A Politics Lab Project about Mental Health in the United Kingdom

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Within this written piece, there will be an exploration of any mental health treatment developments and investigating governmental policy regarding mental health and unemployment. This piece will discuss a variety of information. Including; statistics on mental health waiting lists, both in the NHS and the private sector, what resources are available for the mental health treatment in the public and private sectors and third party sectors, what resources are available for the mental health treatment in both the public and private sectors and third party sectors, current MP’s who are supportive of mental health reform. It will also have a focus on Hope Street in Ormskirk.

***Information and statistics on mental health waiting lists, both in the NHS and the private sector.***

Recent reports emphasise major issues in obtaining mental health care, across the UK encompassing the NHS and private healthcare encountering significant waiting times.

Waiting periods for mental health support:

Children and Adolescents, as of March 2024, almost 1 million children and adolescents had active referrals for mental health care in England. Among them, 28% remained on the waiting list for support, and 39% have undergone assessment yet receiving no support.

Notably in the 12 months prior to March 2024, 40,000 children faced delays of two years or more for mental health care. (Watson,2024). (Rethink Mental Illness, 2024)

Eating Disorders:

The amount of children undergoing treatment for eating disorders has increased twofold in the last eight years from 5,240 in 2016-17 to 10,606 in the 2023-24 school year. There has been an increase in waiting times, with certain children waiting more than a year for treatment, well beyond the NHS target of four weeks (Gill, 2025). (Dathan, 2024).

ADHD Assessments:

Over the first quarter of 2024, 19,400 women aged 25 to 34 received a prescription for ADHD medication, a considerable rise compared to previous years. The increase in demand has resulted in waiting times exceeding a decade for adult ADHD diagnoses in specific areas of England (Marsh and Carmen, 2024).

Private mental health service waiting times:

Definitive statistics in the private sector waiting times are less accessible. Even so, the surge in need for mental health services has prompted many individuals to turn to private care services, possibly resulting in extended waiting periods within the private sector. Decentralised data storage impedes the accuracy of reported figures.

Umbrella Organisations for Private Sector Mental Health Care:

In the UK, various umbrella organisations supervise and advocate for private mental health probationers. The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) (BACP, n.d.) offers individuals membership at £186 per year, with a reduce price of £93 for individuals who receive a certain type of state benefits, and individuals who have no personal income (BACP,n.d.).

In a similar way as the UK Council for Psychological (UKCP) charges £302 yearly for full clinical membership, with price reduction obtainable for payments through direct debit (UKCP, 2020-2021)

Private healthcare providers Network (IHPN, n.d.): Represents independent healthcare organisations (IHPN), featuring professionals in the mental health field. British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), (BACP,n.d.): professional association for counsellor and psychotherapies, including professionals in private practice.

The United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) is a professional association promoting the interests of psychotherapy organisations across the United Kingdom founded in 1993, the UKCP works to establish and preserve excellent standards in psychotherapy services in the interest of the public. It upholds a list of psychotherapists who adhere to its strict training and ethical criteria. (UKCP,n.d.)

Recent shifts in mental health services provision:

In August 2024, the NHS launched a 24-hour national mental health phone line.

It can be accessed via NHS 111 by opting for a mental health option. This service offers instant help from qualified experts to individuals facing mental health crises, intended to reduce the demands on GPs and A&E services. Furthermore, information regarding phone call handlers training, and qualifications vary.

Some NHS 111 services recruit, professionals like nurses, and clinical practitioners, to directly manage Mental Health crisis phone calls. By way of illustration, the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS foundation Trust look for applicants who obtain a nursing degree or equivalent qualifications for the 111 Mental Health Option Service (NHS Jobs ,n.d.). Phone Call handlers’ qualification requirements overall are GCSE-Level education in Maths, English, and IT skills (Health Careers, n.d.)

Also, Phone call handlers alongside enrolment go through comprehensive training programs, normally lasting for a few weeks. This training teaches them the functioning of the call centre equipment, custom care, communication skills, first aid, focusing on calls, and delivering telephone help. Also, they are trained to use the NHS Pathway telephone triage system, which is a clinical decision support (CDSS) supporting the remote assessment of callers to urgent and emergency services. Which leads them to assessing symptoms and supervising callers to suitable care (NHS England, n.d.)

Practically when an individual selects the Mental Health option on the NHS 111, their phone call will be answered by a trained call handler who applies the NHS Pathway system to assess the individuals condition, which then allows the phone call handler to direct them to appropriate help, which might involve talking with a mental health professional for further help care (NHS England, n.d.)

The initiatives bring together efforts that were once managed locally, they had their own positives, and negatives in terms of understanding, and empathy which can lead to a more personalised, and empathetic care due to some local mental health services often have deeply rooted in their communities, and also due to the cost. Illustrating a substantial rise in the need for mental health services following the COVID- 19 pandemic.

Although, in January 2025, the UK government issued a statement on reducing NHS performance targets from 32 to 18, eliminating essential mental health and dementia targets. Analysts suggest that this undermines mental health priorities, and support for dementia patients, which may impact the quality and availability of care services. (O’Dowd, 2025)

These shifts highlight the need for continued disscusses and policy restructure to make certain that mental health services effectively meet the needs for individuals in the UK.

***What resources are available for mental health treatment in both the public and private sectors and third-party sectors.***

With the understanding of mental health developing on a national scale, the resources available have developed. There are resources within public, private and third-party sectors which are all beneficial. Within England a central resource within the public sector is that of the National Health Service (NHS) England. According to the NHS 25% of adults experience one diagnosable mental health problem and ten percent of children have a diagnosable mental health problem (NHS, 2024).

There have been developments within the mental health sector within the last thirty-five years. In the 1990s the “Care Programme Approach” was developed to provide a more vigorous approach to supporting people with severe mental illnesses , to in 2024 progressing to age appropriate crisis care via NHS 111, these services include 24/7 Crisis Resolution Home Treatment (CRHT) functions for adults, operating in line with best practice by 2020/21 and maintaining coverage to 2023/24 and 24/7 provision for children and young people that combines crisis assessment, brief response and intensive home treatment functions (NHS, 2019).

Talking therapies are a resource that are becoming utilised among the general population. Talking therapies are a resource that are used for a variety of mental health conditions including, but not limited to; Agoraphobia, body dysmorphic disorder (BDD), depression, generalised anxiety disorder, health anxiety (hypochondriasis), obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), specific phobias (such as heights) (NHS, 2023).

The reasons for utilising the private sector differ from feeling as though you are not receiving adequate support and if a second opinion that is regulated by “Care Quality Commission” to wanting more intensive and different methods of support that are not provided by the NHS (Care Quality Commision, 2025). Private sector organisations such as Better Help offer different methods of support which have proved effective (Better Help, n.d). Although a fee-paying organisation, better help is a widely utilized tool, with more than 5.4 million users worldwide with 31,000 licensed therapists who will effectively aid you in the best way suited to you. The average cost for the services are between £52 to £80 weekly (Thompson, 2023).

In the current digital age era, it is vital that support is accessible, “Online Therapy. Com” is one of these resources. This therapy covers both individual and couple queries. Online therapy comes a variety of different attributes, ranging from a conservation with a therapist to yoga to unlimited messages with your assigned therapist, among others (Online Therapy, 2024). Another Feepaying service is the UK Counselling Network, which offers a variety of services from counselling to additional resources. UK Counselling network has different sectors within their organisation (UK Counselling Network, 2024), including menopause group therapy (Menopause Therapy UK, 2025), Online Anger management therapy (Online Anger Management Therapy, 2025) and “Charlie’s corner” which offers support for bereaved parents (UK Counselling Network, 2024).

Resources within the third-party sector have developed in the technological era we are in. There are a variety of accessible apps developed to aid people's mental health. Mental Health charity MIND (Mind, 2017) have partnered with the Organisation for the Review of Care and Health Apps (ORCHA) to determine the apps that are the most beneficial, six of the nine recommended apps are entirely free with advice available and they aim to help a variation of different people ranging from Young Carers, Veterans and service members, people struggling with an eating disorder, students, to the general public from ages upwards of four (Orchahealth, 2025). Within Ormskirk there a third-party organisation; there is a Community Cafe and Hub which has a view to ensure members of the community has the necessary resources available. They have been deemed as a vital source of support in Ormskirk.

***Brief on current government position for mental health***

Since the Sunak government commenced in 2022 the Department of Work and  
  
Pensions (DWP) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) have forwarded  
  
several initiatives addressing the intersection of mental health and unemployment.  
  
In March 2023 the health and disability white paper (Department for Work and Pensions, 2023)  
  
was introduced outlining the governments strategy to aid more disabled individuals and  
  
individuals with mental health conditions to obtain employment. Alongside plans to help  
  
individuals in entering employment the white paper also described measures that could be  
  
taken in aiding people to remain and prosper within employment. This report has not  
  
progressed however it is still being considered as shown in the 2024 white paper “Get  
  
Britain working”.

Some of the key proposals this white paper suggested including the following:  
  
Better Assistance for Employment:  
  
- The government want to make it easier for more people with disabilities and  
  
medical problems to find, keep, and advance in employment.  
  
- To guarantee that job seekers with impairments and medical conditions receive  
  
better and more individualized help from Jobcentres, NHS services, and other  
  
pertinent services, a new "Integrated Employment and Health Services" model will  
  
be implemented.  
  
- In order to help people with severe mental health disorders find and maintain  
  
employment, the government intends to extend the Individual Placement and  
  
Support (IPS) model, which combines employment support with mental health  
  
treatments.

Employer Involvement:  
  
- Encouraging firms to hire individuals with disabilities and health issues is a major  
  
priority. Examining the incentives and support offered to employers to improve  
  
working conditions is part of this.  
  
- Additionally, there will be an effort to make workplaces more inclusive by giving  
  
companies better guidance and resources on how to accommodate workers with  
  
disabilities.

Increasing Assistance for Employment in Mental Health:

- The report emphasizes the need for improved workplace mental health support and  
  
suggests that by 2028, specialist programs will help an additional 140,000 people  
  
with mental health disorders find and maintain employment.

Changes to Benefits and Assessments:  
  
- Enhancing the benefit system is a priority in order to assist individuals with  
  
disabilities and medical conditions in better managing their financial assistance.  
  
- In order to streamline and lessen the strain of the application process, the  
  
government intends to eliminate the requirement for disabled individuals to  
  
undergo further assessments when they apply for assistance.

In November 26th, 2024, a White Paper called “Get Britain working” (GOV.UK, 2024) set out  
  
the governments strategy to bolster employment across the nation. This report has not  
  
progressed but may be considered soon. Some of the key initiatives included:

Establishment of a New Jobs and Careers Service:  
  
- JobCenter Transformation: By combining them with the National Careers Service,  
  
the government suggests transforming conventional job centers into individualized  
  
employment help centers. An initial investment of £55 million supports this  
  
endeavor.

Youth Guarantee Programme:  
  
- Opportunities for Education and Training: In order to address the urgent problem of  
  
young unemployment, a £45 million investment intends to give all 18 to 21-year-  
  
olds in England access to education, training, or assistance in obtaining jobs or  
  
apprenticeships.

Health and Employment Integration:  
  
- Work Well Scheme: A £160 million investment is allocated to initiatives aimed at  
  
reducing NHS waiting lists and involving General Practitioners in offering employment  
  
advice, thereby supporting individuals with health conditions in returning to work.  
  
An ongoing select committee is particularly relevant with the health and social care  
  
committee holding an inquiry into Community mental health Services. (Parliament.uk,  
  
2024)  
  
Some of the key activity this Committe have been involved in include.

- Focusing primarily on community mental health services and directly addressing the  
  
wider health and social needs of service users including employment.  
  
- The committee is also examining how service users' needs can be addressed within  
  
employment and housing showing a clear link between mental health and  
  
influencing employment being recognised

***Current MP’s who are supportive of mental health reform***

Since the current Labour Government began sitting in July 2024, the issue of mental health reform has been debated 12 times by individual MP’s (as of 8 March 2025). Within these debates, a variety of mental health related topics were discussed, including NHS Mental Health Services (HC Deb 23 July 2024; HC Deb 15 October 2024; HC Deb 7 January 2025; HC Deb 11 February 2025), mental health within the context of farming communities (HC Deb 11 November 2024) and maternal mental health (HC Deb 5 February 2025).

In terms of the key issues raised in the debates, the most primary issue to be raised was how the government are improving access to mental health services (HC Deb 23 July 2024; HC Deb 15 October 2024; HC Deb 19 November 2024; HC Deb 7 January 2025; HC Deb 11 February 2025). The Minister for Care, Stephen Kinnock response to this issue outlined the Government’s steps to improve NHS services, stipulated that the government will recruit 8,500 mental health workers, including specialist mental health professionals within every school as well as “young future hubs” in every community (HC Deb 23 July 2024). Within a debate regarding student mental health, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education, Janet Daby, outlined that the increase in mental health workers will help “reduce delays, provide faster treatment and ease pressure on busy mental health services”, with family hubs also highlighted to be crucial to providing this (HC Deb 9 September 2024). In addition to this, Minister Kinnock stated within a debate addressing mental health services that the Government have plans to bring forward legislation to “modernise” the Mental Health Act 1983, which he argued to be a “hugely significant step” (HC Deb 23 July 2024).

Other issues discussed within the mental health related debates surrounded more specific issues requiring focus on reform. An example of this was the debate “Mental Health: Farming and Agricultural Communities”, where the Minister for Food Security and Rural Affairs, Daniel Zeichner, addressed issues raised by Aphra Brandreth (Conservative MP) surrounding poor mental health within the farming community (HC Deb 11 November 2024). In response to this, Minister Zeichner outlined steps the government have taken or will be taking to address this issue (HC Deb 11 November 2024). Firstly, upon the day of the debate, Minister Zeichner agreed to continue funding the Farming Community Network, which helps to support TB-affected farmers (HC Deb 11 November 2024). Secondly, the government continues to fund organisations delivering projects to address the issues, such as Farming Community Network, Lincolnshire Rural Support Network, the Farmer Network and You Are Not Alone (HC Deb 11 November 2024). Thirdly, the Minister highlighted the recruitment of 8,500 new mental health workers, with a further £10 million suicide prevention grant fund running until March 2025 (HC Deb 11 November 2024). Finally, the Minister pointed to the “Better Health—Every Mind Matters” campaign, with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport also supporting organisations playing a role in reducing loneliness stigma amongst men through the “Tackling Loneliness Hub” (HC Deb 11 November 2024).

With regards to Labour MP’s who frequently appear in debates relating to mental health reform, other than the relevant ministers in attendance, only two Labour MP’s have attending more than one debate. These include Lola McEvoy (HC Deb 10 October 2024; HC Deb 5 February 2025) and Chris Vince (HC Deb 9 September 2024; HC Deb 11 February 2025), MPs for Darlington and Harlow, respectively. While there is limited frequent attendance to debates regarding mental health reform, this does not negate the support the Labour MP’s who attended hold towards the issue.

List of Labour MP’s who’ve contributed to debates on mental health reform:

NHS Mental Health Services

Volume 752: debated on Tuesday 23 July 2024

Mohammad Yasin (Bedford) (Lab)

Tim Roca (Macclesfield) (Lab)

The Minister for Care (Stephen Kinnock)

(HC Deb 23 July 2024)

Student Mental Health

Volume 753: debated on Monday 9 September 2024

Who spoke:

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Janet Daby)

Chris Vince (Harlow) (Lab/Co-op)

Laurence Turner (Birmingham Northfield) (Lab)

(HC Deb, 9 September 2024)

Mental Health Support

Volume 754: debated on Thursday 10 October 2024

Sojan Joseph (Ashford) (Lab)

Tony Vaughan (Folkestone and Hythe) (Lab)

Jack Abbott (Ipswich) (Lab/Co-op)

Mark Ferguson (Gateshead Central and Whickham) (Lab)

Dr Lauren Sullivan (Gravesham) (Lab)

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op)

Helena Dollimore (Hastings and Rye) (Lab/Co-op)

Tristan Osborne (Chatham and Aylesford) (Lab)

Dr Simon Opher (Stroud) (Lab)

Lola McEvoy (Darlington) (Lab)

Lee Pitcher (Doncaster East and the Isle of Axholme) (Lab)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Andrew Gwynne)

Sonia Kumar (Dudley) (Lab)

(HC Deb 10 October 2024)

Access to NHS Mental Health Services

Volume 754: debated on Tuesday 15 October 2024

Who spoke:

Luke Akehurst (Lab)

Chris Webb (Lab)

The Minister for Care (Stephen Kinnock)

(HC Deb 15 October 2024)

Mental Health: Farming and Agricultural Communities

Volume 756: debated on Monday 11 November 2024

David Smith (North Northumberland) (Lab)

The Minister for Food Security and Rural Affairs (Daniel Zeichner)

(HC Deb 11 November 2024)

Mental Health Support

Volume 757: debated on Tuesday 19 November 2024

Abtisam Mohamed (Sheffield Central) (Lab)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Andrew Gwynne)

(HC Deb 19 November 2024)

Suicide and Mental Health of Young People: Tatton

Volume 757: debated on Tuesday 26 November 2024

The Minister for Care (Stephen Kinnock)

Helen Grant (Maidstone and Malling) (Con)

(HC Deb 26 November 2024)

Mental Health Services: Children

Volume 759: debated on Tuesday 7 January 2025

Graeme Downie (Dunfermline and Dollar) (Lab)

The Minister for Secondary Care (Karin Smyth)

(HC Deb 7 January 2024)

Mental Health Services

Volume 759: debated on Tuesday 7 January 2025

The Minister for Care (Stephen Kinnock)

Peter Prinsley (Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket) (Lab)

Anna Dixon (Shipley) (Lab)

(HC Deb 7 January 2025)

Maternal Mental Health

Volume 761: debated on Wednesday 5 February 2025

Who spoke:

Laura Kyrke-Smith (Aylesbury) (Lab)

Maya Ellis (Ribble Valley) (Lab)

Olivia Bailey (Reading West and Mid Berkshire) (Lab)

Irene Campbell (North Ayrshire and Arran) (Lab)

Lola McEvoy (Darlington) (Lab)

Michelle Welsh (Sherwood Forest) (Lab)

Kirith Entwistle (Bolton Northeast) (Lab)

The Minister for Care (Stephen Kinnock)

(HC Deb 5 February 2025)

Mental Health Services

Volume 762: debated on Tuesday 11 February 2025

Munira Wilson (Twickenham) (LD)

The Minister for Care (Stephen Kinnock)

Jen Craft (Thurrock) (Lab)

Andrew Cooper (Mid Cheshire) (Lab)

Chris Vince (Harlow) (Lab/Co-op)

(HC Deb 11 February 2025)

***Hope Street***

One key organisation within Ormskirk is Hope Street. The community hub and cafe offer a safe place with an inclusive environment. There are a variety of different activities that foster a community environment and offer different avenues for support. Popular sessions include Dementia Cafe on a Monday, Peer Support on Tuesday, Karaoke with Hayley Homles on a Wednesday, Sensory Play for babies on a Thursday, NHS Holistic Health checks on a Friday and A children's arts and crafts session on a Saturday (which one of the authors participated in running for a time). (Hope Street, n.d) The central aim of Hope Street is to ensure that everyone feels welcome, whether it’s those who suffer with mental health or those who are impacted by a loved one's mental health.

Hope Street has even held specialist sessions, including Makeup Tutorials, an evening with Davy Edge who shows patron s all about expressive arts, Davy was in the original cast of blood brothers and Tai Chi sessions. Hope Street is an organisation dedicated to fostering positivity, promoting love, and advocating for the inclusion of hope in the lives of its patrons (Hope Street, n.d).

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