



Department
of Health

From the Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
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Dev Ms. Hassell

Thank you for your letter of 30 January about the inquest into the death of 15 year old Tallulah Wilson who jumped in front of a train, taking her own life.

In summarising your findings, you raised concerns about improved clinical practice and training of healthcare professionals. You noted that no person who gave evidence felt that, at the time they were caring for Tallulah, the health professionals involved had a good enough understanding of the evolving way that the internet is used by young people.

I recognise the increasing importance of the role of media and in particular social media in the lives of young people. The first annual report on England's cross-government suicide prevention strategy, *Preventing Suicide in England: One Year On* was published on 17 January and noted that the Policy Research Programme is investing £1.5 million into six projects, one of which will explore the use of the internet in relation to suicidal behaviour and identifying priorities for prevention.

This study is being undertaken by researchers at the University of Bristol, in partnership with Samaritans and Papyrus. The research started in October 2013, and is due to complete in March 2016. The aim of the research is to:

- a) provide detailed empirical evidence about use of the Internet for suicide-related purposes and how this beneficially and/ or detrimentally influences suicidal feelings and behaviour;
- b) use these findings to inform advice to policy makers, clinicians, voluntary sector organisations, and the Internet Industry; and identify potential interventions to be developed and future programmes of work with these groups.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists

As the body responsible for education, training, setting and raising standards in psychiatry, the College is heavily involved in both development of the government's suicide prevention strategy, and research to support it. I have invited them to comment on the report into Tallulah's death.

The College is involved in the National Suicide Prevention Alliance Working Group on the Online Environment. Over fifty national organisations have signed up to the Alliance, working together so that fewer lives are lost to suicide and to support those who are bereaved or affected by suicide. The Online Environment Working Group is looking at possible areas of work that the group could undertake relating to suicide and the online environment.

The College lead for Public Mental Health, [REDACTED] has been working with NHS England, the British Transport Police and the railways board to;

- consider appropriate training;
- consider necessary evidence to improve clinical practice; and
- establish a systems-based public health approach involving local authorities and trusts as well police, media, NGOs and the rail industry.

Specifically on training on the role of media in the Child and Adolescent Curriculum, in the current (2013) curriculum for Higher Training, there is a selective Independent Learning Objective (ILO 19) on Public Health which includes ILO 19.4 "Promoting mental wellbeing and prevention of mental illness, including liaison with the media."

Within this ILO there is a post-Certificate of Completion of Training Mastery performance objective that includes

"communication to the general public via public media"

"awareness of the impact of media coverage on mental well-being and the responsibility of providing up to date accurate information"

and

"ability to explain complex ideas to children, young people and their families and the media in a way that they can understand."

Although this is at present a non-compulsory part of the curriculum, in light of the increasing use of, and issues surrounding, social media, the Child and Adolescent



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Psychiatry Faculty will recommend to the Dean that these competencies are made compulsory in the next curriculum revision and recommended at pre-specialist registration stage.

Finally, I believe that it is important that all professionals who work with children and young people have access to information about mental health. Norman Lamb, the Minister for Care Services, is launching an interactive e-learning tool for children and young people's mental health on 25 March. This is aimed at health professionals who are not necessarily mental health specialists, teachers, social workers and anyone working with children and young people. The Royal College of Psychiatrists is part of the consortium of organisations headed by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health developing this exciting tool.

The loss of a young person in such tragic circumstances is always a matter for concern, and I am grateful to you for bringing the circumstances of Tallulah's death to my attention.

I hope that this response is helpful.

Yours sincerely

JEREMY HUNT

