

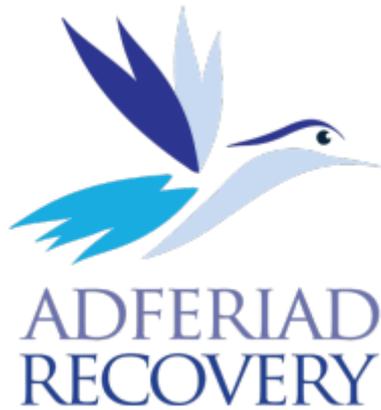
Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#) ar [Effaith yr ôl-groniad o ran amseroedd aros ar bobl yng Nghymru sy'n aros am ddiagnosis neu driniaeth](#)

This response was submitted to the [Health and Social Care Committee](#) consultation on the [impact of the waiting times backlog on people in Wales who are waiting for diagnosis or treatment](#)

WT 17

Ymateb gan: | Response from: Adferiad Recovery





Welsh Parliament Health and Social Care Committee
inquiry into the impact of the waiting times backlog on people in Wales who
are waiting for diagnosis or treatment

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide written evidence to supplement my oral evidence provided to the Committee last year. The following additional evidence is, like my oral evidence, on behalf of Adferiad Recovery.

Euan Hails

1 About us

Adferiad Recovery is a recently-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 Establishing priorities

We urge the Committee, in considering delays in diagnosis and treatment across all areas of health and social care, to give equal priority to mental health and drug, alcohol, and other addiction problems.

In the context of mental health and drug, alcohol, and other addiction problems, priority should be given to those in highest need, in accordance with prudent healthcare principles.

3 Mental health problems requiring specialist support

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 draw attention particularly to the waiting times for psychological treatments. Waiting times remain much longer for people with the most serious mental health (pre, during and post pandemic) problems and the priority must be to resolve this problem rather than extend such treatments further to a wider group, however desirable that may be in future. These waiting times are historically long in Wales due to the low levels of appropriately trained, accredited and skilled psychotherapists and mental health professionals skilled enough to deliver Matrics Cymru recognised psychological interventions.

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.

4 The effects of the pandemic on mental health

We share the concern that the pandemic can affect the mental wellbeing of many people. However, these problems are almost always best addressed through practical support - economic, educational, and housing-related, for example.

Where direct help with mental wellbeing is required, non-specialists such as schools (pastoral support, school nurses and school counselling), colleges, and employers are best placed to provide this.

Specialist 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 are a number of examples across Wales where such low level psychological interventions are taught and supported by locality CAMHS services.

Of course very exceptionally specialist mental health services may support some individuals where the pandemic is the primary cause of their problems. However, a greater concern would be the overuse of treatments such as antidepressants for people whose problems are essentially practical ones caused by the pandemic. It is important that specialist services define their role clearly and avoid medicalising normal reactions to life events.

5 Anxiety or distress as a result of long waiting times

Where patients are affected by delays in physical health procedures we believe that the responsibility for providing emotional support lies with those supporting the patient and managing the waiting list: such support is a fundamental part of physical healthcare.

We do not support the establishment of special arrangements to provide access to psychological therapies or other specialist support for those distressed as a result of long waiting times for physical health procedures. Exceptionally specialist support might be provided to some individuals through established, general referral pathways. Again, a number of services across Wales have employed professionals able to deliver such support in the referral and waiting pathways.

6 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, speedy access to appropriate support should be high on the Welsh Government's agenda.

7 Contact

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