

## Cross Party Group on Mental Health & Eating Disorders

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> June

Hybrid (Seminar Rooms 1&2 Pierhead Building & Teams)

### In attendance:

Julie Morgan MS	Welsh Labour
Simon Jones	Mind Cymru (presenting)
Jo Whitfield	Beat
Sarah Wilson	Mind Cymru
Bethan Phillips	Mind Cymru
Caroline Roberts	ABUHB
Jemma Wray	Mental Health Foundation
Keith Bowen	Samaritans
Frances Rice	Wolfson Centre
Kolade Gamel	ABUHB
Martin Ball	Carer
Valerie Billingham	Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Katherine Pyke	CVUHB
Georgia Taylor	Lived experience
Nesta Lloyd Jones	NHS Confed
Rachel Thomas	Office of Children's Commissioner for Wales
Sam Young	Age Cymru
Sarah Thomas	National Federation of Women's Institutes
Sarah Louise Andrews	SBUHB
Steve Mulligan	BACP
Naomi White	NSPCC Cymru/Wales
Frasier Welsh	CIPD
Kate Powell	Barnardo's Cymru
Dr Liam Mahedy	Public Health Wales
Amy Crossley-Lewis	CTMUHB
Tom Freeston	Beat

### Apologies:

Mark Isherwood MS	Welsh Conservatives
Llyr Gruffydd MS	Plaid Cymru
Dafydd Huw	Royal College of Psychiatrists
Sian Taylor	ABUHB
Emily Hoskins	Lived Experience
James Downs	Lived Experience
Isabella Jurewicz	CVUHB

- **Welcome and Introduction**

Julie Morgan MS welcomed everyone to the meeting

- **Presentation: Simon Jones on behalf of Wales Alliance for Mental Health: Priorities for the next Welsh Government**

Simon introduced the Wales Alliance for Mental Health (WAMH) as a coalition of national mental health and suicide prevention charities that had been working together since 2014 to share information and advocate on behalf of service users and the wider population. Simon highlighted that there were a number of members of the Alliance in the meeting both in person and virtually.

Whilst the Alliance had been around for some time this is the first time that a document has been produced to highlight what organisations would like to jointly see post-election from a new Welsh Government. This has been a process of getting to know the positions of each organisation and where there is commonality.

The recommendations are high level and strategic and will be supplemented and supported by the individual priorities developed by each organisation. They also consider prevention as something that doesn't just happen around early intervention but can happen after more acute treatment and support as well.

Part of the process of developing the recommendations was establishing a clear shared understanding of the current mental health environment, drawing from what we each hear from people with lived experience as well as our service delivery and data.

Simon the introduced the nine themes of recommendations within the document:

- **Prioritise Mental Health**

Prioritise improving and supporting the mental health of the Welsh population, including measurable and impactful cross-government action through the Programme for Government

- **Increase Investment in Prevention**

Increase investment in preventative and protective measures in the first and subsequent budgets, to reduce pressure on the mental health system and improve population mental health

- **Reform Mental Health Services**

Set out an ambitious, resourced programme of reform to create an equitable, easily accessible and fair mental health system that is least restrictive and free from stigma

- **Prioritise the Needs of Babies, Children and Young People**

Develop a clear strategic response to reduce rising mental health need among babies, children and young people by prioritising whole family support in the early years and ensuring quick access to support

- **Tackle the Causes of Poor Mental Health**

Set out clear, deliverable actions to tackle the social and structural causes of mental health inequity with tangible improvement goals by the end of the Senedd term, particularly focused on thriving communities, safe secure affordable housing and eradicating poverty

- **Develop a Robust Measurement Framework**

Deliver a robust and transparent data system that focuses on the quality and benefits of service provision and people's experiences within the first year of the new Welsh Government

- **Develop the Mental Health Workforce**

Support and resource a stronger and united trauma-informed and rights-focused workforce from initial training and qualification through to continued professional development

- **Strengthen Mental Health Legislation**

Commit to reviewing and strengthening the legislative framework for mental health in the first legislative programme to ensure it is rooted in a rights-based accessible approach that provides least restrictive safeguards

- **Support Third Sector Collaboration**

Set a clear direction around embracing and embedding integrated and collaborative partnership between statutory and third sectors ensuring co-production in the development and delivery of mental health provision

Simon confirmed that the document had been shared with all political parties for considering in manifesto development and is also available via these links:

English: <https://www.mind.org.uk/media/ul2jnpbq/wales-alliance-for-mental-health-priorities-for-welsh-government-2026-eng.pdf>

Welsh: <https://www.mind.org.uk/media/a3edocms/wales-alliance-mental-health-manifesto-welsh-v4.pdf>

### **3. Discussion:**

Julie Morgan MS thanked Simon for the presentation and opened up the meeting for comments and questions, stating that there had been some progress around better mental health support, but recognised that there was still more to do

Keith Bowen stated Samaritans Cymru support for the work to develop the document and recognised the progress made and the positive direction of travel set out in the new strategy. Needed to maintain the direction of travel. This was supported by Jemma Wray from Mental Health Foundation who highlighted the journey the Alliance has been on to achieve these recommendations. Steve Mulligan from BACP welcomed the recommendations and stated that they reflected some of the issues and points they were raising themselves

Kate Powell from Barnardo's Cymru welcomed the particular reference to babies in recognition of the impact trauma can have from the earliest ages. Kate also noted that there is a need to recognise

the particular experiences of care experienced children and welcomed the focus on tackling inequalities

Simon Jones noted the importance of the strategy committing to a mental health system that is “proactively anti-racist” and that whilst there is still a way to go to create this, the intent is clear. Julie Morgan added that the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan is an important strategy and unique in the UK, but it has to lead to improvements for people and actual change.

Amy Crossley Lewis welcomed the positioning of prevention as being something more than just early intervention. From her experience within eating disorders prevention can equally be considered following discharge in order to aid recovery and prevent readmission. Julie Morgan asked whether readmission was an issue. Jo Whitfield from Beat highlighted that there is a need to develop more intensive services within communities and that the lack of these could be contributing to the need for readmission. Georgia Taylor shared her experience of inpatient care.

Julie Morgan posed the question of whether there was more stress in communities now and whether Covid experiences continue to play a role. Amy Crossley-Lewis felt there was, particularly on young people. That social media can be positive for some as it helps build communities but also can provide extra pressure on young people.

Simon Jones added that the pandemic is probably continuing to be a factor for some, particularly when you consider the disruption young people experienced during this time. Kate Powell added that it would be interesting to know how the pandemic has contributed to delayed diagnosis for both mental health and neurodiversity due to not being seen in school and not getting access via that route. Julie Morgan added that the disruption to mothers and babies during this period of not being able to access activities may also play a role.

**Action:** Simon to share the links to the WAMH priorities document with members of the group

***Due to technical issues with the microphone the meeting paused here to resolve these issues and await the arrival of the Minister.***

***During this period we became aware that the Minister unfortunately would not be able to attend the meeting for which she was profoundly sorry, but would like to attend a future meeting.***

***Following this the meeting was drawn to a close.***

#### **4. Next steps and Close**

Julie Morgan MS to invite the Minister to a meeting in the autumn

Meeting closed at 12.30pm