



## **Unpublished letter to the Guardian's Editor on the NHS and Mental Health White Papers**

Dear Editor,

The undersigned Counselling and Psychotherapy organisations are alarmed by the proposals set out in these two recent white papers. We think the proposals described in the NHS white paper would contradict and undermine hope for positive change contained in the Mental Health white paper.

The Mental Health white paper aims to address the disproportionate number of people of colour detained under the Mental Health Act and the disempowerment of that experience. It speaks of strengthening people's rights, expanding and providing more culturally appropriate advocacy, and offering treatment choice to patients. This is contradicted by the NHS white paper, as the new Integrated Care Systems threatens to further fragment, destabilise and privatise our NHS. Private sector providers will be on decision making boards leading to loss of accountability and transparency and more of the type of cronyism witnessed during Covid.

Experience of the private sector in mental health to date has been to downgrade and reduce access to specialist therapies, thus diminishing choice. This is especially true in the case of those suffering the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences which are currently poorly provided for.

Furthermore, for community alternatives to detention to work, there needs to be genuine community support, much of which has deteriorated during the past 10

[admin@pcunion.org.uk](mailto:admin@pcunion.org.uk)

[www.psychotherapyandcounsellingunion.co.uk](http://www.psychotherapyandcounsellingunion.co.uk)



years of austerity. It is hard to see how the White Paper will tackle racial disparity while our society continues to be racist and unequal.

In spite of its laudable goals, the Mental Health White Paper falls short of full human rights, remains strongly based on a medical model of mental distress/trauma, and fails to tackle multiple discrimination. In addition, the NHS White Paper reforms will ensure further fragmentation and deterioration of all NHS services and psychological services in particular.

Yours sincerely,

Gavin Robinson, Ruth Jones, Psychotherapy and Counselling Union

Juliet Lyons, General Secretary, Psychotherapy and Counselling Union

Elizabeth Cotton, Surviving Work

Erin Stevens, Partners for Counselling and Psychotherapy

Bea Millar, Psychotherapy and Counsellors for Social Responsibility

Paul Atkinson, Free Psychotherapy Network

Maria Albertson, Counsellors Together UK

Andy Rogers, Alliance against State Regulation

Pretish Raja, Aashna

David Murphy, United Kingdom Person-Centered Experiential

Ian Parker, College of Psychoanalysts UK

Janet Tolan, The Person-Centered Association

Dominic Davies, Pink Therapy.

[admin@pcunion.org.uk](mailto:admin@pcunion.org.uk)

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