



Welsh Government's Draft Budget proposals for 2021-22

Response from Hafal

1 About us

1.1 Hafal is a charity and company limited by guarantee which speaks for people in Wales with a serious mental illness (including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and other conditions involving psychosis or loss of insight), their families and carers, and for a wider group of vulnerable people for whom we provide services.

1.2 Hafal is governed by its Members – over 1,500 people who are mainly service-users and carers – who elect our Trustees who are themselves mainly users and carers. We manage services in all 22 counties of Wales which support over 6,000 service users and carers every year. Many of our 420 staff also have personal experience of mental illness.

2. Response to the Draft Budget proposals

2.1 *Funding for mental health services needs to be set at a considerably higher level* – not least to recognise the increased and lasting pressure on mental health services arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. There has long been an acute need for more resources in Wales to provide effective and timely treatment for serious mental illness. This need has increased even further during the pandemic when we have seen vital support for people receiving secondary services drastically reduced, putting many at increased risk of deterioration or crisis.

2.2 Funding for mental health should be applied as minimum percentage of health and social care budgets, and the ring-fenced percentage should be expanded as necessary to achieve parity with other health and social care needs.

2.3 Funding for mental health should not be diverted to support the responsibilities of public-facing general services to protect the mental wellbeing of their clients. The priority must be to increase funding for secondary services - and this needs to be closely monitored so that the mental health budget is not diverted towards lower-level care, either within or outside the ring fence.

2.4 Value for money should be ensured through commissioning services based squarely on patients' needs. All secondary service users have the right to a comprehensive care plan which sets out the support they need to recover. Those plans must be used to gauge what should be commissioned and

what resources are needed at secondary level – this approach will ensure services are person-centred and cost-effective.

2.5 There needs to be a clear threshold for referrals to secondary mental health services. The welcome recognition in recent years that mental wellbeing is an issue for everybody does not mean that mental health services should expand their role. Specialist mental health services should give priority to those in greatest need, aiming to assist those patients receiving higher-end (and more expensive) services to achieve recovery and move down into lower-level support services, as this will have the greatest impact in terms of improving people's lives - and additionally in reducing the cost of their care and treatment. If there is a lack of clarity about what constitutes a mental health service then the ring-fence is worthless because inappropriate referrals can endlessly overwhelm any fund and/or the fund can be drained to finance other agencies' pastoral responsibilities (e.g. wellbeing activities, school counsellors, etc.).

2.6 However, as mental health and wellbeing is relevant to many areas of the whole budget, there may be an argument to augment other budgets to address relevant support (e.g. youth services) not appropriately delivered by mental health services – although this funding should *not* be taken from the ring-fence amount for mental health. It would also be unethical and bad practice to extend mental health services to cover this more general wellbeing work.

3. Contact

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