Mental Health Charity calls for £30M Investment for Disused NHS Buildings

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The national mental health charity Mental Health Matters have written an open letter to the Chancellor ahead of the Autumn Budget, calling for a £30 million investment fund to embed Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) services within NHS estates.

The charity is urging the Chancellor to establish a fund to refurbish existing, unused NHS buildings, including spaces in hospitals and GP surgeries. This investment would create permanent spaces for voluntary and community-led services to operate on-site, alongside the NHS.

Jane Hughes, Chief Executive of Mental Health Matters, said: “There are over 800,000 square metres of unused or underutilised space within the NHS estate, which we believe is costing the taxpayer over £375 million. The charity sector is ready to deliver services in these spaces. We often hear that people don’t know what support is available in their community, and that services need to be more joined up. We believe this proposal would help make services like ours more visible, accessible and better integrated with the NHS.”

The proposal seeks to reduce reliance on temporary prefab structures and make better use of underused NHS spaces, ensuring that voluntary and community organisations have safe, high-quality spaces to provide prevention, early intervention and recovery support.

The plan would also see local VCFSE partners co-design facilities to meet community needs.

Sarah Wileman, Director of Development at Mental Health Matters, added: “Local communities know what works for them. By working together, we can transform empty spaces into services that are accessible, inclusive, and tailored to local needs."

Mental Health Matters say this investment would help the Government deliver on NHS England’s Community Mental Health Transformation priorities, ensure more efficient use of taxpayer money, and re-invest building rental income back into the health system.

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