

Rt Hon Victoria Atkins MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

26 March 2024

Dear Ms Atkins,

Re: Investment in NHS and social care staff mental health and wellbeing

We are writing to ask you to take urgent steps to restore ringfenced investment in evidence-based mental health and wellbeing services for NHS staff, social workers and social care staff, delivered as part of a fully funded NHS Long Term Workforce Plan.

A healthy, thriving workforce is fundamental to driving the NHS productivity improvements recently outlined in your speech at the Nuffield Trust Summit. To deliver high quality, efficient and effective care, staff must feel supported within a psychologically safe working environment and culture.

However, the findings of the [NHS Staff Survey](#) published on 7 March continue to reflect a struggling workforce, with 42 per cent of staff saying they have felt unwell because of work-related stress in the last 12 months. Nearly one third (30 per cent) said they often or always felt burnt out because of their work.

As we approach the first anniversary of the removal of most ringfenced government funding for the NHS Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs, with all funding ending on 31 March 2024, NHS and social care staff are once again facing a postcode lottery of patchy mental health support.

To date, of the original forty hubs, eighteen have closed since March 2023. Three hubs will close at the end of March, and a further nine are yet to receive confirmation of funding and are under threat of closure. Just ten hubs have confirmed funding for part or all of 2024-25.

The Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs have been positively evaluated and their outreach model aims to end a cycle of staff waiting until reaching breaking point to seek support. They provide a range of evidence-based interventions to support individuals and teams across local systems, alongside vital preventative measures.

The NHS Long-Term Workforce Plan recognises the role of staff mental health services in addressing core issues such as staff retention and sickness absence and reducing costly expenditure on temporary staff.

We know that for [every £1 spent](#) on workplace mental health interventions, £5 is saved. [Research](#) estimates the financial cost to the NHS of poor wellbeing at £12.1 billion a year, and that around £1 billion could be saved by successfully tackling this issue in the long term, through sustained, ring-fenced investment at scale.

However, with integrated care systems operating in significant financial deficits, funding for many services is hanging in the balance, leaving NHS staff, and in particular social care staff, without the appropriate level of help they need to maintain their mental health, and stay in their jobs.

We urge the government to restore long-term, ringfenced funding to integrated care systems to provide equity of access to mental health support for all NHS and social care staff and to help safeguard the mental health of this vital workforce both now, and in the future.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this issue further.

Yours sincerely,

