

Cross-Party Group Annual Report 2022 – 2023 (AGM October 2022)

Cross Party Group on Mental Health

1. Group membership and office holders

Ken Skates MS
Jack Sargeant MS
Laura Anne Jones MS
Llyr Gruffydd MS
Jane Dodds MS

Secretariat:

Simon Jones (Head of Policy & Campaigns, Mind Cymru)
Nia Sinclair (EA to Director, Mind Cymru)

2. Previous group meetings

Meeting 1 – Cost of Living

Date: (22 October 2022 – AGM)

Attendees: (Total 26)

Ken Skates MS	Chair & MS for Clwyd South
Tom Giffard MS	MS for South Wales West
Conor D’Arcy	Money & Mental Health Policy Institute
Simon Jones	Mind Cymru (secretariat)
Sue O’Leary	Mind Cymru
George Watkins	Mind Cymru
Richard Jones	Mental Health Matters
James Radcliffe	Platform
Sarah Hatherley	Senedd Research Team
Chris Dunn	Diverse Cymru
Liz Williams	RNIB
Karan Chhabra	British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP)
Madelaine Phillips	Wales NHS Confed
Ross Walmsley	NSPCC Cymru/Wales
Naomi Stocks	Clerk CYPE Committee
Ellie Harwood	Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG)
Valerie Billingham	Office of Older People’s Commissioner
Linsey Imms	Wales TUC
Rachel Lewis	Public Health Wales

Angie Darlington	West Wales Action for Mental Health
Laura Morgan	Adferiad
Euan Hails	Adferiad
Rhys Hughes	Office of Rhun ap Iwerth MS
Kate Liddell	General Medical Council (GMC)
Jess Williams	Sport Wales
Nia Evans	Mind Cymru

Summary of issues discussed:

AGM – Ken Skates MS was elected as Chair for the group following nomination from Simon Jones (Mind Cymru) and seconded by Tom Giffard MS. Mind Cymru was nominated by Ken Skates MS as secretariat of the Group. This was seconded by Tom Giffard. Mind Cymru was appointed as secretariat.

Conor Darcy, Head of Research & Policy, Money and Mental Health Policy Institute gave a presentation highlighting how poor mental health and financial hardship are a vicious circle. He noted that Wales has a forty percentage point gap in employment between those identifying as having a mental health problem and those without. Also, 28% of people economically inactive in Wales have a mental health problem. This makes Wales particularly vulnerable to economic changes which impact hugely on people with poor mental health.

Key comments:

- KS asked whether the statistics on economic activity are like other regions in the UK. CD stated that you see a broad pattern in areas where there is lower employment of poorer mental health outcomes.
- Unions highlighted as good starting points to find out how organisations support people with poor mental health are working to improve the way people are supported in the workplace.
- Reference to pilot at very early stages in London looking at embedding money advice in mental health services (linked to IAPT), which is looking at providing greater signposting to support in recognition that people may struggle to engage with money advice services. Good example for Wales to follow. Early evidence indicate that people do recover quicker if finances are in place. Agreement that more information should be made available at GP practices about how money problems can impact on your mental health.
- Barriers for older people accessing support via online platforms was acknowledged. Recognition of the issues of scams and those suffering with mental ill health may be more susceptible to being victims of these scams.

- The Mental Health and Money service delivered by Adferiad was highlighted. It offers a package of training for professionals.
- Work undertaken on the impact of financial stress has so far largely focussed on adult experiences, but children and young people noted around family members prioritising their children. Greater need for financial literacy targeted at children and young people. Link to Sioned Williams MS' Bill on ensuring benefits are taken up in Wales provides an opportunity to improve the situation and utilise our knowledge around what helps people access support.
- Recognition of people living in fear - distressed caused by debt collectors and impact of people becoming too afraid to open letters. Tragically could lead to someone taking their own life.

There was agreement that joining up money advice and mental health services is very important and there are opportunities to do more within employment services and linking with the Welsh Government.

Meeting 2 - Wales Alliance for Mental Health - Vision for the Next Strategy

Date: 24 May 2023

Attendees: (Total 23)

Ken Skates (Chair)	MS for Clwyd South
Simon Jones	Mind Cymru
George Watkins	Mind Cymru
Bethan Phillips	Mind Cymru
Chris Dunn	Diverse Cymru
Gwyneth Sweatman	Federation of Small Businesses
Dr Jen Daffin,	Platform
Oliver Townsend	Platform
Kathryn Morgan	Shared Lives Plus
Peter Martin	Adferiad
Annabelle Llanes Sierra	CIPD
Dr Jenny Burns	Mental Health Foundation in Wales
Lowri Wyn Jones	Time to Change Wales
Nesta Lloyd-Jones	Welsh NHS Confederation
Elinor Puzey	NSPCC Cymru
Valerie Billingham	Office of Older People's Commissioner
Naila Noori	Royal College of Speech and Language Therapy
Richard Jones	Mental Health Matters
Jonathan Davies	
Sarah Thomas	

Ceri Reed	
Martin Bell	
Euan Hails	Adferiad

Summary of issues discussed:

Simon Jones welcomed members of the Wales Alliance for Mental Health to lead a presentation on the vision for the next strategy given the change in external landscape since the previous 10-year Together for Mental Health strategy.

Dr Jen Daffin (Platform) opened the discussion referencing the Kawa River model (from occupational health) in which our lives is depicted as a river journey with different blockages along the way.

- We want to change the wider environment people live in (social determinants, racism etc.).
- We want to remove rocks (problems) people have and make transitions easier.
- We want to create levers to help remove problems (logs). We want spaces in-between.

WAMH highlighted the following for consideration;

- A new cross-governmental strategy
- Focus on prevention and early intervention
- Recognition of stigma and how it plays a role in affecting people's access to help
- The key overarching strategic priorities should be:
 1. Governance, measurement and transparency
 2. Mental health and suicide risk inequality
 3. Children and young people
 4. Lived experience leadership
 5. Workforce

In discussion, CIPD was noted as having worked with providing employers with resources needed for early intervention so that they are able to recognise when employees are struggling with their mental health.

There was some concern regarding the importance of prevention, especially with demand being so high across all NHS bodies and the cost-of-living crisis (put forward by Nesta from NHS Confederation).

Simon Jones referred to the cultural and conceptualisation shift, moving from illness to wellness. Focus tends to be on practical things when talking about social determinants. There's a need to improve relational health.

Ken called the meeting to a close and offered further contributions from members about the content of future meetings.

3. Professional lobbyists, voluntary organisations and charities with whom the Group has met during the preceding year.

Mind Cymru provided the secretariat support for the group throughout the year. Money and Mental Health Policy Institute presented to the meeting in October 2022 and Mind Cymru and Platform presented on behalf of the Wales Alliance for Mental Health at the May meeting.

The meetings were attended by a range of external organisations, identified on the attendance lists above, who participated in the discussions during the meeting.

4. Financial Declaration

All meetings were held online via Teams, so no payment was made for rooms or catering

All presenters provided their time for free, so no payment for speakers fees

This means that there were no financial transactions for the Cross Party Group during 2021/22