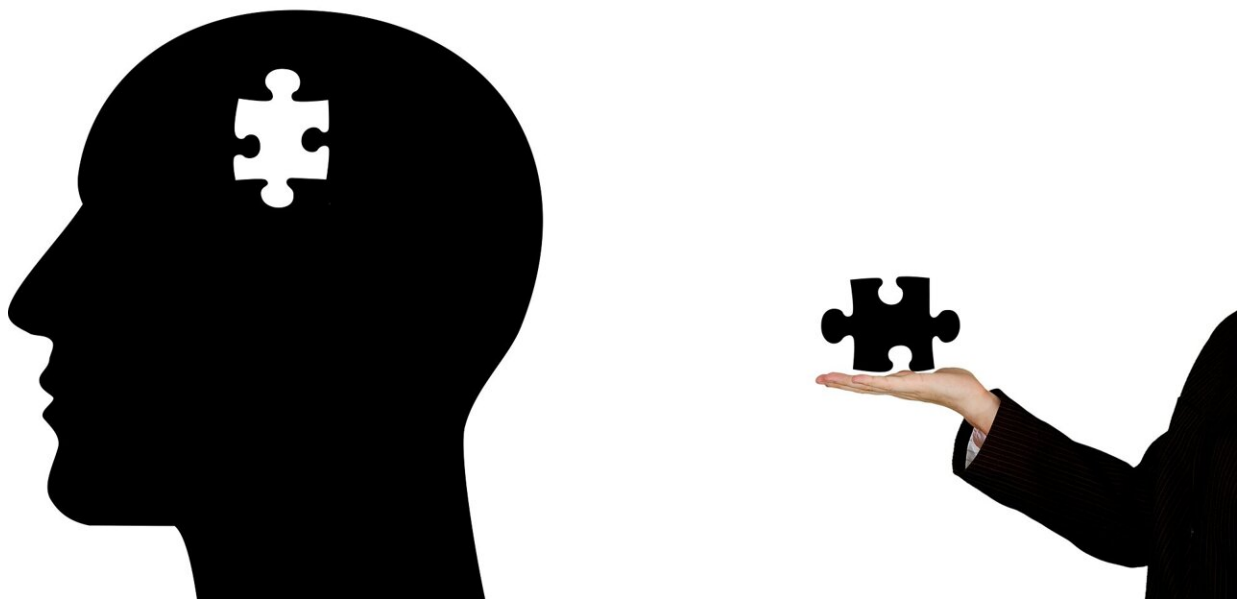


Progress on England's mental health services 'requires improvement,' finds panel

December 9 2021



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An expert panel chaired by UCL's Professor Dame Jane Dacre has concluded the UK Government's overall progress to achieve its nine key commitments on mental health services "requires improvement."

Set up by the cross-party Health and Social Care Committee, the independent panel has piloted a new evaluation system, giving Care

Quality Commission-style ratings on the [government's](#) performance in meeting policy commitments on mental health services in England.

The objective evaluation is designed to enhance the select Committee's core task of holding the government and ministers to account.

Published today, the panel's report, "Evaluation of the Government's progress against its policy commitments in the area of mental health services in England," examined nine commitments across four policy areas: Workforce; children and young people's mental health; adult common mental illness; and adult severe mental illness.

Alongside an overall rating, each of the nine commitments received a CQC style rating; eight of the nine were rated "requires improvement," with one rated "good."

Dame Jane, Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee's Expert Panel, and Professor of Medical Education at UCL, said, "Our expert panel has assessed to what extent commitments on improvements to mental health services for adults and children, and the expansion of the workforce have been met. Our overall verdict is that the government's progress requires improvement.

"On growing the workforce, every aspect of the government's commitment to do so requires improvement. Despite an overall increase in staff, in some important areas, such as psychiatry and mental health nursing, targets have not been met. This is a wake-up call because shortages represent the single biggest threat to national ambitions to improve mental healthcare, with an impact on delivery across all mental health services.

"On commitments to services for adults with severe mental health illness, there are a number of aspects where we have rated progress as

inadequate.

"Throughout our work a prominent theme of inequality emerged on outcomes, provision and access to mental health services with striking differences between regions and ethnic groups. This failure to ensure equality reflects a lack of overall progress within the commitments we have evaluated."

The Health and Social Care Committee's Expert Panel consists of seven core members. To assist the panel's evaluation into mental health services in England, they were joined by mental health specialists including Professor Peter Fonagy OBE, Head of the UCL Division of Psychology & Language Sciences.

Health and Social Care Committee report

The expert panel's evaluation of the UK Government's mental health pledges has fed into "The Health and Social Care Committee's Children and Young People's Mental Health Report," also published today.

In conclusion, the H&SCC Report calls for urgent action to prevent children and young people's mental health services "slipping backwards as a result of additional demand created by the pandemic and the scale of unmet need prior to it."

Health and Social Care Committee Chair Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt said, "Partly because of the pandemic, we are seeing demand for mental health treatment pushing NHS services to breaking point. Whilst we recognize that capacity to provide such services is increasing, we are not convinced it is happening at a fast enough rate.

"There is a growing risk that elective and emergency care pressures will mean [mental health](#) services once again become the poor relation.

"Our report uncovers good progress in schools provision but a continuing failure to find community care for too many young people who end up in inappropriate secure provision that makes their illness even worse."

More information: committees.parliament.uk/publications/83466/default/

Provided by University College London

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