



# Making it happen

General election 2017 manifesto for better mental health in Wales

[mind.org.uk/election17](http://mind.org.uk/election17)

 **mind Cymru**  
for better mental health  
o blaid gwell iechyd meddwl

## Who we are

We're Mind Cymru, the leading mental health charity in 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 wider manifesto for England and Wales, can be found at [www.mind.org.uk/election2017](http://www.mind.org.uk/election2017).

## Introduction

This June, the UK goes to the polls to vote for the next UK 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 UK government.

Most issues surrounding delivery of mental health support are devolved to the National Assembly for Wales, however many decisions taken in Westminster directly impact on people with mental health problems in Wales. This includes policy areas such as welfare and benefits, policing and the Mental Health Act. Our manifesto for Wales calls for commitments from parties and candidates that will directly benefit people in Wales facing a mental health problem and improve mental wellbeing among the population.

Mental health is one of the biggest domestic issues facing the next UK government. More people than ever are speaking out about mental health and demanding change. In Wales as in the rest of the UK our expectations for better mental health for all are higher than ever and the next UK 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 UK government should commit to the following actions:

1

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

---

2

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.

3

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.

---

4

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 UK 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.





## Improve public understanding and prevention of mental health, and reduce mental health stigma and discrimination, including supporting the Time to Change Wales campaign

In Wales, it is estimated that one in four people have a mental health problem. Amongst those, 90% have told us they experience stigma and discrimination impacting on all aspects of their lives, including their ability to find and sustain work, maintain healthy relationships and access the help and support they require.

In response to this, Time to Change Wales was launched in 2012, the first national anti-stigma and discrimination campaign. Jointly led by Hafal, Gofal and Mind Cymru, the campaign is a social movement aimed to challenge negative attitudes and behaviour towards mental health and encourage the people of Wales to speak out, seek help and reach out to others. We know that by promoting and increasing positive attitudes towards mental health, we will reduce the stigma and discrimination encountered by people with mental health issues.

Following a Public Attitudes to Mental Health in Wales survey conducted in 2016, we have seen a 4.7% (from 71.7% to 76.4%) improvement in positive attitudes towards mental health since Time to Change Wales was launched in 2012. However, there is still work to be done - half of the people surveyed believed that somebody with a mental health problem is unpredictable. We continue to strive for further improvements in public attitudes in our work with Time to Change Champions, employers and with schools and young people.

Mind is also 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.

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 to live full and discrimination-free lives in their communities and no-one is prevented by shame or fear from seeking help.

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 promoting the Time to Change Wales Campaign
- 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.



# 2

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.

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. Costs associated with poor mental health in the workplace amount to nearly to £1.2 billion a year in Wales, equivalent to £850 for every employee in the workforce. This total includes the costs of sickness absence, reduced productivity that occurs when people come to work but function at less than full capacity because of mental health problems ('presenteeism') and increased staff turnover. A recent Mind survey of over 15,000 staff across thirty employers found that only one in four (25 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 Wales Employer Pledge, recognise the benefits of recruiting and retaining a talented and diverse workforce, including people whose mental health may have prevented them from working previously.



An UK-wide 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 in Wales were four times less likely to find work than those without. The next UK 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.

#### We want to see the next government:

- Promote, recognise, incentivise 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 UK-wide Independent Mental Health and Employers Review, which is expected to report in summer 2017, and commit to implementing recommendations applicable and relevant to Wales which will have a positive impact in supporting employers to be a full partner in driving this change.
- 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.



# 3

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 when they are too unwell to work.

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.





# 4

## 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.

Whilst 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. Key areas are outlined below.

The Mental Health Act allows people in England and Wales 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. 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. The Wales Crisis Care Concordat has delivered a reduction in the use of police cells since its launch in November 2015, and the figures clearly show what's possible.

The recent Policing and Crime Act 2017 also placed limits on the use of police cells and banned the use of police cells for under 18s - something partners of the Concordat have also worked to ensure is a never event. But the changes don't go far enough. We want to see an end to the use of police cells as places of safety under the Mental Health Act.

The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 ('LASPO') reduced the budget for publicly funded legal advice and representation by £500m. 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 you have a recurrence this 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 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.

Mind Cymru  
Castlebridge 4,  
Castlebridge,  
5-19 Cowbridge Road East,  
Cardiff CF11 9AB

029 2039 5123  
contact@mind.org.uk  
mind.org.uk

 @MindCymru  
 mindforbettermentalhealth  
 Follow us on LinkedIn

Mind is a registered charity No. 219830

  
for better mental health  
o blaid gwell iechyd meddwl