

Vaughan Gething AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: MA-P/VG/1813/19

Dai Lloyd AM
Chair
Health, Social Care and Sport Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff

22 May 2019

Dear Dai,

Thank you for your letter of 23 April requesting further details about our plans to invest the additional £500,000 that I announced in February 2019 for suicide prevention.

At the outset I would like to stress that the additional funding should not be seen in isolation from our broader approach to improve mental health and access to services, which was set out in the Welsh Government's response to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee's report, *'Everybody's Business'*. This includes £14.3 million of additional funding from 2019-20 to support health boards to improve in a number of priority areas including: crisis and out of hours care, psychological therapies and services for children and young people – all of which will support the suicide and self-harm agenda.

Building on this broader funding, the additional £500,000 will be used to improve the national and regional work required to tackle suicide and self-harm. This includes funding four new posts to drive forward this work and co-ordinate the multiple agencies with a role to play in this agenda. The new National Suicide Prevention Lead, supported by three Regional Leads, will be vital in joining up approaches and leading the development and implementation of new action to prevent suicide and self-harm.

Following feedback from Regional Partnership Boards about how best these new roles can support and – crucially - add value to current arrangements, we will commence the recruitment process shortly. We anticipate that the posts will be filled by the Autumn and reporting arrangements will be via the Regional Suicide Prevention Forums and the National Advisory Group for Suicide and Self-Harm .

Along with our wider investment in crisis services, part of the additional funding will support a Mental Health Urgent Access and Conveyance Review. The review will address the issues surrounding individuals with mental health issues and/or distress and consider how urgent care is accessed. This will help us better understand what is needed to improve the system as a whole. It will be led by the NHS National Collaborative Commissioning Unit and a multi-agency steering group is being convened to oversee this work which will meet for the first time in May.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

We are also considering, based on the advice of the National Advisory Group, options to utilise the remaining funding in 2019-20 to scale up or extend existing initiatives, particularly to those most at risk. We will provide information on the agreed approach in a future update.

I understand the need to ensure support is in place for the farming community and can confirm that we are working with Public Health Wales to take forward a rapid review of the evidence on support for farmers' mental health and wellbeing. Two workshops are planned in May for key stakeholders to gather views to influence the development of a framework which will support the mental wellbeing of farmers at times of uncertainty. The final report is due to be completed in July 2019 and will help us understand what actions need to be taken across Government to improve support for this group.

In terms of other support available to the farming community, in 2018-19, £500,000 was provided by Welsh Government to three all Wales rural charities to address the acute financial issues and knock on effect on mental health some farmers will face in the short term. Funding was awarded to the Addington Fund, the Farming Community Network and Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution. A condition of receiving the funding is to work with the network of local charities to address mental health issues.

As part of this funding, £60,000 was allocated to the Farming Community Network to increase its support to help farming families. The aim is to extend a range of support through volunteers, nurses providing mental health checks and expanding NHS liaison services. We have also reprinted the 'Fit for Farming' booklet which is being made available to all farmers across Wales and includes information on well-being.

I hope this reassures you that our plans to utilise the additional funding to prevent suicide and self-harm will build upon and add value to our wider investment to improve mental health and well-being.

I will provide further information when I next update the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vaughan Gething". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vaughan Gething AC/AM

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