

News story: World's first global ministerial mental health summit to be held in London

Health and Social Care Secretary Jeremy Hunt has announced that the UK will host the first ever Global Ministerial Mental Health Summit in London this October.

The summit will aim to help countries work together to increase the evidence for different treatments, and to ensure healthcare systems around the world value mental health as much as physical health.

Ministers, leading academics, policy makers and patients from more than 30 countries will be invited to attend.

The summit is also expected to help countries learn from each other to find the best ways to deal with issues such as stigma, discrimination and increased rates of depression and anxiety among young people.

Mr Hunt has also announced the launch of the Global Alliance of Champions on Mental Health – set up jointly with his Australian and Canadian counterparts. The aim is to encourage political leaders to raise the profile of mental health, decrease stigma and work together more across world regions.

Around 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem at some point in their life and by 2020 the World Health Organization estimates that mental health conditions will account for 15% of cases of disease in the world.

Mental illness is also the biggest cause of lost economic output, with an estimated cost to the global community of nearly US\$2.5 trillion a year, which is expected to increase to US\$6 trillion by 2030.

Health and Social Care Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

When you look at the extraordinary prevalence and impact on people's lives, it is clear that mental illness is fast becoming one of the defining global health challenges of the 21st century. Until recently, this hasn't had the profile it deserves on a global stage.

I hope the Alliance of Champions for Mental Health and Wellbeing, along with the inaugural global summit, will be the next step that millions of people around the world need right now. Together we will bring about a new level of co-operation between nations and improve people's access to evidence-based services and bear down on stigma and other factors that are exacerbating this crisis.