

Prime Minister appoints Dr. Alex George as Youth Mental Health Ambassador

- During Children's Mental Health week, the PM has appointed Dr. Alex George as Youth Mental Health Ambassador
- He will play an important role in shaping children's mental health education and support in schools
- Part of government plans to build back fairer from the pandemic and ensure all children and young people are supported with their mental health and wellbeing

The Prime Minister has today appointed Dr. Alex George as a Youth Mental Health Ambassador to advise government and raise the profile of mental health education and wellbeing in schools.

Dr. Alex is an A&E doctor and has been a passionate online campaigner for children's mental health since he tragically lost his brother to suicide last year.

As Youth Mental Health Ambassador, he will use his clinical expertise and personal experience to champion government's work on children's mental health and shape policy on improving support for young people in schools, colleges and universities.

Thanks to his huge social media following among young people, Dr. Alex is well placed to signpost the support that is already available, as well as provide input and feedback to government on what more can be done.

He will also sit on the new Mental Health in Education Action Group, chaired by Children's Minister Vicky Ford and Universities Minister Michelle Donelan – which will look specifically at how we support young people with their wellbeing as they return to school and university after this difficult year.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

Children and young people have heroically adapted to save lives and protect our NHS. This has understandably had a huge impact on their mental health, so I want to shine a spotlight on this vital issue ahead of their return to school. I'm delighted that Dr. Alex George will be working with us as we do everything in our power to improve people's mental wellbeing.

Dr. Alex George said:

The last year has been unimaginably difficult for all of us, but

particularly for young people who have sacrificed so much.

I am honoured to be appointed for this role where I'll be working closely with government to make mental health an absolute priority and hope to have a positive impact on the lives of young people and their education for good.

Right now young people need a voice in government, and I hope that through this role I can advocate for meaningful change in this area.

Dr. Alex will also provide input on the issues being faced by children and young people and how this can be reflected in the tools and support teachers will need in order to provide high-quality advice and care to their students who need it, and what more could be done to ensure the mental health curriculum meets the standard children need.

His appointment comes on top of the existing support government is providing to ensure children's mental health is a priority – including the Wellbeing for Education Return project, which provides funding to councils so they can offer training and advice from mental health experts to schools and colleges on how best to support their pupils.

The NHS, in collaboration with the Department for Education, has also overseen the introduction of over 180 Mental Health Support Teams in England, with more currently in training.

These teams provide counselling for students, and also assist with training parents and teachers to help children and young people improve their mental wellbeing. During lockdown these teams have continued to work virtually.

Claire Murdoch, Mental Health Director, NHS England and NHS Improvement, said:

I welcome the appointment of Dr Alex George as a Youth Mental Health Ambassador, and look forward working closely with him on this important issue.

I met Dr Alex recently and was struck by his commitment to the NHS and to the mental health of our nation.

Children's Mental Health Week couldn't be a more important time to come together and help our youth improve their wellbeing.

It has been a tough year, but the NHS is here for children's mental health, and with the help of Dr Alex and our partners in health, education and charities, we will keep working hard to make sure every child in this country get the mental health support that they deserve.

Dr. Alex will start his role immediately, and will work within the Department for Education. He will remain independent of government and it is an unpaid position.