PR E S S R E L E A S E
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A NEW PRIORITY FOR MENTAL HEALTH:
New #ElectionEconomics policy briefing from the Centre for Economic Performance

The final report in the Centre for Economic Performance (CEP) series of background briefings on key policy issues in the May 2015 UK general election calls on the three main political parties to commit themselves to raising dramatically the coverage of Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT), the service that provides psychological therapies for depression and anxiety disorders.

The report’s author Professor Richard Layard explains why treating mental illness should be high on the public agenda, especially as proven psychological therapies effectively cost nothing:

- Mental health is the biggest single factor affecting whether people are satisfied with their lives.
- Bad mental health costs the economy at least £70 billion in lost output and costs the economy £10 billion in extra physical healthcare due to mental illness.
- At present, only 15% of adults with depression and anxiety disorders are offered psychological therapy recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). By 2020, this should increase to 25%.
- Only 25% of children with mental health disorders receive any form of treatment. By 2020 this should rise to 33% receiving NICE-recommended treatments.
- This expansion should be mainly school-based, with a clear integration of Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and school-based provision.
- The net cost of providing these treatments would be zero due to the huge savings on disability benefits, crime, social services and additional physical healthcare.

Professor Richard Layard, author of the report, says:

‘The key development in the last Parliament was the Health and Social Care Act 2012, which established ‘parity of esteem’ for mental and physical health. This means that people should have the same access to NICE-recommended treatments whether their problem is with mental or physical health.’

‘But we are currently far from that situation. The main failing is the shortage of psychological therapy – and the main achievement of previous governments has been to begin reducing that shortage.’

‘The most important task now is to maintain the expansion of the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme.’

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Notes for editors:

‘A New Priority for Mental Health’ by Richard Layard is the latest in CEP’s #ElectionEconomics series.

Objective, brief and non-technical, CEP Election Analysis is a series of background briefings on the policy issues in the May 2015 UK General Election.

This series discusses the research evidence on some of the UK's key policy battlegrounds, including immigration, austerity, real wages and living standards, productivity and business, Europe, the NHS, schools, tuition fees, gender gaps, urban and regional policy, top tax rates, inequality, housing and planning, crime, climate change and energy, and mental health.

These analyses are provided by some of our expert researchers and draw on some of our past and current research.

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