



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

25<sup>th</sup> September 2023

*Dear Constance,*

**RE: MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCY HELPLINE**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of calls to introduce a mental health emergency helpline. I have read your comments with interest.

Every case of suicide is a tragedy many times over: for the person who could see no way out; for their family and friends, often left with an intolerable burden of guilt; and also, for society as a whole in its failure to provide greater support.

I send my sincerest condolences to the family and friends of Cal Stuart, and I commend the work of the Calzy Foundation in raising awareness about suicide and sharing Cal's story.

The 'NHS Long-Term Plan' committed to ensuring a significant expansion of urgent and emergency mental health care and access to these services via NHS 111. NHS England specifically sought views on the creation of a separate number for mental health from patients, clinicians and commissioners implementing local services, as well as other national mental health bodies and charities.

To achieve the ambition of a single national three-digit number for mental health, stakeholders concurred that rather than creating a separate access point, the Government should seek to make the current main access points fit for purpose for people with urgent mental health needs.

Within the NHS 111 service, technical developments have been undertaken to ensure the mental health option is offered to callers at the earliest opportunity. These developments went live for those areas with mental health crisis lines linked via NHS 111 in March this year, thus improving the wait time for connection to the specialist crisis mental health point of access.

Furthermore, in August this year, the Government relaunched a £10 million fund, so charities can work with the NHS to provide life-saving suicide prevention services. Charities in communities across England can now apply for the latest round of funding from the Suicide Prevention Grant Fund, which will ensure as many people as possible can access the support and prevention services they need, when they need it. Funding will also help to prevent people reaching crisis point and reduce future demand for these services across both the charitable sector and the NHS.

I would also add that the Government has recently published a 'National Suicide Prevention Strategy' which includes a commitment to see the number of suicides in England decrease within two and a half years at the very latest. Over 100 measures have been outlined in the strategy aimed at saving lives, providing early intervention, and supporting anyone going through the trauma of a crisis. This includes a new national alert system to notify relevant authorities – like schools, universities, and charities – of emerging methods of suicides and risks, and any required actions that can reduce access or limit awareness.



Finally, the 'NHS Long Term Workforce Plan' sets out an ambition to grow the mental health workforce by 73 percent by 2036 to 2037, and the workforce already continues to grow to help cut waiting lists – one of this Government's top five priorities. In March 2023, there were almost 9,300 more mental health staff working than the previous year.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

*With best wishes,*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Pursglove'.

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP  
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT  
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**