Changing the law won’t fix problems in children’s mental health care, warns charity

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The Home Secretary Theresa May has today revealed plans to change the Mental Health Act to stop children and young people with mental illness being detained in police cells.

In response, Brian Dow, Director of External Affairs for Rethink Mental Illness, said:

"It's never appropriate for children or young people with mental health problems to be held in a police cell. However, we're deeply concerned that without proper investment in child and adolescent mental health services, young people will continue to be failed by the system.

"If you are detained by police under the Mental Health Act, you should be brought to a health-based 'place of safety'. But hundreds of young people end up in police cells each year because there is no appropriate place of safety in their community.

"The real issue is that there simply aren't enough suitable services available for children and young people. Changing the law won't fix the problem alone – we also need significantly more funding for young people's mental health services. Everyone, including children and young people, should have safe and speedy access to quality crisis care 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"Local decision-makers also need to put much more investment in preventative mental health care, such as Early Intervention in Psychosis services, which play a crucial role in helping young people avoid reaching a crisis point in the first place. Mental illness accounts for 23% of the total impact of ill health in the UK, but gets only 13% of the NHS budget. Until this discrepancy in funding is addressed, children and young people with mental illness will continue to get a raw deal."

ENDS

To set up an interview with Brian Dow**,** please contact Brian Semple, News and Media Manager for Rethink Mental Illness, on 0207 840 3043 or brian.semple@rethink.org

Notes to editors

Rethink Mental Illness is a charity that believes a better life is possible for millions of people affected by mental illness.

For over 40 years we have brought people together to support each other. We run services and support groups that change people's lives and challenge attitudes about mental illness.

We directly support almost 60,000 people every year across England to get through crises, to live independently and to realise they are not alone.

We give information and advice to 500,000 more and we change policy for millions.

For more information go to www.rethink.org

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