C/o Mark Winstanley

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26 June 2020

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP

Prime Minister

10 Downing Street

London

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Dear Prime Minister,

Covid-19 has changed the world as we know it. The devastating loss of life, months of social isolation and widespread financial instability has brought despair to individuals, families and communities. The initial pandemic has created a new crisis for our nation’s mental health. If we do not take urgent cross-government action our nation’s mental health will pay a heavy price for years to come.

As a group of over 50 voluntary and social sector organisations we have come together in an unprecedented coalition. We represent some of the UK’s most vulnerable people and speak with one voice and with one clear call: the UK government must urgently work with us to establish a Mental Health Renewal Plan, with the financial and political backing, at the highest level, to turn this into immediate action.

We are already seeing the effects of the crisis on our nation’s mental health. Research by our organisations has shown that almost 80 percent of people living with mental illness have reported that their mental health has got worse as a result of the crisis; more than 7,000 times a day, people struggling to cope are receiving emotional support from Samaritans; and almost half of the UK population is experiencing high levels of anxiety.

Before the crisis, many people in our society with mental health problems were already struggling to access the basic support needed to stay well. But with an estimated half a million more people likely to experience mental health problems as a result of the economic impact of the pandemic, continuing with business as usual is now not an option.

We know, as you do, that no one organisation, agency or government department can provide the solutions to the enormous challenge facing us. But as Prime Minister, you have the authority to convene all the right people to make this happen. Together we can lead the world in delivering a Covid-19 recovery that puts the nation’s mental health at its heart.

For this to be a success, not only does the Mental Health Renewal Plan have to be driven by a cross-government group but also will need to involve the people in our communities who are either experiencing or at risk of poor mental health to identify the solutions that will work best for them. As a sector, during the pandemic we have found new ways to provide support, advice and information when people need it. Drawing on what we knew before this crisis and what has emerged during it, we want to use our expertise to work with you to grasp from this horrific experience the rare opportunity to create a better future for the mental health and wellbeing of the nation.

We are calling on the government to work in full partnership with the mental health and wider voluntary sector and their allies to shape a New Social Contract for a mentally healthier society. Only through collaboration, partnership and fully involving people who are struggling with their mental health in the development of a plan can we prevent the looming mental health crisis, tackle health inequalities and enable the UK to rebound stronger from this pandemic.

We the undersigned commit to work in partnership with the UK government to develop and deliver a Mental Health Renewal Plan.

Your sincerely,

Caroline Abrahams, CEO, Age UK

Kate Lee, CEO, Alzheimer's Society

Michael Samuel, Chair of Board, Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families

Kathy Roberts, CEO, Association of Mental Health Providers

Emma Rigby, CEO, Association of Young People's Health

Kay Boycott, CEO, Asthma UK & British Lung Foundation

Andrew Radford, CEO, Beat

Helen Walker, CEO, Carers UK

Sarah Hughes, CEO, Centre for Mental Health

Clare Stafford CEO, Charlie Waller Memorial Trust

Poppy Jaman, CEO, City Mental Health Alliance

Steven Wibberley, CEO, Cruse Bereavement Care

Chris Askew, CEO, Diabetes UK

Sinead McBrearty, CEO, Education Support

Ronnie Wilson, CEO, First Step Trust

Paula Ojok, CEO, Helplines Partnership

Natalie Seymour, Clinical Psychologies/Clinical Lead, MAC-UK

Matthew Reed, CEO, Marie Curie

Alison Pay, CEO, Mental Health at Work

Simon Blake, CEO, Mental Health First Aid England

Mark Rowland, CEO, Mental Health Foundation

Victoria Hornby, CEO, Mental Health Innovations

Sean Duggan, CEO, Mental Health Network

Brian Dow, CEO, Mental Health UK

Paul Farmer, CEO, Mind

Anna Feuchtwang, CEO, National Children’s Bureau & Chair of the End Child Poverty Coalition

Jacqui Morrissey, Co-Chair, National Suicide Prevention Alliance

Akiko Hart, CEO, National Survivor User Network

Leigh Wallbank, CEO, OCD Action

Ged Lynn, CEO, PAPYRUS

Catherine Roche, CEO, Place2Be

Jabeer Butt, CEO, Race Equality Foundation

Mark Winstanley, CEO, Rethink Mental Illness

Nathan Dick, Head of Policy, Revolving Doors Agency

Neil Tester, Director, Richmond Group of Charities

Catherine Johnstone, CEO, Royal Voluntary Services

Ruth Sutherland, CEO, Samaritans

James Watson O’Neill, CEO, SignHealth

Nancy Kelley, CEO, Stonewall

Juliet Bouverie, CEO, Stroke Association

Rosie Tressler, CEO, Student Minds

Brendan Hill, CEO, The Concern Group

Chris Martin, CEO, The Mix

Amanda Janoo, Knowledge and Policy Lead, The Wellbeing Economy Alliance

Phil Pyatt, CEO, TimeBank

Linda Bryant, CEO, Together for Mental Wellbeing

Thomas Lawson, CEO, Turn2us

Liam O'Toole, CEO, Versus Arthritis

Emma Thomas, CEO, YoungMinds

Barry Williams, Interim CEO, Youth Access