

Draft mental health and wellbeing strategy: integrated impact assessment

Section 1: What action is the Welsh Government considering and why?

Welsh Government is publishing a new draft Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2024-2034) for public consultation, which will replace the previous ten year strategy **Together for Mental Health**. We are also consulting on a new draft Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy, which will replace **Talk to me 2: the suicide and self-harm prevention strategy for 2015-2022**.

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy aims to improve and protect the mental health and wellbeing of people in Wales. The strategy sets out an overarching vision for mental health and wellbeing in Wales, alongside four key vision statements, supporting principles, and a series of high level actions to support implementation.

In developing the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, we have considered and applied the five ways of working underpinning the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (as set out below).

As part of the consultation, and alongside this Integrated Impact Assessment, we have also published a draft Welsh Language Impact Assessment, an Equalities Impact Assessment and a Children's Rights Impact Assessment.

Long term

The **Independent Review of Together for Mental Health and Talk to Me 2 Strategies (2012-2022)** showed some improvement in population mental health and wellbeing, at least pre-COVID. However, the impacts of the pandemic on mental health and wellbeing are still being felt, alongside the impacts of the current cost of living crisis. We are seeing rising numbers of people seeking support from mental health services, and we are in "the toughest financial situation we have faced since devolution".¹ Wider challenges also exist – for example, inequalities in access to services, experiences and outcomes; the ongoing need for parity between mental and physical health; needing to build our evidence base on what works to support people in hospital and in the community; and delivering a sustainable workforce.

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy looks to address these long-term challenges. The actions supporting Vision Statement 1 are centred around the core aims of promoting positive mental wellbeing, improving access to wellbeing promoting activities, and further strengthening our understanding of what may prevent poor mental health and wellbeing. The actions supporting Vision Statement 2 capture cross Government contributions to address the wider social determinants of health, given their fundamental impact on mental health and wellbeing. Vision

¹ Written Statement: Update about Budget 2023-24 (9 August 2023) | GOV.WALES

Statement 3 is about having a connected system that supports people to access the right help, at the right time and in the right place. Vision statement 4 is about ensuring quality, evidence-based mental health services are there for everyone who would benefit from them and how they need to be safe, timely, effective, efficient, equitable, person-centred and recovery-focussed.

Prevention

Promoting good mental health and wellbeing remains a major feature of the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and it continues to reflect the importance of moving away from thinking about mental health in a clinical way, towards it being part of everyday conversation. There is a focus on addressing the wider determinants of mental health and wellbeing, with cross Government action to protect mental health and wellbeing framed around the **Marmot Principles**. These principles are about giving every child the best start in life; enabling all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives; creating fair employment and good work for all; ensuring a healthy standard of living for all; creating and developing healthy and sustainable places and communities; and strengthening the role and impact of ill health prevention.

Integration

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Suicide and the Self-Harm Prevention Strategy directly align with the aims of **A Healthier Wales** and the **Duty of Quality** to improve the standard of services.

Vision Statement 2 recognises the wider factors that impact on mental health and wellbeing, and vice versa. Vision Statement 3 is specifically focussed on providing a connected system, where people receive the appropriate level of support wherever they reach out for help. It supports the principle of integration by setting out how we want the mental health system to work – and this includes providing access to the right services and support, at the right time, and in the right place for the individual. Vision Statement 4 and its focus on delivering seamless mental health pathways is fully aligned with the Duty of Quality, and the Care and Quality Standards.

Collaboration

We recognise the range of stakeholders that have a role to play in realising the aims of both strategies. Our partners include the public and those with lived experience, health boards, local authorities, and the third sector.

We have been planning the development of the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy since the Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan was last updated in light of the pandemic in 2020. Preparatory work to inform successor plans has included a number of reviews of mental health services which have informed our approach.²

² This includes the [National Review of Primary Care Mental Health Demand and Activity](#); the [Review of Evidence on All Age Mental Health Services](#); research on the [experiences of young people transitioning from children to adult mental health services](#); the [National Review of Access to](#)

Collectively, these reviews have drawn together the views of service users and carers, practitioners, service delivery providers and the public to provide a comprehensive insight to inform future planning. We have also engaged with stakeholders on an ongoing basis, as we have developed the new strategy's cornerstone policies, and responded to a number of Senedd Committee Recommendations on mental health and wellbeing. This has included stakeholder engagement on the development of the [NYTH/NEST framework](#), the [NHS 111 Press 2](#) service for urgent mental health support, and the HEIW and Social Care Wales [Strategic Mental Health Workforce Plan](#).

Involvement

During the summer of 2023, we carried out pre-consultation engagement to get initial stakeholder feedback on the proposed vision statements and supporting principles, for both the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy. This included an online survey, completed by over 250 individuals and organisations.

Under each of the Vision Statements for the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy, we have captured the views of stakeholders and the key themes from our pre-consultation engagement. We will use the consultation period to further engage with those with lived experience to develop actions for supporting a delivery plans.

Impact

There is support for the development of the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Wales and the Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy, which we are developing collaboratively with our partners.

The Independent Review of Together for Mental Health and Talk to Me 2 highlighted that further improvements to mental health services and support, system changes, and cross Government action is needed, in order to achieve the intended outcomes of improving the mental health and wellbeing of the population of Wales. The new Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy look to strengthen our approach in Wales by setting new Vision Statements – which include a specific focus on the way in which mental health (and suicide and self-harm) services and support will be delivered.

Costs and Savings

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy are being developed in a period of financial constraint and as such we have developed both with the understanding that there will need to be a

[Emergency Services for those Experiencing Mental Health and / or Welfare Concerns; and the Secure Services Review.](#)

way of setting priorities, ensuring best use of existing resources, and needing to be clear about what can realistically be delivered.

Final versions of both strategies will be accompanied by a delivery plan, which over the life of the strategy will be renewed and refreshed.

Section 8: Conclusion

How have people most likely to be affected by the proposal been involved in developing it?

We have developed the draft Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy in collaboration with those with lived experience. We have continued to engage with key groups, including the Mental Health Service User Forum, the Mental Health National Partnership Board, the Wales Alliance for Mental Health, the Mental Health Ethnic Minorities Task and Finish Group, and National Youth Stakeholder Groups. We have also considered the findings of other recent consultations, including the Welsh Government's consultation on the **draft Child Poverty Strategy**.

The National Youth Stakeholder Group has been closely involved with developments in mental health policy and delivery in Wales. Most prominently, it has co-produced the NYTH/NEST Framework, a key element of the new strategy, as well as contributing to the Whole School Approach to Emotional Health and Wellbeing, another cornerstone of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The Welsh Youth Parliament's **Young Minds Matter** Report has been used as fundamental evidence for drafting. Alongside this: In July 2023, the National Youth Stakeholder Group held a focus group to feedback on the draft vision statements. The feedback from the group centred around the requirement to have increased awareness of disordered eating, suicide and self-harm in schools and in improving access to services with dual mental health and neurodevelopment diagnosis. Mind also ran young people engagement work which informed the drafting of the strategy. Additional workshops with children and young people, the Welsh Youth Parliament, and the National Youth Stakeholder Group were held in the lead up to publishing the draft strategy.

We will use the consultation period to build on this previous engagement. This includes further planned engagement with children and young people, people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, Welsh speakers and Welsh language specialist groups, and others who may be affected by the proposal.

What are the most significant impacts, positive and negative?

The intended impacts of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy are improved mental health and wellbeing for the people of Wales.

Positive Impacts

Vision Statement 1 *for the strategy is that people have the knowledge, confidence and opportunities to protect and improve mental health and wellbeing.* This sets out

how we will give people opportunity to take action to support their own mental wellbeing and that of their communities. We define mental wellbeing, which is an important element of establishing a shared vocabulary for mental health, and part of avoiding over-medicalisation. Supporting actions are centred around the core aims of promoting positive mental wellbeing, improving access to wellbeing promoting activities, and further strengthening our understanding of what may protect against mental health conditions and poor wellbeing.

Vision Statement 2 *for the strategy is that there is cross Government action to protect good mental health and wellbeing.* This highlights the wider (social, environmental and economic) determinants of health that impact our mental health and wellbeing. We capture cross Government commitments underway to drive improvements in these wider determinants, that will then have a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing.

Vision Statement 3 *for the strategy is that there is a connected system where all people will receive the appropriate level of support wherever they reach out for help.* Our overall goal is to ensure people get support from a joined-up service that is easy to access and easy to navigate. Services should actively support people to find the right help, in the right place, at the right time. We are aiming to have a **connected system** in place and make sure the people who provide services have the confidence and knowledge to engage with people who need mental health support, aligned with the principles of the **Trauma-Informed Wales Framework**. This section also acknowledges that the current means of accessing mental health and wellbeing support has room for improvement and does not always work as a connected system. Children, young people and their families tell us they experience being “bounced between” services or being told they have come to the wrong place for support or that they have to repeat their background and story multiple times.³ Having listened to what people have told us and in response to these issues, Vision Statement 3 highlights we have co-produced, with young people and families, the **NYTH/NEST Framework** for implementing a connected approach to mental health and wellbeing services for babies, children, young people and their families.⁴

Vision Statement 4 *for the strategy is delivering seamless mental health services – which are person centred, needs led and where people are guided to the right support first time without delay.* This is about providing access to quality, evidence based mental health services to everyone who would benefit from them, and for those services to be outcome and recovery-focused with a priority for those with serious and enduring mental health conditions.

³ [No Wrong Door: bringing services together to meet children’s needs - Children’s Commissioner for Wales \(childcomwales.org.uk\)](https://www.childcomwales.org.uk)

⁴ The acronym of Nurturing, Empowering, Safe and Trusted (NEST) was created by young people and stakeholders during our co-production sessions and sets out the core values they want in mental health services. [NEST framework \(mental health and wellbeing\): introduction | GOV.WALES](#)

Negative Impacts

We do not envisage any negative impacts from the implementation of the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, or the Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy, but we will use the consultation period to gather further evidence.

In light of the impacts identified, how will the proposal maximise contribution to our well-being objectives and the seven well-being goals?

Through its vision statements, supporting principles and proposed actions, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy directly supports the seven connected wellbeing goals for Wales in the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** including a resilient Wales, a healthier Wales, and a more equal Wales. The strategy has been developed in line with the five ways of working set out in the Act, which says that we must:

- take account of the long term
- help to prevent problems occurring or getting worse
- take an integrated approach
- take a collaborative approach
- consider and involve people of all ages and with diverse characteristics and needs

There are proposed high level actions and key policies in place to support delivery of each of the vision statements in both the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy, that will contribute to the wellbeing goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Ministerial Advice and decision

Officials in the Mental Health and Vulnerable Groups Team set out proposals regarding the development of the draft Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy in a submission to the Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing. The Deputy Minister agreed to the overall draft approach for both strategies and the Welsh Government Cabinet approved both strategies on 29 January 2024 for consultation.

How will the impact of the proposal be monitored and evaluated as it progresses and when it concludes?

A “theory of change” is being developed for the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2024-2034) and the Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy. The theory of change will set out the mechanisms by which the strategies intend to achieve outcomes. It will be used as the basis for planning an evaluation of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. It is intended that an evaluation of the strategy will be commissioned in due course.

Throughout the strategy we have also identified a number of measurable indicators that we will monitor as part of the implementation of the strategy. These, and further indicators to be identified, will also support the evaluation of the strategy when commissioned.

The implementation of both the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy will be overseen by the Mental Health Joint Ministerial Assurance Board.