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Thursday March 12 2015 | thetimes.co.uk | No 71454

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Clarkson's last stand Times2

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True scale of child mental health crisis uncovered

Times campaign calls for revolution in treatment

Rosemary Bennett
Social Affairs Correspondent
Kaya Burgess

The scale of the crisis that is engulfing children's mental health is revealed today with official data showing that a record number of youngsters are being admitted to hospital for self-harm, eating disorders, depression and other psychological disorders.

Emergency admissions for psychiatric conditions soared to 17,278 last year, double the number four years ago. There were 15,668 admissions of young women aged 15 to 19 for cutting, burning or harming themselves, compared with 9,255 admissions in 2004.

A total of 2,965 children were treated on wards for anorexia and other eating disorders, a 12 per cent jump in one year and double the number treated a decade ago.

Experts say that exam stress, social media, bullying and the pressure to look slim and attractive are combining to make children's lives unmanageable. However, they also criticised savage cuts to early intervention services, which meant that families struggled on alone until they reached crisis point and turned up at A&E.

Only 6 per cent of the NHS mental health budget goes on services for children and teenagers.

In response to the crisis, *The Times* today launches a manifesto written by Tanya Byron, the leading clinical psychologist and government adviser, and three other experts in the specialty, representing the Royal College of Psychiatrists, Great Ormond Street Hospital and the Young Minds charity.

It calls for:
● A "state-of-the-nation" study to be carried out immediately to update

statistics that professionals have to use, which are now 11 years old.

● An urgent revival of early intervention services in schools and communities to prevent children from being forced to wait until their conditions are life-threatening before getting help.

● Investment in emergency beds to end the scandal of children being held in police cells, on adult psychiatric wards or being sent across the country in the midst of a crisis.

● The 18-week waiting time for non-urgent physical health treatment to be extended to cover non-urgent children's mental health.

Professor Byron called the manifesto "a blueprint for urgent change". She said: "When are we going to wake up to the fact that mental health problems in children can be as serious and life changing as physical illnesses? How as a society can we justify the fact that the mental health of children is so low on our list of priorities?"

Assessing children who could be treated effectively and early but often have to wait for months for treatment can be a daily reality for those who work in the sector, she said.

"In this election year this manifesto sets out clearly and definitively a blueprint for urgent change. We are fundamentally letting young people down."

The latest evidence that children are being failed came during an inquest yesterday into a 16-year-old girl with a history of self-harming, who committed suicide hours after attending A&E for her injuries. Numerous attempts to get proper psychiatric help for Aleysha McLoughlin had failed and she grew disengaged and eventually refused all offers of help.

The manifesto authors say that it is Continued on page 8, col 1



Winner by a head All sorts of hats were on show on Ladies' Day at the Cheltenham Festival yesterday. Racing, pages 64-67

BBC faces huge bill for dropping Top Gear

David Sanderson, Kaya Burgess
Mark Lister

The BBC could have to pay millions in compensation to foreign broadcasters after the suspension of Jeremy Clarkson, as it emerged yesterday that the presenter's "fracas" with a producer was caused by a row over a cheese platter.

The global success of *Top Gear* means that holes have been created in TV schedules across the globe during the programme's enforced hiatus.

BBC Worldwide, the corporation's commercial division, will offer alternative programmes but could be forced

to make payouts or renegotiate contracts in many of the 170 counties where *Top Gear* is broadcast.

Details emerged yesterday of the row, in which Clarkson allegedly aimed a punch at Oisín Tymon, a producer, at a hotel in North Yorkshire.

A member of staff at Simonstone Hall in Hawes said that the presenter had arrived by helicopter at 10pm after a day's filming — two hours later than planned. He found the hotel restaurant shut and no hot food available.

He was offered a cheese or meat platter or bar snacks but allegedly threw a "child's tantrum" until a steak

sandwich was prepared. A member of staff, who asked not to be named, said: "I didn't see any pushing or shoving, but he was swearing and the manager was trying to calm the situation."

There was speculation yesterday that Clarkson may quit the BBC when his contract finishes at the end of the month. As more than half a million signed a petition to back his reinstatement, David Cameron entered the fray. He described his friend and constituent as a "huge talent" and said his children would be "heartbroken" if he left. Tantrum over cheese platter, page 7
Leading article, page 33

IN THE NEWS

Police's rape failures

Police in England and Wales do not send three quarters of recorded rapes to prosecutors to decide whether charges should be brought, the Rape Monitoring Group said. Page 2

Divorce ruling

The Supreme Court has ruled that a woman can claim against her former husband, a New Age hippy who amassed a £107 million fortune, 23 years after their divorce. Page 3

Cameron attacked

David Cameron was accused by his former chief military adviser of contemplating "dodgy" accounting practices in his desire to inflate Britain's defence budget. Page 4

Militants cornered

Up to 2,000 Isis fighters were holed up in Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's birthplace, as troops loyal to the Iraqi government prepared for a final push to take the city. Pages 34-35

Food suppliers in fear

Food suppliers are afraid to complain about the bullying tactics of the big grocery chains because they are scared of retribution, the industry's regulator has said. Page 41

Chelsea go out

Paris Saint-Germain knocked Chelsea out of the Champions League round of 16 on away goals by securing a 2-2 draw after extra time at Stamford Bridge last night. Pages 72-76