HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London, SW1H 0EU

24 April 2020

Dear Matt

The Covid-19 pandemic will have long-term implications on all aspects of life and one of the areas where this will be most acutely felt is mental health. We, the undersigned, urge the government to consider measures that will ensure people's mental wellbeing will be prioritised both during this outbreak and afterwards.

We are already seeing the consequences on mental health as the indicators published on 16 April presented a significant proportion of adults, 53.1%, saying that coronavirus was affecting their wellbeing. A number of leading experts, including The Lancet Psychiatry and the charity Mind are concerned on current and future wellbeing. People are already encountering difficulties in accessing support, without which some may resort to alcohol, drugs or gambling. Effective tools and monitoring will play an important role in providing treatment.

We were pleased to see the accessible advice in the Every Mind Matters campaign, launched by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, which will provide many with tools and resources they need to manage their mental health. We urge the government to go further and, as in my last letter, conduct more publicity by circulating leaflets to households and reaching out to older demographics. We are also concerned that in the long run, NHS 111, the Samaritans and other mental health charities and organisations will be overwhelmed with people needing their services. We are requesting that the government increase their funding and publish a long-term strategy that will demonstrate what services those who have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic can access when the social distancing measures eventually abate.

Staying at home and social distancing are essential for protecting the NHS and saving lives, but we cannot avoid the fact that the stress and emotional fallout of losing loved ones, fearing for the future and loneliness may precipitate a mental health crisis. Therefore, the government must develop a long-term strategy urgently to deal with the effects of coronavirus. We are asking for:

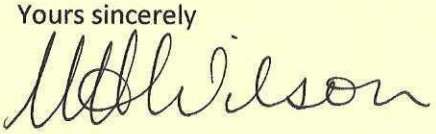
1) The Government to develop a cross-departmental mental health plan urgently to determine methods to improve mental wellbeing for those affected by the outbreak. This must take into account tailored provision as different vulnerable groups will experience the pandemic

differently and respond to varied treatment and support. Many will have a significant change in circumstances including homelessness and unemployment.

2) A new mental health taskforce comprised of experts to advise on and determine methods to help deal with the effects of coronavirus
3) Develop "PPE for the Mind" to ensure all key workers on the front lines of this crisis can have immediate access to adequate support for their wellbeing during and after this crisis.

The pandemic will pass but we must be confident in the government that the lasting effects of coronavirus will be considered and dealt with effectively to prevent any more undue pain and suffering. We know the aftermath will be difficult as we grieve for those we have lost and face the tangible impact of economic uncertainty. Therefore, it is critically important that the government prepare now for trauma, which is already becoming apparent, across society.

Yours sincerely



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