Making it happen
Mind’s 2017 election manifesto for better mental health
mind.org.uk/election17
Who we are

We’re Mind, the leading mental health charity in England and Wales. We’re here to make sure anyone with a mental health problem has somewhere to turn for advice and support. We work for a better deal and respect for everyone experiencing a mental health problem.

More information on Mind’s general election campaign, including our Welsh version of this manifesto, can be found at mind.org.uk/election17.

Introduction

This June, the UK goes to the polls to vote for the next government. Two years ago, mental health was on the agenda of every main political party; this time each party needs to maintain this momentum and, most critically, it must be at the heart of the next government.

Mental health is one of the biggest domestic issues facing the next government. More people than ever are speaking out about mental health and demanding change. As a nation our expectations for better mental health for all are higher than ever and the next government must rise to this challenge.

People with mental health problems have told us they want timely access to good quality mental health services, and for their mental and physical health needs to be treated equally. They also told us that a decent place to live, a job and good quality relationships with people in their local communities were crucial to their ability to stay well.

Recent years have seen real progress in terms of attitudes towards mental health and some investment and improvements in our services. But in many parts of the country services are still poor and people lack the essential support that is necessary for their full participation in society. There is still so much more to do.
The next government should commit to the following actions:

1. Deliver the investment and commitments agreed in the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health – the national plan to improve mental health care – and go beyond this to take us closer to putting mental health on an equal footing with physical health.

2. Improve public understanding of mental health and reduce negative attitudes and discrimination, including supporting the Time to Change campaign.

3. Tackle the culture of fear and silence of mental health in the workplace by providing increased and better support and incentives for employers to create mentally healthy workplaces for all staff, including employees with mental health problems. For people with mental health problems who are out of work, ensure they are offered voluntary, individually tailored back-to-work support delivered by trained staff who understand how mental health can impact on a person’s ability to get and stay in work.

4. Make sure anyone with a mental health problem who requires it can access financial support from the welfare system to help manage the extra costs of having a mental health problem, so they can stay well and live independently, free from the fear of sanctions and having their benefits removed if they are too unwell to work.

5. Ensure local authorities have sufficient funding to deliver tailored social support and advice to alleviate debt, social isolation and housing insecurity – the issues that make life harder for people with mental health problems.

6. Change outdated and discriminatory legislation like the Mental Health Act and the definition of disability to ensure everyone with mental health problems gets support and respect.

If the next government takes these actions, it will be rewarded with a positive transformation in the lives of the many millions of us affected by mental health.
For too long, those of us with mental health problems have had to put up with second-rate, second-class services, with two-thirds of people with common mental health problems not receiving any treatment or support.

This has affected lives and it has cost lives. Having waited a long time for things to improve, the publication of the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health in 2016 was a landmark moment in transforming mental health care. The 58 recommendations and associated minimum investment of £1 billion by 2020/21 were accepted by the NHS and the current Government in full.

The key recommendations are:

- By 2020/21, one million extra people will be provided with support for their mental health problem.
- Everyone facing a crisis should have access to mental health care 24/7 – right care, right time, right place.
- Our mental and physical health should be treated equally – including people with severe mental health problems, women in the perinatal period, children and young people.
- All areas of society, such as schools, workplaces and community organisations need to contribute to the promotion of good mental health and prevention of mental health problems – in all areas of our lives.

Too many people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities have problems accessing good quality mental health care and have little faith in services. Urgent action must be taken to ensure that everyone gets the help they need with cultural needs taken into account, irrespective of their background or the communities they belong to.

The Five Year Forward View on Mental Health is clear on how mental health care needs to be transformed. It is down to the next Government, the NHS and other organisations to get the job done. The workforce, both those working in mental health, and those in the wider health service and in local communities, is critical to making this happen. The next government needs to ensure we have a skilled, highly competent, workforce to deliver what’s needed, and one which prides itself in looking after its own mental health and wellbeing, alongside those using services.

The Five Year Forward View for Mental Health is only the start of the journey though. Mental health has been underfunded and ignored for decades, and it will take decades of investment and attention to bring services up to the standard we all expect.
We want to see the next government:

- Deliver all the commitments in the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health, mental health services receiving the funding they’ve been promised and adequate workforce to deliver these changes by 2020/21.
- Ensure at least £500 million a year additional investment in NHS mental health services continues through until 2022/23 to help meet need and expand access to services.
- Use this additional investment to extend the reach of mental health services, from primary care to crisis care, to everyone who needs them, and fill in important gaps including: a greater focus on inequalities in mental health care, increasing choice of evidence-based psychological therapies for everyone who needs them within 28 days, a renewed focus on public health interventions and primary prevention, and providing better support for more complex mental health problems like personality disorder.
- Ensure a costed multidisciplinary workforce strategy is developed and delivered which includes a strong focus on staff wellbeing, the role of voluntary and community organisations and peer support workers, and begin work to determine the shape of the mental health workforce beyond 2020/21.

Having the ability to access talking therapies has been life changing. I feel I have a safe haven in my therapist. Giving me a place to be open, vent and simply be myself.

Anne-Marie, London
Nearly nine out of 10 people with a mental health problem say they have faced stigma or discrimination, restricting working lives, curtailing social lives and relationships and leading to social isolation.

Time to Change is England’s biggest evidence-based programme to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination, run jointly by Mind and Rethink Mental Illness. It is the first campaign in the world to show that it is possible to change behaviour towards those of us with mental health problems.

Between 2007, when Time to Change began, and 2015, public attitudes towards mental health have improved by 8.3%. Together, we’re making it easier for those of us with mental health problems to speak out, seek help, and live our lives to the full. Mind is part of the Heads Together partnership, fronted by members of the royal family, which is helping to change the national conversation around mental health, encouraging openness and support.

Changing attitudes and behaviour is the work of a generation, and funding for Time to Change runs out in March 2021. That’s why we’re calling on the next government to re-commit to supporting Time to Change during its full term in power. Without a concerted effort and continued investment in Time to Change and the work to embed anti-stigma work within schools, employers, the NHS and communities, there is a huge risk that our early gains will be lost.

With the success of Time to Change and partnerships like Heads Together, the next government has the perfect opportunity to help ensure everyone feels comfortable talking about mental health, that those with mental health problems are free live full and discrimination-free lives in their communities and no-one is prevented by shame or fear from seeking help.

However, despite this, far too little time and money is spent on stemming the flow of people becoming unwell in the first place. By supporting the prevention of poor mental health and promotion of resilience skills and coping mechanisms throughout the population, the next government can create a psychologically robust nation to respond to the challenges and opportunities of a post-Brexit Britain.

Nowhere is this more important than in the case of young people who face a range of challenges in relationships, employment and insecure work, a digital culture with its multitudes of uncertainties, body image issues, housing problems and navigating the transition to adulthood in a fast changing world.
We want to see the next government:

- Re-commit to reducing mental health stigma and discrimination and to supporting the Time to Change campaign to sustain its work.
- Show real leadership from the Prime Minister, politicians and candidates in improving public understanding by talking openly and sensitively about mental health, and avoiding, negative and damaging stereotypes and misconceptions.
- Take a different approach to policy development and its impact on mental health; if a policy is bad for the mental health of the nation, it's bad policy.
It’s never been more important for employers to look after the mental health of their staff, with mental health now the leading cause of sickness absence in the UK. The indirect costs of unemployment, absenteeism and presenteeism resulting from mental health problems have been estimated to total £30.3 billion in England alone. Mental health problems can stop people performing at their best. A recent Mind survey of over 15,000 staff across 30 employers found that only one in four (26 per cent) said they would be likely to seek support from their manager if they were experiencing a mental health problem.

By promoting wellbeing for all staff, tackling the causes of work-related mental health problems and supporting staff who are experiencing mental health problems, organisations can help keep people at work and create mentally healthy workplaces where people are supported to perform at their best. It’s in employers’ interests to take workplace wellbeing seriously, as those that do report having more engaged, productive and loyal employees who are less likely to need time off sick.

Too often people with mental health problems fall out of work because they aren’t adequately supported in their job. This is often the worst possible outcome, making people more unwell and, if off work for longer than six months, dramatically reducing the chances of returning to work in the following five years. Employers who create supportive working environments and make appropriate reasonable adjustments for staff will reap the benefits – these adjustments are often about a change of attitude or culture and are usually relatively small and inexpensive.

We also need to see employers’ attitudes towards recruiting people with mental health problems continue on a positive trajectory. Forward-thinking employers, such as those who have taken part in Mind’s Workplace Wellbeing Index and who have signed the Time to Change Employer Pledge, recognise the benefits of recruiting and retaining a talented and diverse workforce, including people whose mental health or other disability may have prevented them from working previously.

An Independent Mental Health and Employers Review was established in January 2017 to further drive work with all employers to support mental health in the workplace. It is critical that this review is enabled to finish its work and its recommendations adopted in full.
Many people with mental health problems tell us they want help to find an appropriate job with a supportive employer so that they can earn a stable income. And indeed evidence tells us that the right kind of work, with the right support is good for your mental health. We know that under previous back-to-work support programmes, people with mental health problems were three times less likely to find work than those without. The next Government has a chance to change this.

The end of the Work Programme means that thousands more people with mental health problems will receive support directly from Jobcentres and their staff. Too often that means people are given just 88 minutes of support each year in which they are expected to have difficult conversations about their mental health in a busy, open-plan office.

Too often Jobcentre staff aren’t given the time or the training they need to tailor their support to an individual’s health condition, or to help people to find jobs with supportive employers. And the threat of benefit sanctions often makes people’s mental health worse, making it harder for them to engage with support and delaying their recovery. This is intolerable in a modern society.

Mental health fluctuates and is not a constant. Therefore the system of support should be flexible, people need a safety net not a harness. Let’s make sure supported return to work is exactly that.

Andy, Doncaster
We want to see the next government:

- Promote, recognise and share effective in-work support for employers, including wellbeing initiatives and Mind’s Workplace Wellbeing Index, a benchmark of best policy and practice when it comes to promoting good mental health at work.

- Commit to supporting the continuation of the Independent Mental Health and Employers Review, which is expected to report in summer 2017, and commit to implementing recommendations which will have a positive impact in supporting employers to be a full partner in driving this change in full.

- Invest in the ambitions of people with mental health problems by making sure that people both in and out of work can get access to specialist and evidence-based employment support when they need it.

- Make back-to-work support voluntary for people with mental health problems to improve people's chances of staying well and finding appropriate work suited to their individual skills and ambitions.

- Expand the reach of the Access to Work programme so that anyone with a mental health problem can access support to stay in work and ask for adjustments to their role.
People with mental health problems can face extra costs in their day-to-day lives and money worries have a significant impact on a person’s mental health and chances of recovery. We know that one in two people with mental health problems have felt suicidal because of money or benefits issues. We also know the right support to manage extra costs can make a huge difference in helping people to stay independent, to maintain contact with friends and family, and to do the things that help them stay well.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is a crucial benefit for thousands of people with mental health problems. However recent changes uniquely exclude people with mental health problems who cannot use public transport or who need a support worker in order to travel. By restoring support under PIP, the next government can make sure that people with mental health problems have access to a vital springboard, which allows them to get to appointments, get to work, pick up children from school, and maintain contact with friends and loved ones.

We want to see the next government take real action to help people with mental health problems to return to work, but it’s crucial that there is support in place for when people are too unwell. People who are out of work because of a mental health problem face the dual pressures of managing their costs of living while focusing on their recovery and treatment.

Recent reductions to Employment and Support Allowance add to those pressures, as does a complex and outdated assessment process. The next government has an opportunity to restore support and improve the system, so that people with mental health problems can get the help they need to manage their basic living costs and focus on their recovery.

Being able to depend on a secure and stable income is hugely important when someone is experiencing a mental health problem. The threat of benefit sanctions is a significant source of anxiety for thousands of people with mental health problems and can make people’s mental health worse.

We also know that sanctions don’t help people with mental health problems return to work, especially when people are struggling to access the support from employers or health services. By removing this threat the next government can give people with mental health problems the security and stability needed to focus on staying well.
We want to see the next government:

- Remove the threat of sanctions for people who cannot work because of a mental health problem so that people have the space they need to recover, free from inappropriate pressure.

- Restore support under the Personal Independence Payment for people with mental health problems who need extra help to make journeys.

- Reverse recent reductions to Employment and Support Allowance so that people who are unable to work because of a mental health problem have the support they need to stay well.

- Deliver the current Government’s recent commitment to no further reductions to the financial support people with mental health problems receive through disability and incapacity benefits.

- Reform the Work Capability Assessment so that people are accurately and honestly assessed, the real impact of individual health problems is understood, and assessments get it right the first time.
Poverty, low incomes, social isolation and poor mental health often go hand in hand. Debt, housing problems, unemployment and family breakdown can be both a cause and a consequence of mental health problems and often one problem aggravates the others which can easily spiral into crisis.

That’s why it’s crucial that everyone with mental health problems has access to support that is responsive to their day-to-day needs and challenges. Local services, including voluntary and community sector organisations like local Minds, can help people better manage many of these challenges. Initiatives like peer support have the potential to help transform the way services are delivered by enabling people with mental health problems to support each other, share experiences and better manage their mental health.

Whole community approaches to mental health like the ‘Thrive’ initiatives launched in the West Midlands and London, provide a potential blueprint for many parts of the country in how to take forward more regionalised approaches to improving the mental health and wellbeing of the local population.

Social care supports people with mental health problems who need extra support to do the everyday things which enable people to retain their independence and dignity. However, pressure on local authority budgets has led to much higher thresholds for support, with a knock on effect on individuals, families, the NHS and voluntary and community organisations who have to pick up where social care has been withdrawn.

It’s clear that social care must be a top priority for funding in the next Parliament.

Some people with mental health problems also face other challenges including homelessness, problems with drugs and alcohol, and contact with the criminal justice system. At the moment, people experiencing these multiple needs don’t get the support that they need.

We want to see the next government:

- Conduct an assessment of every community’s assets and services that support social relationships and reduce loneliness based on national measures.
- Fair funding and a sustainable future for mental health social care established during the next Parliament.
- Support for more regional mental health initiatives like Thrive West Midlands and Thrive London to ensure a whole community approach to effectively supporting people with mental health problems.
- Make sure that people with multiple needs receive coordinated support by setting out a strategy to support local areas to work together to help people with mental health problems solve their housing problems, move towards recovery and ultimately find employment.
While we have seen considerable progress in assigning outdated legislation to the scrapheap, we still have a way to go before our legal framework puts mental health on the same footing as other physical health problems and other physical disabilities. We need a comprehensive legislative reform programme to ensure people with mental health problems get the protection they need.

The Mental Health Act allows people to be detained and forcibly treated on the basis of a mental health problem - this does not apply to any other diagnosis or physical health problem. This can happen even if you have capacity to make decisions about your health care. Mental Health Act detentions are going up every year and this is likely to be a sign of services under pressure – if people do not get the right care at the right time their mental health will get worse and involuntary admission to hospital is more likely. People are being detained because they can’t get care when they need it.

No one in a mental health crisis should end up in a police cell. It can be a hugely traumatising experience and is not an acceptable response to a health emergency. We have seen a huge reduction in the use of police cells over the last few years, and the figures clearly show what’s possible. In the last recorded year we’ve seen some police forces never taking people in crisis to police cells, and others resorting to this hundreds of times a year. The recent Policing and Crime Act 2017 placed limits on the use of police cells and banned the use of police cells for under 18s. But the changes don’t go far enough and still allow some vulnerable people to be held in a police cell for 24 hours.

Part of the Care Act is discriminatory as it excludes mental health care from measures designed to prevent people from being kept unnecessarily in hospital while they wait for the local authority to assess their needs and arrange care.

The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (‘LASPO’) reduced the budget for publicly funded legal advice and representation by £600m. LASPO wholly or partially removed areas of social welfare law such as housing, debt, welfare benefits and family law from the scope of legal aid. The impact for people with mental health problems has been significant and there is now very limited means for people to enforce their rights, with people having the additional stress and significant disadvantage of representing themselves in some instances.

Finally, the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998 are vital laws that exist to safeguard all of our rights and ensure you are treated fairly and without prejudice. They are particularly important for people who may be more vulnerable. When they work as intended, they help make our shared values a reality – values like equality, dignity, justice and freedom. The next government needs to ensure that the human rights of people with mental health problems are protected by retaining the Human Rights Act and membership of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Some people with mental health problems have found themselves outside the protection of equalities legislation because it doesn’t properly recognize fluctuating conditions. This is a particular problem for depression and other fluctuating health problems where very severe episodes of depression often last no longer than six months. And even if
have a recurrence this is could be seen as a separate episode which would mean you aren’t protected under the Equality Act.

Acute episodes of depression can be profoundly disabling and there is a 70% chance of having another episode within five years. Depression also carries considerable stigma, particularly in the area of employment, and discrimination often continues between or after acute episodes, regardless of whether you are looked after in a primary care or a mental health setting.

Current equalities legislation doesn’t provide the protection in the workplace that people with mental health problems need. The only way they can enforce their rights is to take their case to an employment tribunal which is expensive and stressful. That’s why the review of the equalities and discrimination legislation running parallel to the Independent Mental Health and Employers Review is so important. We need to ensure we have effective equalities legislation that enables people with mental health problems to have meaningful and effective support in the workplace which can be easily accessed.

We want to see the next government:

• Carry out a fundamental review of the Mental Health Act based on the principle of respect for people’s wishes and decision-making capacity, and duties on health care providers to respond to people’s requests for help and to plan care and treatment in partnership with people with mental health problems.

• Eradicate the use of police cells for everyone in a mental health crisis once and for all.

• Review how mental health is treated in the Care Act, in order to put it on an equal footing with physical health, and to ensure people with mental health problems get timely and appropriate support from local authorities to enable them to leave hospital when they are well enough.

• Review the impact of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 on people with mental health problems to ensure they are not denied access to justice.

• Commit to protecting the Human Rights Act and maintain membership of the European Convention on Human Rights.

• Widen the definition of disability under the Equality Act so people with fluctuating conditions like depression are protected from discrimination.

• Commit to supporting the continuation of the Protection from Workplace Mental Health Discrimination Internal Review running parallel to the Independent Mental Health and Employers Review, which is expected to report in summer 2017, and implement its recommendations.