



## **Senedd Finance Committee call for information – Welsh Government Draft Budget proposals for 2022-23**

### **1 About us**

Adferiad Recovery is a newly-formed Welsh charity, the result of a merger between Hafal, CAIS and WCADA on April 1st 2021. Adferiad Recovery is a charity and company limited by guarantee which speaks for people with a serious mental illness (including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and other conditions involving psychosis or loss of insight), people affected by addiction, and people with co-occurring diagnoses, and for their families and carers, as well as for a wider group of vulnerable people for whom we provide services.

Adferiad Recovery is governed by its members who elect our Board of Trustees (which has strong representation of service users and carers). Adferiad Recovery delivers services in all twenty-two counties of Wales and in Lancashire.

### **2 Focus of our response**

We have focused on two of the key areas specified by the Committee, namely

- How resources should be prioritised to address the pressures felt in sectors that need to “catch-up”, such as Health and Education
- Approach to preventative spending and how is this represented in resource allocations (Preventative spending = spending which focuses on preventing problems and eases future demand on services by intervening early).

Please note that we have previously set out similar views to the Senedd Health and Social Care Committee but in this response we have given particular attention to cross-cutting issues which the Finance Committee may be best placed to consider.

### **3 Key Priorities for “catch-up”**

#### **(i) Mental Health - and the Ring Fence**

The Finance Committee has a key role in ensuring that the “Ring Fence” which protects mental health spending delivers improved mental health services for those in the highest need.

Our surveys of clients and members have shown significant problems for people with serious mental health problems during the pandemic. Some of these problems were inevitable as services were

affected by infection precautions and resources were reallocated to tackle the disease; some problems could have been avoided or at least mitigated through better all-Wales advice on the minimum level of service which should be maintained and better communication by services on what was available and how that availability changed in the course of the pandemic: both these issues remain live ones.

The priority for mental health services must be to “catch up” in terms of treatment and care for those most in need, whether long-term clients or newly diagnosed clients who have become seriously unwell during the pandemic.

We would ask the Committee to note particularly the distinction between the need to prioritise these high-needs patients and the need to address the effects of the pandemic on the mental well-being of the wider population: more on this below.

## **(ii) Alcohol, drug, and other addictions**

There should be a priority for access to services for those with addiction issues, particularly given the recent rise in numbers of people with gambling, alcohol and other addictions.

A 2017 HIW/CIW Review of Substance Misuse Services in Wales found that access and waiting times for services across Wales is inconsistent and is sometimes limited in rural areas, and that long waiting times and a lack of capacity in services means that some find it difficult to get the treatment they need.

Following a period when even more people have struggled with addiction, access to appropriate support should be high on the Welsh Government’s agenda.

## **(iii) Complex needs**

There needs to be a priority to integrate services and provide a holistic service for the many patients in Wales with mental illness, addiction issues or co-occurring/complex needs.

Often, people with a mental illness receive little treatment for their substance misuse issues, and people with an addiction have in the past been excluded from mental health care. However, such needs typically interact with and exacerbate one another, leading to individuals experiencing several problems simultaneously.

Taking a comprehensive and integrated approach to providing care is the best way to build a new life in recovery from mental illness, addiction and co-occurring disorders. We need a new approach where the NHS and councils move away from commissioning services in silos. Instead of using conditions to exclude people from services we need to commission dynamic services which meet the complex needs of the citizens of Wales.

The Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010 identified that a holistic approach is essential: considering accommodation, social life, physical health, money etc. as well as mental health needs if we are to make any difference to those who need help. The Sixth Senedd is the time to

ensure that this approach is not only being implemented properly for secondary mental health patients but also those with addiction and co-occurring issues.

Services need to be joined-up and structured to deliver an individualised approach rather than trying to fit the person to the service. Only then will they truly reflect the people they serve, and only then will they truly be effective.

## **4 Preventative Spending – and Prudent Healthcare**

The Committee has a key role in identifying both the advantages and the limitations of a preventative approach to spending, specifically ensuring that mental health services are not diluted or allowed to “mission creep” in the name of prevention.

We noted that the previous Finance Committee (in relation to the 2021/22 budget) recommended that ***“whilst tackling the increased levels of mental ill health linked to the pandemic, the Welsh Government ensures that investment is made in preventative measures which consider the wider determinants of mental health, such as skills and employability, education, housing, access to green space and physical activity”***.

We expressed concern then that this recommendation could be interpreted as support for mental health specific funding (protected by the Ring Fence) to be used to fund such additional measures. We recognise that such measures may have some value in preventing mental ill health, but for the Ring Fence to have meaning it cannot include such measures which are matters for other budgets: of course the Welsh Government can fund other departments to undertake such measures but this should not be at the expense of mental health services funded under the Ring Fence.

But this is not just about the Ring Fence. Mental health services should not be diverted to support the responsibilities of other departments and agencies to play their role in protecting and enhancing the mental wellbeing of their clients, staff and the public.

There needs to be cross-cutting priority to adopt a Prudent Healthcare approach in the provision of all care and treatment (as pioneered by the present First Minister when he was health minister) which seeks to ensure that people are not supported at higher levels of intervention than they need.

We know that following the pandemic there are likely to be more people in Wales needing support for their wellbeing and of course, anyone in need of help should always receive a positive referral to an appropriate source of support, but it is also vitally important that specialist services define their role clearly and avoid medicalising normal reactions to life events.

If the access routes to services work robustly so that specialist services are allowed to focus on the patients which need them while other support services consistently assist those with problems which are better addressed at that level then this will have the greatest impact in terms of improving people's lives.

## **5 Contact**

For more information on the above points please contact:

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