

Date:

Dear **MP NAME**

**Subject:** Proposed review of the Mental Health Act

I am a member of RECOVERY Assistance Dogs.

RECOVERY Assistance Dogs for Mental Health are trained in three levels to assist Survivors to recover from their symptoms and find wellbeing. We campaign against compulsion and for freedom of choice. We are a registered Charity Number 1125395.

We are an independent network of people and groups with lived experience of mental distress, disadvantage and discrimination. In contrast to many Mental Health charities, RAD is user-led and so is in a particularly strong position to represent the views of people with personal experience of mental distress/mental health service use.

Point 8 of the NSUN Members’ Manifesto www.nsun.org.uk/our-manifesto ***calls for a reform of the Mental Health Act to make it fully compliant with human rights and ensure that people are not harmed or abused.***Therefore, as a RAD member, I welcome the fact that the Prime Minister is planning to reform mental health legislation. However, the terms of reference for the independent review contain a continuing emphasis on a medical model approach that large numbers of people using mental health services have found actively unhelpful/discriminatory. In addition, the issues raised in the terms of reference focus on amendments to the current Act, not on measures to bring detentions and compulsory treatment to an end.

On 22nd June 2017, the Mental Health Alliance published the report [*A Mental Health Act Fit for Tomorrow. An Agenda for Reform*](http://www.mentalhealthalliance.org.uk/news/A_Mental_Health_Act_Fit_For_Tomorrow.pdf)*.*  Whilst I support the need for a Mental Health Act survey and welcome the report’s emphasis on greater dignity, autonomy and human rights for people detained under the Act, I agree with RAD’s concerns about the report and reasons for not endorsing it. See RAD’s response here. For example:

* Although people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities are particularly likely to be detained and made subject to compulsory treatment, only 8% of the 61% of respondents who supplied demographic details came from BME communities. In addition, numbers of BME respondents with personal experience of detention were too small to be statistically significant
* 70% of respondents who named their gender were female. Therefore, men were seriously under-represented amongst respondents
* The questions used to determine respondents’ views are problematic and the conclusions drawn about the numbers of respondents who supported detention under the Mental Health Act appear to be overstated.

Current government plans and the survey report fall short of what is needed. What is vital to me is a rights-based Act that gives weight to non-medical models and brings to a finish the breach of human rights represented by detentions and compulsory treatment. There has been a strong call for this type of mental health legislation from key parts of the United Nations, most recently in the recommendations from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities following its examination of the UK government last year [UNCRPD’s final report](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD/C/GBR/CO/1&Lang=En)

For all the reasons above, I am appealing to you to:

* Emphasise the need for a significant widening of the current terms of reference for the Independent Review of the Mental Health Act
* Draw attention in Parliament to the limitations of the report from the Mental Health Alliance
* Strongly advocate a rights-based Mental Health Act, one which ends the dominance of a medical model and brings detentions and compulsory treatment to a finish.

Yours sincerely

**NAME, CONTACT DETAILS**