

Minutes of the last meeting – Annual General Meeting

20 November 2019

08.15 – 09.15

Conference Room A, Tŷ Hywel, National Assembly for Wales

In attendance:

David Rees AM

Huw Irranca-Davies AM

Dai Lloyd AM

Mike Hedges AM

Louis Mertens - Royal College of Psychiatrists

Val Billingham – Older People’s Commissioner for Wales

Liz Williams – Samaritans Cymru

Chris Emmerson – Public Health Wales (Health Working Wales)

Jo Whitfield – Beat

Richard Jones – Mental Health Matters Wales

June Jones – Time to Change Wales

Lowri Jones – Time to Change Wales

Sara Moseley – Mind Cymru

Mark Major – Caroline Jones AM’s office

Des Kitto – Board of Community Health Councils

Sophie Binns – Lesley Griffiths AM’s office

Georgina Webb – Welsh Conservatives

Glenn Page – Mind Cymru

Simon Jones – Mind Cymru

Nia Sinclair – Mind Cymru (secretariat)

1. AGM Business – Election of Chair

David Rees AM was the sole nomination for Chair of the Cross Party Group on Mental Health. He received unanimous support from all in attendance and Mind Cymru was approved as secretariat for the group.

2. Welcome

David Rees AM (DR) welcomed attendees to the meeting of the Cross Party Group on Mental Health and invited everyone to introduce themselves to the group. Apologies was given in advance from Assembly Members who needed to leave early to attend committee meetings.

The Chair highlighted the importance of the topic of Mental Health, with the purpose of the group to provide a focus on scrutinising developments and progress.

Sara Moseley (SM) introduced the Time to Change Wales (TtCW) campaign as a social movement for change and a partnership between Hafal and Mind Cymru (funded by both Health and Economy Departments of the Welsh Government and Comic Relief). She highlighted that the campaign is founded on the experiences of people with mental health problems in Wales.

3. Presentation on Time to Change Wales

Lowri Jones (LJ) introduced herself as the Programme Manager for TtCW. She noted the campaign's mission to improve public attitudes and change people's perceptions towards mental health. Launched in 2012, and currently in Phase 3, she noted how the landscape is very different today from when the programme first started. She highlighted the 5% point increase in positive attitudes between 2012 and 2016, with the aspiration for this to increase a further 5% by 2021.

She talked about the TtCW champions, who she said are continuously coming on board to support the campaign and to share their personal experiences. She highlighted their value in feeding into the direction of the campaign through focus groups, consultations, feedback surveys and the lived experience reference panel. The reference panel was noted as an invaluable forum which has a two-way process; providing champions (volunteers) and TtCW employers with an opportunity to share views and opinions as well as a space to tell their own story as part of a recovery process.

She noted that the campaign targets employers to sign a pledge as a promise to improve attitudes towards mental health in the workplace. To date, over a 160 employers in Wales have signed the campaign's pledge, representing 270,000 employees (roughly 1 in 5 employees in Wales). She noted that demand is now at an all-time high. Furthermore, she informed the group that a new employer toolkit would be launched and circulated shortly.

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She drew attention to the programme's current campaign, Talking is a Lifeline, encouraging men to talk more openly about their mental health, and their work in targeting larger typically male dominated organisations to sign the pledge. She noted the significance of the recent pledge signing by the WRU.

June Jones (JJ) introduced herself as the Campaign Lead, and provided the group with information on the market research and analysis. She noted how the campaign's work is continuously evolving based on insight, adding that they have access to global research on stigma. She made reference to the baseline survey, Public Attitudes Survey 2019, which she said would be repeated in two years' time.

LJ summed up the presentation by highlighting the campaign's current focus on targeting men and rural parts of Wales. She noted the positive 85% figure in the number of new visitors to the TtCW website since the launch of the second wave of the Men's campaign at the start of November (first wave was launched in February). She added that a further report of analytics would be available shortly which she would be happy to share with the group.

Finally, she highlighted what AMs can do to help support and tackle stigma:

- Make reference to TtCW in formal presentations and speeches
- Share progress and engage in insights work
- Champion anti-stigma work within constituencies
- Show support via social media channels

4. Discussion

DR invited members of the group to share their thoughts.

Huw Irranca-Davies (H I-D) commended the campaign's work in de-stigmatising attitudes towards mental health. He referred to the use of language, adding that sensitivity on choice of words varies between different groups of people. He talked about the Mens' Sheds event which he had hosted earlier in the week, and the strength of the individuals coming together to talk openly about their mental health. He encouraged the TtCW team to increase engagement with these explicit groups of men. However, in the context of the workplace, he underlined the continued stigma and challenges in encouraging open conversations and although progress may be slow, he underlined the importance in continuing to push forward.

He further highlighted the reluctance of the group of younger men to disclose their feelings. Sara Moseley (SM) agreed and said that it is this group of men which are most difficult to tackle given the strain of the pressures of work and family, and the fear of the consequences of speaking out. She informed the group that the campaign is currently looking at the links between deprivation and stigma

DR asked whether employers are aware of the signs from employees in disclosing their difficulties. LJ added that although TtCW is not a public health campaign, they

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actively seek to encourage employers to create an environment where people feel comfortable to talk, and signpost to providers who can provide the relevant training.

Chris Emmerson informed the group of the recent event he had attended on mental health and the power of the champions in connecting with the audience, which he said added real value to the discussions.

H I-D asked about the campaign's work in targeting smaller employers. LJ noted the challenge in targeting small and micro businesses but confirmed that they have seen a number of smaller businesses come on board recently. She added that the team has been working with the Federation of Small Businesses and has been looking at creative ways to reach this specific group of employees, who may not be office based, through digital channels. This led to a discussion on whether larger organisations expand into their sub-contractors as well as themselves in terms of the pledge.

H I-D asked a further question on training for Assembly Members and staff. LJ noted that work is being done by the Assembly Commission who has signed the pledge. However, he recommended that further work is done on exploring what Assembly Members can do to support the campaign individually.

ACTION: LJ to explore link between work with Assembly Commission and individual Assembly Members

DR made reference to the Economic Contract and the importance of positioning this work on stigma in the context of health and the economy.

5. Conclusion

DR concluded the session by noting the significance of the group going forward and reaffirmed the importance of tackling stigma and attitudes towards mental health in Wales. Stigma should not exist in any given society he said.

He thanked all for attending. Business closed at 9.15am.

The date and agenda of the next meeting will be confirmed shortly.