



About Mind Cymru

We're Mind Cymru, the mental health charity.

We campaign to raise awareness, promote understanding and drive change. We're also the first point of call for information and advice, providing mental health information to people in Wales over a million times every year.

We're an unstoppable community of people in Wales who won't give up until everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets the support and respect they deserve. Together we're Mind in Wales.

Foreword

Mental health is one of the biggest issues facing the next Welsh Government. The Coronavirus pandemic has placed the physical and mental health of the nation under unprecedented pressure, as well as the formal and informal networks and services that support people. As the pandemic and related restrictions have become a way of life for communities, we have seen a real toll taken on mental health.

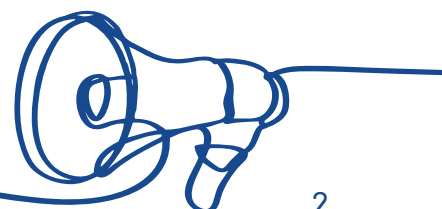
Even before the pandemic, momentum to prioritise the nation's mental health was building. Every generation now fully expects the Welsh Government deliver for the nation's mental health just as much as its physical health. We won't stand for anything less.

We want to see a step change in support and experiences for people with mental health problems in the next Senedd term. Whilst there has been extra investment, targeted towards those most in need, and pockets of innovative

practice that are making a huge difference to people's lives, the overall picture is not changing quickly enough. Whilst health services are vitally important, every aspect of our life affects and is affected by our mental health. Every part of Government must respond to prevent and support people to live fulfilled and secure lives. To get well, stay well and live well.

It is vital that the next Welsh Government puts mental health at the very heart of its agenda, listening to and acting on the views of those of us with a mental health problem. The nation demands it, and we are asking all politicians to 'Stand for Us', to make mental health a priority for them, their party and the next Welsh Government.

Sara Moseley
Director
Mind Cymru



Whoever forms the next Welsh Government must:

①

Make mental health a cross-cutting national priority

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Address the growing crisis in young people's mental health by meeting the wide and varied demand for support

③

Commit to ensuring everybody has safe and speedy access to quality crisis care 24 hours a day, seven days a week

④

Provide greater focus, planning and investment into mental health in primary care and for talking therapies to ensure timely access to a range of support

⑤

Tackle stigma in communities and drive improved employment practices to make workplaces more accessible and inclusive for those experiencing mental health problems.





Stand for everyone

Make mental health a cross-cutting national priority:

The ending of the ten year *Together for Mental Health* strategy provides an opportunity to look afresh at the policy and laws that provide the framework for mental health support in Wales.

However, good mental health is about so much more than good mental health services, crucial as these are. Our mental health is affected by a huge range of things – the quality and security of our homes; employment status and money worries; transitions between school, college, university and beyond; the relationships and friendships we have with others in our communities; our physical fitness and access to green space, to name but a few. The ability of health services to help people when they are unwell will not be maximised if, at the same time, there is a failure to address the social determinants that affect our mental health.

To be effective any new mental health strategy has to focus on what can be achieved across all the responsibilities of Government and its delivery partners, with an expectation that improved mental health is a golden thread throughout every policy and having confidence that the right laws are in place to drive improvements. It needs a range of outcome and output measures that are transparent and provide a framework for holding organisations accountable for delivering change. Only by taking this wide-ranging approach can we ensure people's experiences and lives are improved.

We also expect greater action to tackle long-standing inequalities in access to support experienced by certain communities. The pandemic has brought these inequalities into sharp focus with young women, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities and those living in economic and social deprivation, all experiencing poorer mental health. There is a need to prioritise support and end this inequality through listening and acting upon people's experiences.

The next Welsh Government must:

- Develop a new Mental Health Strategy following *Together for Mental Health*, that listens and responds to people's individual experiences, cuts across the responsibilities of Government, and builds resilience to prevent poor mental health as well as support for those with more acute and enduring mental health problems
- Review the legislative framework around mental health in Wales, taking into account the Mental Health Act Review and duty to review recommendations around the Mental Health (Wales) Measure
- Develop an effective and transparent set of national indicators, both output and outcome, on mental health to guide investment and prioritisation
- Ensure everyone is aware of and able to access mental health support appropriately and quickly, in particular people in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities and those living in poverty
- Ensure that support focusses on the needs of the individual. It must take into account and deal with each person's experiences of trauma
- Review investment into mental health services and deliver additional funding, to ensure there is capacity to meet demand
- Deliver a workforce strategy for health and social care that prioritises mental health and recognises the role of the voluntary and paid workforce within the voluntary sector, as an equal and valued part of support.

2

Stand for young people

Address the growing crisis in young people's mental health by meeting the wide and varied demand for support:

There has been growing concern over the mental health of children and young people in Wales and the support available to them. Half of all mental health problems are established by the age of 14, rising to 75% by the age of 24. There needs to be greater urgency in addressing the issues young people are facing, in particular early access to support.

If we can enable our young people to understand their mental health, to look after it and to seek and receive support as early as possible, we could drastically reduce the number of people reaching crisis point. The new curriculum is a once in a generation opportunity to place the mental health of all children at the heart of their learning experience. A culture of positive attitudes towards mental health in our education system, including understanding and tackling stigma, will equip children and young people to recognise when they need to reach out and ask for help.

This needs a whole school approach to mental health, creating a culture shift in every school and learning environment to encouraging open discussion, understanding and help-seeking behaviours. This has been the message we have repeatedly heard from young people.

When support is needed this should be available at an early stage, quickly. Most importantly it must be responsive to the needs of each individual young person. There are too many young people waiting to access a service or who cannot find appropriate support. This is completely unacceptable and needs to be addressed with urgency and leadership.

The next Welsh Government must:

- Make improving access and outcomes for children and young people experiencing mental health problems a national priority with resources to meet demand
- Deliver a statutory Whole School Approach to mental health in every school, with all school staff receiving appropriate support and training to create a step change in approach
- Ensure the new curriculum includes mental health as a cross cutting area, including delivery of anti-stigma and discrimination education
- Urgently focus on ensuring all children and young people experiencing mental health problems can access appropriate and timely services as close to their home as practical
- Ensure all young people experience a seamless and timely transition from Child and Adolescent Mental Health services to adult services based on their views and experiences.

3

Stand for people in crisis

Commit to ensuring everybody has safe and speedy access to quality crisis care 24 hours a day, seven days a week

Experiencing a mental health crisis is a distressing experience and over the four years to 2018, there was a 17% increase in the number of referrals to crisis teams across Wales.

Providing excellent crisis care requires a resolute focus on the person experiencing crisis, recognising them as an individual in-need and responding with compassion. Improving access to and the quality of support people receive in a mental health crisis has been the focus of a number of reports and inquiries in recent years, including highlighting the lack of a Mother and Baby Unit in Wales.

The Crisis Care Concordat has provided a framework for action and has made some good progress, which now needs to be built upon. The focus now must be on implementation, with outstanding recommendations taken forward at pace and clear lines of accountability and monitoring to ensure delivery of improvements.

We have to ensure that we do not just focus on the moment of crisis but look to intervene earlier, to prevent people getting to that point. People simply are not getting the right support at the right time in the right place. Whether that's difficulties when trying to access their Community Mental Health Teams during a mental health crisis, struggling to contact services out-of-hours, or having to repeatedly attend A&E for support. This is not how support should work.

The next Welsh Government must:

- Resource the delivery of the multi-agency Crisis Care Concordat, including regular reporting on outcomes and progress
- Improve access to age and cultural appropriate 24/7 crisis care support including Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment teams and voluntary sector alternative places of safety
- Improve Care and Treatment Planning for all in receipt of a plan, particularly crisis planning, including renewed training for all professionals and regular auditing of quality and outcomes
- Establish a Mother and Baby Unit in the south of Wales, but also address the need to procure beds accessible to women in the north of Wales.

4

Stand for early support

Provide greater focus, planning and investment into mental health in primary care and for talking therapies to ensure timely access to a range of support

The majority of people who seek support for their mental health are only ever seen in primary care. GP surgeries are on the front line of supporting people with mental health problems. We know that the first response a person experiences when talking about their mental health can have a big impact on whether they seek support again. A Mind Cymru survey of GPs in Wales carried out in 2018 found that mental health now accounts for 40% of all GP appointments and due to the pandemic there is widespread agreement that there will be an increase in the numbers of people seeking help. This will place increased pressure on the service and there is a need to ensure everything is in place to provide people with the support they need.

There are many ways in which service design can impact the experiences of people with mental health problems when seeking support from a GP, from how an appointment is booked to the follow-up care received. GPs and other primary care staff have indicated to us that they would like more training and awareness about what is available locally to help people. There is also a need to ensure that a range of options are available to GPs and other primary care professionals so that support can be tailored to people's individual needs, including exploring the ability for people to self-refer directly to commissioned voluntary sector services.

Access to support through the medium of Welsh or service provision being culturally appropriate for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities have been consistently highlighted as areas for improvement. More work should be undertaken to train mental health professionals to be able to provide appropriate support, working with community organisations to provide an accessible service. Where these services already exist there needs to be improved signposting so that people are aware of the choices available.

Psychological therapies are delivered both in primary and secondary care in Wales, depending on how severe or complex the need of the individual is. Within secondary care there is a 26 week waiting time target for psychological therapies following assessment. However, a recent report from Health Inspectorate Wales found some people were waiting up to two years to access psychological therapies. This is totally unacceptable. NHS Wales should offer a full range of evidence based psychological therapies to anyone who needs them within an acceptable timeframe, working to reduce the current 26 week target.

The next Welsh Government must:

- Ensure timely access to early support services, including a fast track for people with mild to moderate conditions through to voluntary sector services that work in partnership with and provide support to statutory sector services
 - Expand training opportunities for GPs and other primary care staff on mental health and available local support
 - Ensure a range of services are available before NHS level that can be provided by the third sector, including provision of advice and information, befriending/ counselling services, rights information, etc.
 - Ensure all providers and commissioners of services have 'parity of esteem' between mental and physical health emphasised within their plans
- Make a commitment to increasing the delivery of psychological therapies through the Welsh Language
 - Improve training to ensure services are culturally appropriate and accessible to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, based on increased partnership working with community organisations
 - Reduce the 26-week waiting time target for specialist psychological therapies over the course of the next Senedd with a clear and detailed timeline that sets out how this reduction will take place.

5

Stand for a stigma-free culture

Tackle stigma in communities and drive improved employment practices to make workplaces more accessible and inclusive for those experiencing mental health problems

Despite improvements in public attitudes towards mental health, people continue to tell us that they experience stigma in a wide range of situations. Time to Change Wales has been at the forefront of tackling this stigma, utilising the voices of people with lived experience alongside drawing on research and expertise from across the world.

Funding for the Time to Change Wales programme comes to an end in March 2021 and there is a risk that Wales will lose significant knowledge, expertise and momentum. We want all political parties to recommit to supporting the campaign for future phases to ensure we can continue making a difference to people's lives right across Wales. The importance of tackling stigma has been illustrated during the pandemic with Time to Change Wales reporting an increase in people feeling self-stigma and believing they are not worthy of help. Tackling mental health stigma needs to be at the heart of post pandemic planning for Wales.

The workplace is consistently referenced as somewhere stigma is more likely to be experienced with two in five people continuing to feel uncomfortable disclosing their mental health problem in the workplace. In light of the pandemic it has never been more important for employers to look after the mental health of their staff. We know that there is huge appetite among some employers to do more, but many require help to do so. Employers are often unclear on their legal responsibilities and duties, and employees unaware of their rights.

In 2017, UK Government commissioned an independent review of mental health at work. Thriving at Work made various recommendations and we would want to see the framework proposed within the report adopted by the next Welsh Government. This would provide all organisations with a direction of travel and bring public, private and voluntary sector organisations together to share what works and support each other.

The next Welsh Government must:

- Continue to fully support and fund Time to Change Wales in its programme of work beyond 2021 in order to continue to develop the social movement to reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with mental health across communities and workplaces
- Adopt the Thriving at Work report as a framework for improving mental health in the workplace
- Ensure mental health as a prominent and central part of a 'fair work' agenda, including supporting organisations and businesses to work together to share best practice.

Any questions?

Now is your opportunity to Stand Up
for better mental health in Wales.

For questions about this briefing or
how you can improve mental health policy
in Wales, please email Simon Jones,
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