

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

Cc:

Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP
Maria Caulfield MP

7 November 2023

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of the people we support, we're writing to express our deep disappointment and concern that the King's Speech did not include a mental health bill.

Reform of the outdated Mental Health Act 1983 is urgently needed - and has been promised. The 2019 Conservative election manifesto included commitments to "legislate so that patients suffering from mental health conditions, including anxiety or depression, have greater control over their treatment and receive the dignity and respect they deserve" and to "improve how [people with learning disabilities and autism] are treated in law". There has been a huge investment in the reform process over many years, with an independent review of the act commissioned by former Prime Minister Theresa May in 2017, a white paper in 2021, draft bill in 2022 and pre-legislative scrutiny report in 2023. Many individuals, as well as officials and organisations across the mental health sector, have worked extensively on it.

But more important than the huge effort already put into reform, will be the impact on people across the country going through the worst and most vulnerable time of their lives. Being detained under the Mental Health Act is one of the most serious and traumatic things that can happen to someone. The independent review heard "many stories from service users that detention not only had little beneficial effect, but left some worse, and not better, off". And "too often and in too many areas the experiences of those of Black African and Caribbean heritage is one of either being excluded or detained". More and more people are being detained under the Act every year, with Black people being over four times more likely to be detained than White people. Abandoning this reform, betrays the people it set out to support.

Legislative change cannot happen soon enough. In addition, we urgently need resources now to improve mental health care and community support more widely so people can receive treatment and support when they need it, with a focus on preventing crisis situations and inappropriate detention under the MHA.

Yours sincerely

Alun Thomas, Chief Executive, Adferiad Recovery

Indy Cross, Chief Executive, Agenda Alliance

Kathy Roberts, Chief Executive, Association of Mental Health Providers

Vava Tampa, Chair, BASW England

Ben Higgins, CEO, Bild

Simon Kitchen, CEO, Bipolar UK

Anna Daroy CEO, British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

Sarb Bajwa, Chief Executive, British Psychological Society

Andy Bell, Chief Executive, Centre for Mental Health

Viv Cooper OBE, CEO, The Challenging Behaviour Foundation

Amy Whitelock Gibbs, Chair, The Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition

Daisy Long, COO, DCC Interactive Ltd (DCC-i)

Dr Vanessa Pinfold, Co-founder and Research Director, McPin Foundation

Jackie O'Sullivan, Acting Chief Executive, Mencap

Sean Duggan OBE, CEO, NHS Confederation's Mental Health Network

Brian Dow, Chief Executive, Mental Health UK

Sarah Hughes, Chief Executive, Mind

National Autistic Society

Jen Beardsley, Interim CEO, National Survivor User Network

Leigh Wallbank, CEO, OCD Action

Jabeer Butt OBE, Chief Executive, Race Equality Foundation

Mark Winstanley, Chief Executive, Rethink Mental Illness

Marjorie Wallace CBE, Chief Executive, SANE

Linda Bryant, Chief Executive, Together for Mental Wellbeing

Sheilabye Sobrany, President, Royal College of Nursing

Jonathan Senker, CEO, VoiceAbility

Joyce Kallevik, Director, WISH