



Mental health is everything:

**Mind Cymru's priorities for
the next Welsh Government**

October 2025



Introduction

Mental health is more than just a small part of our lives. It is connected to everything, everywhere and everyone. It's part of our defining moments and the day to day. It's intertwined with physical health, housing, finances, relationships. It's a fundamental part of every one of us, despite the different lives we lead. This is why we're so insistent that the next Welsh Government prioritises mental health.

In April 2025 Welsh Government published the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-35, the first time in over 10 years that the strategic approach to mental health in Wales has been refreshed. This provided an opportunity to reflect on the previous strategy, the progress made and how the nature of mental health has changed over the last ten years.

With this strategy and its accompanying delivery plan now in place, the next Senedd term needs to be characterised by determined leadership to fundamentally create a step change in access and experiences of mental health support in Wales.

There is an urgent need to translate strategic intentions into action and to make tangible differences to the lives and experiences of every person in Wales. If we understand and centre people's experiences from every community in Wales, we can deliver the best possible support for all levels of need.

The next Welsh Government should:

- Make mental health a clear priority within the next Programme for Government
- Commit to transforming the mental health system to improve access and experiences of mental health support for all
- Prioritise children and young people through a clear strategic response to rising mental health need
- Improve relationships between statutory and voluntary sectors with enhanced co-production to reach those most in need of support.

As a member of the Wales Alliance for Mental Health (WAMH) we also fully endorse our joint priorities for the next Welsh Government 2026 document:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/media/ul2jnpbq/wales-alliance-for-mental-health-priorities-for-welsh-government-2026-eng.pdf>



Listening to people's experiences

At Mind Cymru, we don't look at mental health on its own. Through our services, information and campaigns we explore all the parts of a person's life, so better mental health can inspire a happier and healthier society overall.

Over the course of the last Senedd term we have spoken to thousands of people in Wales about their mental health and their experiences of accessing support. These experiences, both positive and negative, form the basis of our recommendations.

The evidence is clear. There are increasing levels of mental health need in our communities. This needs to be met with compassion and understanding. When asked about their experiences, people consistently tell us they want:

- Quicker access to support
- To be involved in conversations and decisions about their treatment
- To be treated with respect, free from stigma and discrimination
- To get help with wider aspects of their lives
- To take action to end inequality of access and experiences of the mental health system.

“It needs to be available within a few weeks, not a few months for an appointment with someone who doesn't address any of the issue, but is there just to meet waiting list targets, before you're passed on for the real appointment with the real professional to start the multi-year wait for help.”

Focus group participant

The reports we have produced are listed at the end of the briefing paper for further information. Central to our understanding has been Mind's Big Mental Health Report, the first edition of which was published in November 2024. This report provides a comprehensive overview of the mental health of the Welsh population from the available data.



Meeting the mental health challenge

We currently have a mental health care system that has slipped towards late intervention and crisis management. The model of waiting for people to develop mental health problems and then seeking to treat them is not the most effective way to improve the population's mental health.

Unless we rethink our approach, it is likely that mental health services will never be able to cope with the rising demand on their own. Instead, we must reorientate national and local systems towards prevention and earlier support. We must provide help beyond the health system to tackle the root societal causes of mental health.



“Prevention - prevention is always better than a cure. Try and identify people early before they spiral too deeply and require more help in getting through their issues. ”

Focus group participant

To achieve this, we need to measure the right things and publish the data, both output and outcome, to have a transparent picture of where there is a need for improvement and what's working well. This will also enable better understanding of whether investment is making the difference intended and if there is a need for different ways to spend the almost £800m currently available for mental health support.

We need to improve the way in which we listen to people with lived experience, so we can ensure that everyone is getting the support they need and identify where improvements can be made. Too often we still hear from people that they do not feel empowered to speak out about their care or what options they would like to choose. When they do, they do not feel listened to, and experience stigma or discrimination. We may work alongside people seeking help, centring their needs and ensuring we respond to them.

“If people knew that what they said was going to be listened to I feel more people would speak up however most of us are shut down and no change is ever made so makes people feel like it's useless and they are just wasting their time. ”

Survey participant

We consistently hear about the role inequalities play in driving poor mental health and in accessing support. If you are from a racialised community, experience poverty or are young, your mental health outcomes are generally worse and you struggle to access appropriate support. There is a need to reimagine the mental health system with ending these inequalities right at its heart, listening to experiences to expand and reform provision to meet the needs of everyone.



We need to rebalance the way support is provided. Instead of waiting until people become unwell we should offer support earlier in community models that can keep us out of more intensive support, including inpatient units. Where inpatient care is needed, this should be trauma informed, least restrictive and focus on a range of therapeutic activities that enable recovery. We must also consider the level of investment we make into children and young people's mental health in order to provide support at the earliest possible point.

This direction of travel has started with the publication of the new strategy but must be made a reality in the coming years.

“I’m 17 and 8 months. I’ve been turned down from pretty much everywhere I’ve turned to for free counselling because I’m either too old to get child care or too young to get adult care. I am really struggling and don’t have the money for private care. I really don’t want to go on medication but it’s looking like that might be my only option for the next few months. I need shorter waiting lists and a plan in place for people aged 16 and 17.”

Survey participant



We know that the NHS alone cannot prevent and protect the mental health of the Welsh population, we need to see greater partnership across the public and voluntary sectors for seamless support where people do not have to tell their stories time and time again. This involves taking the widest view of the mental health system, going beyond simply the health service that treats the presenting problems and towards investing in those factors that help protect our mental health such as good housing, community assets, social care and access to leisure and recreation. This will require greater collaboration across government departments, public services and the voluntary sector for delivering shared outcomes.

“It’s clear that support is the responsibility of a network of people from the government to public bodies to schools and the workforce. Everybody has a part to play.”

Survey participant

Whilst the challenges are significant, we do not believe that experiences of poor mental health are inevitable. With determined leadership, listening and the right resources in the right place, we can build a Wales that can be a world leader in how we support mental health.



Mind Cymru believes that the next Welsh Government must:

Make mental health a clear priority within the next Programme for Government

- Include mental health as a key delivery priority in the new Programme for Government, including appointing a Minister for Mental Health and developing mental health impact assessments for all policies
- Mandate the collection and publication of output and outcome data from health services, particularly in relation to protected characteristics, to inform decision making, identify areas of concern and make the best use of resources available
- Commit to meaningful, cross government actions and measurements that address the socio-economic determinants of poor mental health, in particular the link between poverty and poor mental health
- Review the legislative framework for mental health in Wales, including the provisions in the new Mental Health Bill, extension of the Mental Health Units (Use of Force) Act 2018 (Seni's Law) to Wales and ensuring the Mental Health Measure is updated
- Ensure NHS Wales Performance and Improvement's Strategic Programme for Mental Health has the resources and authority to drive accountability for the transformation of mental health services

Commit to transforming the mental health system to improve access and experiences of mental health support for all

- Develop a Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework for Wales to contribute to an anti-racist mental health system that meets the needs of racialised communities
- Design and deliver open access support services that allow for self-referral and seek to engage less heard voices in design, including meeting the needs of racialised communities, perinatal mental health and those experiencing poverty
- Improve experiences of inpatient care by investing in the inpatient estate, ensuring recommendations from inspection reports are systematically delivered and reducing the use of restrictive practices through making guidance statutory
- Reduce waiting times for access to secondary care over the lifespan of the next Senedd term, through targeted investment, workforce planning and early support
- Deliver improved Care and Treatment planning through training, measuring patient involvement and ensuring all aspects of a person's life are considered in completing plans
- Invest in anti-stigma programmes to support communities to promote positive mental health and end stigma, building on the work of Time to Change Wales
- Evaluate population level mental health campaigns and online national support options to ensure value for money and effectiveness

Prioritise children and young people through a clear strategic response to rising mental health need

- Develop a specific delivery plan to improve access, experiences and outcomes for children and young people's mental health
- Increase investment in early support for young people, particularly those who currently fail to access services, including ensuring any new models of support meet the needs of young people
- Address the trauma caused to young people when moving to adult services by improving care and treatment planning and removing the age-based system currently in place
- Use the statutory duty around the new curriculum and the whole school approach to mental health to provide non-medicalised information and support to all children and young people, including tackling stigma

Improve relationships between statutory and voluntary sectors with enhanced co-production to reach those most in need of support

- Reintroduce national funding opportunities to drive innovation and tackle persistent inequity of access and experiences of mental health support
- Recognise and embed the role that the voluntary sector can play in reaching and representing communities that experience mental health inequalities, ensuring there is diverse representation at national, regional and local levels

Conclusion:

Mental health matters on the days when everything happens and the days when nothing happens. When life is busy and unpredictable, but when it's quiet and ordinary too.

We believe that whoever forms the next Welsh Government **has a duty to make the mental health of the nation a priority.**

By placing mental health at the heart of the next government we can address the social and economic factors that contribute to poor mental health.

With determined, focussed leadership we can end inequalities of experience and access to support. Taking the right steps to listen to those with experience and tackling the access challenges that too many of us face when seeking help

We can create a Wales where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and if help is needed it is available quickly, compassionately and based on our needs.

About Mind Cymru

We're Mind Cymru, the mental health charity. We work nationally and locally.

Nationally, 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. Locally, in communities across Wales, independent local Minds provided life-changing face-to-face support to more than 37,000 people last year.

Together, we won't give up until everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets support and respect.

Throughout the last Senedd term we have listened to the experiences of a range of people across Wales, producing reports relating to:

[Big Mental Health Report](#)

[Priorities for the next mental health strategy](#)

[Raising the standard of inpatient care](#)

[Sort the Switch: The experiences of young people moving from Specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services to Adult Mental Health Services in Wales:](#)

[The Mental Health Measure Ten Years On](#)

[Together through tough times: The power of community to support mental wellbeing across the UK](#)

Our [network of 16 local Minds](#) across Wales provide a variety of different services to over 37,000 people. Each local Mind is unique, and support may include talking therapies, peer support, advocacy, crisis care, employment and housing support. You can find your local Mind [here](#).

Mind's four [helplines](#) provide a voice at the end of the phone when there's nowhere else to turn. Each line meets a different mental health or wellbeing need – from information and service finding to understanding mental health law:

Infoline: 0300 123 3393

Our Infoline provides an information and signposting service to help you understand mental health problems and find support near you.

Welfare benefits line: 0300 222 5782

Our welfare benefits line supports anyone with mental health problems who is navigating the benefits and welfare system.

Legal line: 0300 466 6463

Our Legal line offers legal information and general advice on mental health related law in England and Wales.

Support line: 0300 102 1234

Our support line is a safe space for you to talk about your mental health. Our advisors are trained to listen to you and help you find specialist support if you need it.

We also facilitate an online peer support community [Side By Side](#) as well as an [app library](#) where every app has been independently reviewed by experts for safety, effectiveness, and quality.

We also have lots of bilingual mental health resources on our [website](#). You might find our [mental health A-Z](#) a useful place to start.

