

Breaking the Silence: There can be no health without mental health

It was difficult to believe that the confident and self-assured man standing by me had for years suffered from severe mental health issues, was ostracised by his family, and left destitute.

My encounter with Ahmad (not his real name) was one of the most memorable moments of my recent 'Ghana Grand' cycle ride, from Tumu to Accra.

Ahmad, who joined us for the 20km ride out of Tamale that morning had, just five years earlier, been found chained to a tree having suffered from recurrent psychotic incidents.

Basic Needs Ghana, a UK Aid funded organisation helping those with mental health challenges, not only found him and helped connect him to Ghanaian psychiatric services but offered ongoing counselling. Ahmad is now married, has two children and – serendipitously – runs a bicycle repair shop.

Thanks to the Basic Needs self-help group, and good community care, Ahmad has become the family breadwinner and owner of a thriving business. He is supporting others in his community to lead equally rewarding and prosperous lives. He is not a “cost” to society; he is an active contributor.

Mental health remains a taboo and is one of the most neglected issues of our time. But this is – thankfully – starting to change. Around the world, mental health, neurological and substance use conditions (MNS) are the leading cause of disability and ill health and it is coming – literally – at a cost to the global economy; estimated at \$16.3 trillion between 2010-2030.

The message is loud and clear: there can be no health, no lasting wealth, without mental health. UK-Ghana Partnership on Mental Health

The UK is proud of our global leadership in Mental Health, demonstrated by our hosting of the first ever Global Ministerial Mental Health Summit in 2018. The Summit united leaders around a commitment to address key mental health challenges, to tackle stigma and discrimination, to increase investment in mental health, and improve access to mental health services and research.

Whether it is family, friends, neighbours or colleagues, the chances are that we all know someone who is affected. 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem each year. We will continue to work to ensure that everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets support and respect. But there is much that needs to be done in the UK – and elsewhere.

The UK Government has been investing £10 million (GHS 65 million) of UK Aid to support mental health services across Ghana. Our support has centred on improving access to quality community based mental health care services; and supporting the gradual erosion of stigma.

The UK shares His Excellency The President Nana Akufo-Addo's vision for a self-reliant Ghana. "Ghana Beyond Aid" must leave no one behind, and that includes every Ghanaian affected by a mental health condition. We welcome the leadership and foresight behind the decision to make mental health a priority. Backing this commitment with sufficient resourcing and appropriate legislation will be the key to affecting real change. We have seen considerable change in a short space of time. All districts in Ghana now provide mental health services compared to 32 districts just six years ago. More than 5,000 health workers have been trained on how to treat mental health conditions, with more than 100,000 people receiving treatment for mental health conditions in 2018. Community self-help groups like the one I visited in Tamale have reached 32,827 people, reuniting many with lived experience with their families and providing the tools to enable them live productive lives.

Looking ahead, with UK support, 250,000 Ghanaians will have access to quality mental health services. We are working with the Government of Ghana and the World Health Organisation to put human rights at the heart of Ghana's approach to mental health.

World Mental Health Day 2019 This year, the main theme of World Mental Health Day 2019 (10 October) is suicide prevention. Attempted suicide is a criminal offence in Ghana. It's not for me or the UK to argue the rights and wrongs of this decision. Whatever the laws says, the impact of suicide on families and our communities is devastating and long-lasting. According to the WHO, more than 800,000 people die by suicide a year – mostly men – making it the principal cause of death among young people. Suicide is a global public health problem.

A conversation is healthy. But what is more important is that, together, we nurture an environment in which people receive support so that fewer people decide to take their own lives. The factors and causes are wide-ranging but mental health plays a significant part. As the writer Simone de Beauvoir captured "what chills your spine when you read an account of suicide...[is] what happened inside that heart immediately before". Suicide prevention and support must be part of the solution. Addressing the stigma and discrimination around mental health will support the full, active inclusion of those suffering.

Individuals, families, communities, schools and offices all have a role to play. Working together to improve access to quality mental health services, particularly in more remote areas, will help address the desperation experienced by those suffering the most.

For our part, the UK Government will continue to work with Ghanaian partners at the grassroots to erode the stigma and discrimination around mental health. Next month, a UK Aid supported programme will address stigma among the urban youth, who are among the most vulnerable but are also the key to securing Ghana's long-term future.

As we mark World Mental Health Day, let us recognise that mental health issues can touch us all; and vow to take action to break the stigma as a

first step to protecting our mental health and wellbeing. For me, meeting Ahmad will always be a reminder of the power of hope; the power that we all have in our communities to give hope to others who need it most.

[Defence Secretary Ben Wallace addresses the NATO Parliamentary Assembly 2019](#)

Thank you for inviting me here to address you all today. Could I thank our president Madeleine Moon MP and Richard Benyon MP for their leadership in hosting these past few days and David Hobbs for all the work in putting this excellent event together.

Seventy years ago, a group of 12 nations came together to establish our Alliance. They did so to protect their common values and the freedoms so recently won in the Second World War. The then common need of the founding members; as is it is now; is not one of offence but of defence – mutual self-defence. NATO members chose freedom and democracy to be our guiding principles.

The NATO alliance is a unique balance between democracy and military. As parliamentarians you not only clear the way to ensure that new challenges to our security are appropriately met by our governments but you also act as that vital check on power to ensure that the most vital ingredient of democracy – consent – is upheld. The power of the 14 articles and the doctrine of mutual self-defence cannot be maintained without the constant reaffirmation of our consent.

We must, however, be realistic. Upholding the articles of the treaty aren't free. They take investment and innovation. For a long time there has been pressure for us all to increase investment in defence. And the United Kingdom is proud to have heeded that call. Last month our spending review granted my department and extra £2.3bn. This takes us to an overall budget of £41.23bn and the leading spenders in Europe.

The motto of our Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst is “serve to lead” – its meaning is simple – to lead you must give. As a platoon commander it means you give your time, your effort and your loyalty, often long after everyone else has gone to bed. And for a country it is no different. Leadership must not be defined as “working to rule” or doing just enough. It is proven by going that extra kilometre. That's why we believe, in the United Kingdom, that our nuclear deterrent is for all your defence. It is why we believe it is important to contribute over 2% of GDP on defence spending and it is why we intend to continue to seek to support and strengthen this alliance and its membership.

All of us can lead in our own way. Whether by extending the hand to new members or leading development of niche capability our collective forward momentum is the glue that can keep us unified. We can never be static at NATO. And while the methods might have changed the threat and challenge to us all has not.

In 1949 as we were coming together for common good others were learning new ways to challenge us. Our adversaries realised that if you couldn't beat us by playing by the rules they would seek to change them. Just a few years before that founding of NATO, Georgy Isserson was rewriting them in the Soviet Union. With social media and open borders, Hybrid warfare that he projected has come of age.

In 2013 , the Russian Chief of the General Staff , Valery Gerasimov stated "The very "rules of war" have changed. The role of non-military means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown, and, in many cases, they have exceeded the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness."

He went on to say in the same article "Long-distance, contactless actions against the enemy are becoming the main means of achieving combat and operational goals.". Our friends in Ukraine and the Baltics know that too well.

For the last 3 years before taking up this position I was the United Kingdom's Security Minister – I got to see into the shadows and see the daily attacks on our societies that many do not. Cyber, Disinformation, assassination, corruption. All prosecuted on our open and liberal societies. All engineered to divide us and weaken us. Be under no illusion that it is happening across all of our membership. To date our response has not been good enough. We are neither nimble enough nor deterring enough and that is where we must aim our investments.

The UK will soon solidify plans for a National Cyber Force to ensure a stronger presence in the new contested frontier. And we should not be naive to think that China and Russia are not interested in offensive capabilities in Space. If they go high we must go high, if they go deep we must go deep.

In the 70 years that NATO has been, we have achieved great things together. From 12 to 29 Members. Today we still stand guard on our borders and now we reach deep across continents. Still holding dear the same values but dealing with a wider range of threats and adversaries.

I am proud of what we have all achieved together and I am determined that under the leadership that I give to the Ministry of Defence, we will continue to contribute to NATO's readiness, deployments and thinking. What ever happens over Brexit our moto will be that security is not a competition it is a partnership.

As Harry Truman said at the founding of the Alliance: "Men with courage and vision can still determine their own destiny, they can chose slavery or freedom , war or peace, I have no doubt which they will choose."

Public consultations

The SSRO has today launched three public consultations on matters related to its work and the pricing of contracts regulated under the Single Source Procurement Framework. Details of each consultation and how you can engage with us on these matters are provided below:

We welcome your views and supporting evidence in response to these consultations. The consultation period runs for eight weeks from today until 5.00pm on Friday 6 December 2019. A response form for each consultation has been published alongside the consultation documents. Completed response forms should be sent by email to consultations@ssro.gov.uk (preferred), or by post to SSRO, Finlaison House, 15-17 Furnival Street, London, EC4A 1AB.

Queen's Speech 2019

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons.

My Government's priority has always been to secure the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union on 31 October. My Government intends to work towards a new partnership with the European Union, based on free trade and friendly cooperation [European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill].

My Ministers will work to implement new regimes for fisheries, agriculture and trade, seizing the opportunities that arise from leaving the European Union [Fisheries Bill, Agriculture Bill and Trade Bill]. An immigration bill, ending free movement, will lay the foundation for a fair, modern and global immigration system. My Government remains committed to ensuring that resident European citizens, who have built their lives in, and contributed so much to, the United Kingdom, have the right to remain. The bill will include measures that reinforce this commitment [Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill]. Steps will be taken to provide certainty, stability and new opportunities for the financial services and legal sectors [Financial Services Bill and Private International Law (Implementation of Agreements) Bill].

My Government's new economic plan will be underpinned by a responsible fiscal strategy, investing in economic growth while maintaining the sustainability of the public finances.

Measures will be brought forward to support and strengthen the National Health Service, its workforce and resources, enabling it to deliver the highest quality care. New laws will be taken forward to help implement the

National Health Service's Long Term Plan in England, and to establish an independent body to investigate serious healthcare incidents [Health Service Safety Investigations Bill].

My Government will bring forward proposals to reform adult social care in England to ensure dignity in old age. My Ministers will continue work to reform the Mental Health Act to improve respect for, and care of, those receiving treatment.

My Government is committed to addressing violent crime, and to strengthening public confidence in the criminal justice system. New sentencing laws will see that the most serious offenders spend longer in custody to reflect better the severity of their crimes [Sentencing Bill]. Measures will be introduced to improve the justice system's response to foreign national offenders [Foreign National Offenders Bill]. My Government will work to improve safety and security in prisons and to strengthen the rehabilitation of offenders. Proposals will be brought forward to ensure that victims receive the support they need and the justice they deserve. Laws will be introduced to ensure that the parole system recognises the pain to victims and their families caused by offenders refusing to disclose information relating to their crimes [Prisoners (Disclosure of Information About Victims) Bill].

A new duty will be placed on public sector bodies, ensuring they work together to address serious violence [Serious Violence Bill]. Police officers will be provided with the protections they need to keep the population safe [Police Protections Bill]. They will also be awarded the power to arrest individuals who are wanted by trusted international partners [Extradition (Provisional Arrest) Bill].

My Government will bring forward measures to protect individuals, families and their homes. Legislation will transform the approach of the justice system and other agencies to victims of domestic abuse [Domestic Abuse Bill], and minimise the impact of divorce, particularly on children [Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill]. My Ministers will continue to develop proposals to improve internet safety, and will bring forward laws to implement new building safety standards.

My Ministers will ensure that all young people have access to an excellent education, unlocking their full potential and preparing them for the world of work. My Government will take steps to make work fairer, introducing measures that will support those working hard [Employment (Allocation of Tips) Bill]. To help people plan for the future, measures will be brought forward to provide simpler oversight of pensions savings. To protect people's savings for later life, new laws will provide greater powers to tackle irresponsible management of private pension schemes [Pension Schemes Bill].

To ensure that the benefits of a prospering economy reach every corner of the United Kingdom, my Ministers will bring forward a National Infrastructure Strategy. This will set out a long-term vision to improve the nation's digital, transport and energy infrastructure. New legislation will help accelerate the delivery of fast, reliable and secure broadband networks to millions of homes [Telecommunications Infrastructure (Leasehold Property)

Bill]. An aviation bill will provide for the effective and efficient management of the United Kingdom's airspace Air Traffic Management and Unmanned Aircraft Bill. Proposals on railway reform will be brought forward.

A white paper will be published to set out my Government's ambitions for unleashing regional potential in England, and to enable decisions that affect local people to be made at a local level.

My Government is committed to establishing the United Kingdom as a world-leader in scientific capability and space technology. Increased investment in science will be complemented by the development of a new funding agency, a more open visa system, and an ambitious national space strategy.

My Ministers remain committed to protecting and improving the environment for future generations. For the first time, environmental principles will be enshrined in law. Measures will be introduced to improve air and water quality, tackle plastic pollution and restore habitats so plants and wildlife can thrive. Legislation will also create new legally-binding environmental improvement targets. A new, world-leading independent regulator will be established in statute to scrutinise environmental policy and law, investigate complaints and take enforcement action [Environment Bill].

Proposals will also be brought forward to promote and protect the welfare of animals [Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill], including banning imports from trophy hunting.

The integrity and prosperity of the union that binds the four nations of the United Kingdom is of the utmost importance to my Government. My Ministers will bring forward measures to support citizens across all the nations of the United Kingdom.

My Government remains committed to working with all parties in Northern Ireland to support the return of devolved government and to address the legacy of the past.

My Government will take steps to protect the integrity of democracy and the electoral system in the United Kingdom.

My Government will continue to invest in our gallant Armed Forces. My Ministers will honour the Armed Forces Covenant and the NATO commitment to spend at least two per cent of national income on defence.

As the United Kingdom leaves the European Union, my Government will ensure that it continues to play a leading role in global affairs, defending its interests and promoting its values.

My Government will be at the forefront of efforts to solve the most complex international security issues. It will champion global free trade and work alongside international partners to solve the most pressing global challenges. It will prioritise tackling climate change and ensuring that all girls have access to twelve years of quality education.

Members of the House of Commons.

Estimates for the public services will be laid before you.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons.

Other measures will be laid before you.

I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels.

Eight in 10 farmers benefit from working with government pollution advice service

Eight in 10 farmers receiving advice from the government's Catchment Sensitive Farming service have seen improvements in water quality on their land or benefited financially, a new report published today (14 October) shows.

Nearly 20,000 farms – equivalent to 34 per cent of England's total farmland – have received advice from CSF officers since the partnership between Defra, the Environment Agency and Natural England began in 2006 in a drive to tackle water pollution from agriculture.

The [report published today](#) evaluates the first 12 years of the advice service, showing that participating areas have seen reductions in a number of agricultural pollutants – with nitrogen levels down by 4%, phosphorus levels down by 8%, and a 12.3% reduction in sediment.

Alongside improving water quality, farmers also reported seeing other benefits on their farm, such as an improved reputation after taking steps to become more environmentally friendly, or making savings on fertiliser costs by only applying the nutrients their soil actually needs.

For more than a decade the network of trained CSF advisers have helped farmers across the country implement more than 75,000 actions to reduce water pollution on their land – from changing the way they apply pesticides to building new infrastructure to preventing pollutants from reaching waterways.

Visiting South Acre Farm in York today, Environment Agency chair Emma Howard Boyd and Natural England chair Tony Juniper will see first-hand the measures being taken by dairy farmers Rachael and Paul Tompkins, who have worked with CSF advisers since 2017 and taken action to reduce the amount of slurry reaching the water on their land – including the construction of a new concrete yard and roofing for their farm's slurry separation system.

Environment Agency chair Emma Howard Boyd said:

The public are rightly appalled by water pollution incidents. Protecting our rivers, lakes and streams is a top priority for the Environment Agency.

It does not come as a surprise that farmers working to enhance and restore river catchments have also reported financial and reputational benefits.

Natural England chair Tony Juniper said:

If we are to conserve and improve the many beautiful rivers that are so iconic of England's wonderful landscapes, then farmers must play essential roles in making it happen.

Agriculture remains one of the main sources of poor water quality and that's why it is so important that we see positive change toward better farming practices.

The progress being made through the Catchment Sensitive Farming programme reveals how tangible improvements to the quality of our waterways can be achieved, bringing wider benefits to farmers, local communities and the wider public.

[Farmers and land managers can check out the available guidance to find out if their land is in a high priority area](#) or [get in touch with a local CSF officer](#) to access free training and advice on how to improve water quality.