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20 May 2024

In the run-up to the general election, we wanted to take this opportunity to write to you about the critical role that community rehabilitation services play in meeting people's mental, physical, psychological, social, and communication needs. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how the next government can recognise and prioritise this pivotal role within our health and care system.

We are the Community Rehabilitation Alliance (CRA), an expert coalition of over 60 charities and professional bodies across health and social care rehabilitation. We share a commitment to ensuring access to high quality rehabilitation for all adults who need it and driving quality improvements to meet people's needs equitably and reduce health inequalities.

We believe that the party who is looking to form the next government must address access to rehabilitation services. The lack of investment, coupled with the increasing demand, and poor planning of rehabilitation services, is resulting in widening inequalities, increased economic inactivity, and increasing health complications. This has, and will continue to have, a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of our population.

Rehabilitation is as important to health outcomes, recovery, and wellbeing, as medicines and surgery. Rehabilitation is a series of interventions, delivered by a range of health and social care professionals, which aims to help regain, maintain, or slow the loss of function.

The facts are we have an ageing population, with increasing numbers of people living with multiple health conditions and increasing incidence of chronic disease across all age groups.

One in three people today are estimated to be living with a health condition that would benefit from rehabilitation.

A lack of community rehabilitation can result in unnecessary hospitalisation, with a risk of deterioration, increased disability and increased social care needs. However, there are solutions. Rehabilitation provides solutions, enabling people to live well for longer. Rehabilitation services help to reduce the impact of a health condition, enabling people to rebuild their lives. As well as preventing added pressures on GPs and emergency services and costly hospital admissions and readmissions, it enables people to remain independent and return to work, education or activities and social situations.

The CRA is calling on political parties to prioritise community rehabilitation services including:

- Commit to expansion of the rehabilitation workforce in the community making use of the full workforce available, including allied health professionals, mental health experts, nurses, support workers, social care and support workers, exercise professionals, and the voluntary sector. It is essential that rehabilitation is given priority.
- Make a commitment to rehabilitation as an equal pillar of health care to medicines and surgery and reflect this in an updated NHS Constitution and other NHSE planning guidance mandates.
- Mandate integrated care boards (ICBs) to improve access to high quality community rehabilitation services for their populations with a single accountable lead in each ICB for rehabilitation and reflect this in their planning guidance.

We are asking the next Government to take action. Coordinated community-based services, away from, and outside, hospitals, need to become a reality with greater focus, attention, and resources given to improving and increasing community rehabilitation.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you, and your policy officials, to discuss the benefits of rehabilitation in more detail, and to share our ideas on how community rehabilitation can support your aspiration of keeping people at home, healthier, and active for longer.

Yours sincerely,

**Age UK**, Caroline Abrahams, Charity Director  
**Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Alliance**, Sue Brown, Chief Executive  
**Asthma + Lung UK and Taskforce**, Henry Gregg, Director of External Affairs  
**British & Irish Association of Stroke Physicians**, Professor David Werring, President  
**British Association of Social Workers**, Denise Monks, Professional Officer  
**British Association of Sport Rehabilitators**, Steve Aspinall, Chief Executive  
**British Chiropractic Association**, Cait Allen, Chief Executive Officer  
**British Geriatrics Society**, Sarah Mistry, Chief Executive Officer  
**British Heart Foundation**, John Maingay, Director of Policy and Influencing  
**Community Therapists Network & Primary Care & Community Neurology Society**, Neil Bindemann, Executive Director  
**Day One Trauma Support**, Lucy Nickson, Chief Executive  
**Fifth Sense**, Duncan Boak, Chief Executive and Founder  
**Headway - the brain injury association**, Luke Griggs, Chief Executive

**Independent Neurorehabilitation Providers Alliance**, Lesley Pope, Chair  
**Intensive Care Society**, Dr Sandy Mather, Chief Executive Officer  
**Later Life Training**, Professor Dawn Skelton, Director  
**MS Society**, Ceri Smith, Head of Policy and Evidence  
**National Care Forum**, Professor Vic Rayner OBE, Chief Executive  
**National Orthopaedic Alliance**, Alice Fabre, Interim Programme Director  
**Nuffield Health**, Dr Davina Deniszczyc, Medical & Charity Director  
**Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists**, Steve Jameson MSc BSc (Hons) RN, Chief Executive  
**Rehabilitation Workers Professional Network**, Simon Labbett, Chair  
**Royal College of Occupational Therapists**, Karin Orman, Director of Practice and Innovation  
**SameYou**, Jenny Clarke, Chief Executive Officer  
**Stroke Association**, Juliet Bouverie OBE, Chief Executive Officer  
**The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services**, Anna Hemmings, Chief Executive Officer  
**The British Psychological Society**, Sarb Bajwa, Chief Executive  
**The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy**, John Cowman, Chief Executive  
**The Neurological Alliance**, Georgina Carr, Chief Executive  
**The Society for Research in Rehabilitation, Bournemouth University**, Professor Anand D Pandyan, President, and Executive Dean, Faculty of Health and Social Science  
**The Society of Sports Therapists**, Michael Cole, Chair  
**The United Kingdom Acquired Brain Injury Forum**, Chloe Hayward, Executive Director  
**The UK Kidney Association**, Lisa Ancliffe, Clinical Vice President  
**ukactive**, Huw Edwards, Chief Executive Officer  
**UP - the Adult Cerebral Palsy Movement**, Emma Livingstone, Chief Executive Officer  
**Versus Arthritis**, Deborah Alsina MBE, Chief Executive