**Campaigners’ Briefing: Mental Health Funding**

**How does mental health funding work?**

Mental health funding is set at a national level; however what this is spent on is decided locally by Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). With 211 across England, CCGs are groups of GPs and other health care professionals who are responsible for the health of on average 250,000 people. CCGs are responsible for deciding and buying the majority of the mental health services we all rely on.

CCGs decide what their budget is spent on, after being informed of how much they are being given each year. To help decide where to spend their money, CCGs should identify the health needs of the area they cover.

Monitor, an “arms length public body” accountable to the Department of Health, provides guidance for the CCGs in allocating their spending. Along with NHS England, Monitor makes recommendations on how much mental health costs should be compared to the previous year.

**What has Monitor suggested for 2015/16 and how will this affect CCG services?**

Monitor has calculated that all health service funding is to be lowered by 1.9% compared to the previous year. Despite mental health being calculated to receive a smaller cut of 1.5% as a result of £40 million in committed funding for access and waiting time implementation, we believe this is a step in the wrong direction. Objections from our supporters and commissioners have resulted in Monitor recalling their proposal. Although there is no legal obligation to make changes in response to public pressure, 6,700 of our supporters had expressed their concerns about this guidance.

Shortly after this guidance from Monitor, NHS England asked CCGs to increase their mental health spending in real terms. Mental health services should therefore receive more money than they did in previous year. However this is not yet reflected in pricing guidance.

These conflicting views have made budget-setting very difficult. As a result, the budgets submitted in February by CCGs were without a clear steer from national policy. There is considerable uncertainty about how decisions are being made. This is why we asked our supporters, like you, to contact their local CCG to increase funding for mental health services.

**What commitments did the coalition government make for mental health funding?**

In October 2014, the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition set out their 5-year plan for mental health in the ‘Achieving Better Access to Mental Health Services by 2020’report. This was a hugely positive moment for those who are affected by mental illness as it outlined commitments for the first maximum waiting times in mental health and to future funding. With help from activists and supporters like you, we managed to secure an extra £40 million for 2014/15 and a further £80 million for 2015/16.

In March 2015 the coalition Government announced further funding plans, with £1.25 billion pounds to be provided over the next five years to support children, young people and new mothers mental health services.

**What did the Conservative government commit to in their pre-election manifesto?**

With the General Election over and a Conservative party having gained a majority in the House of Commons, below are the commitments made to mental health in their pre-election manifesto.

Their pre-election manifesto committed to:

* Increasing the funding for mental health;
* Placing therapists in every part of the country where they will provide effective treatment for those who need it;
* Enforcing the new access and waiting time standards;
* Providing to treatment to those who would benefit so they can return to work. Those who refuse recommended treatment, will have their benefits reviewed and potentially reduced;
* Women having access to mental health support both during and after pregnancy

Compared to other parties, mental health is not a key component of the Conservative’s health plans. With your help, we can make sure these pre-election commitments remain secured through fair mental health funding.

**So what commitments were made from the other main parties?**

**Labour**

Mental health ran through the health plans of the Labour manifesto, with a call for increased intervention and greater prevention. Below are some of the commitments made by the party in their pre-election manifesto.

* Offering the same rights to accessing psychological therapies as there is for medication and other treatment;
* NHS staff training was to include mental health, with a greater focus on detecting undiagnosed conditions;
* Children and young people were to have a greater proportion of the mental health budget spent on them;

**Liberal Democrats**

The Liberal Democrats’ pre-election manifesto put mental health as one of their priorities. Their commitments aimed to address the issues currently faced in mental health around funding, research and data. Below are some of the commitments made by the party in their pre-election manifesto.

* £250 million a year investment into mental health;
* Continuing to roll out access and waiting time standards for children, young people and adults;
* Increased support for pregnant women and new mothers;
* Increased connections with schools to provide education and support for young people;
* Continue to support our co-led Time to Change campaign;
* Increase in standards to improve the physical health of those with mental health problems.