA

9 June 2017

Dear Prime Minister,

Mental health – 3 key messages from the voluntary, community and faith sector in Sheffield

I am writing to you about mental health.

Healthwatch Sheffield - the watchdog for citizens and patients about health and social care - ran an event in March to discuss mental health in the city. Many people were encouraged by your speech in January this year when you talked about how mental health has been seen as secondary to physical health and mental illness has been a hidden injustice.

We asked participants, drawn from mental health charities and voluntary and community organisations that deal with mental illness and its impact on a day-to-day basis, what messages they would want to send to you about mental health, how it can be improved locally and how mental illness can be less of a stigma.

The three key messages from the consultation are:

1. Improve education and training about mental health – for children and young people, for the wider health workforce, for politicians and the public in general.

There is continued stigma and a widespread serious lack of understanding of mental illness across the population, in politics, schools and colleges and in workplaces. Local voluntary, community and faith organisations could play a significant part in overcoming this huge issue in partnership with the local and national public sector with the right resources and support. We believe the best possible approach is through working in collaboration with people living with mental health conditions and their carers.

2. Ring fence local funding for mental health.

There is widespread acknowledgement that too often mental health spending has been subject to disproportionate cuts. Parity of esteem needs parity of spend. In order to protect against the wider local pressures, funding needs ring fencing.

3. Ensure better training and support for staff in the mental health system.

This was because participants who support clients or family members had knowledge of the pressures staff face and think that this contributes to poor staff retention and less effective treatment.

We think all these ideas are low cost and effective ways to improve mental health but they need a strong lead from Government. You have already begun the process of raising awareness about these issues and we urge you to take further positive action.

We look forward to your response to these three messages from voluntary, community and faith organisations in Sheffield.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J.A. ROBINSON". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Judy Robinson

Chair, Healthwatch Sheffield