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Reform of the Mental Health Act

Thank you for contacting me about the Government's plans to reform the Mental Health Act and Early Day Motion 1242.

Members of the Government / Parliamentary Private Secretaries do not, by convention, sign any Early Day Motions as doing so is likely to breach the Ministerial Code's rules on collective responsibility.

However, I have read the interim report of the independent review of the Mental Health Act. Like you, I am very concerned about the way in which many people with mental health conditions have suffered, and I believe the Mental Health Act should be reformed. I hope I can assure you that the Government will follow the recommendations of this review, and make sure the Mental Health Act is appropriate for the modern day.

In October, the Prime Minister announced her intention to reform the Mental Health Act, which had gone broadly unchanged since 1983. She was particularly concerned about the rise in detention rates, the racial disparity in detention, and feared that the Act was out of step with our modern mental health system. This process will certainly reveal some uncomfortable and difficult facts, and I commend the Government for its willingness to face up to this and commit to substantive reforms.

The review, led by Sir Simon Wessely, wishes to make the Mental Health Act work better for everyone, and ensure that everybody who is detained under the Act is treated with dignity and respect, and is empowered to take decisions about their care as far as possible. This review is just the first step in the lengthy process of reforming the Mental Health Act. I have been assured that the Government will pay close attention to its recommendations, and will not shy away from the challenges it poses. I welcome this interim report, and I will follow closely the next steps being taken to modernise the Act.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP