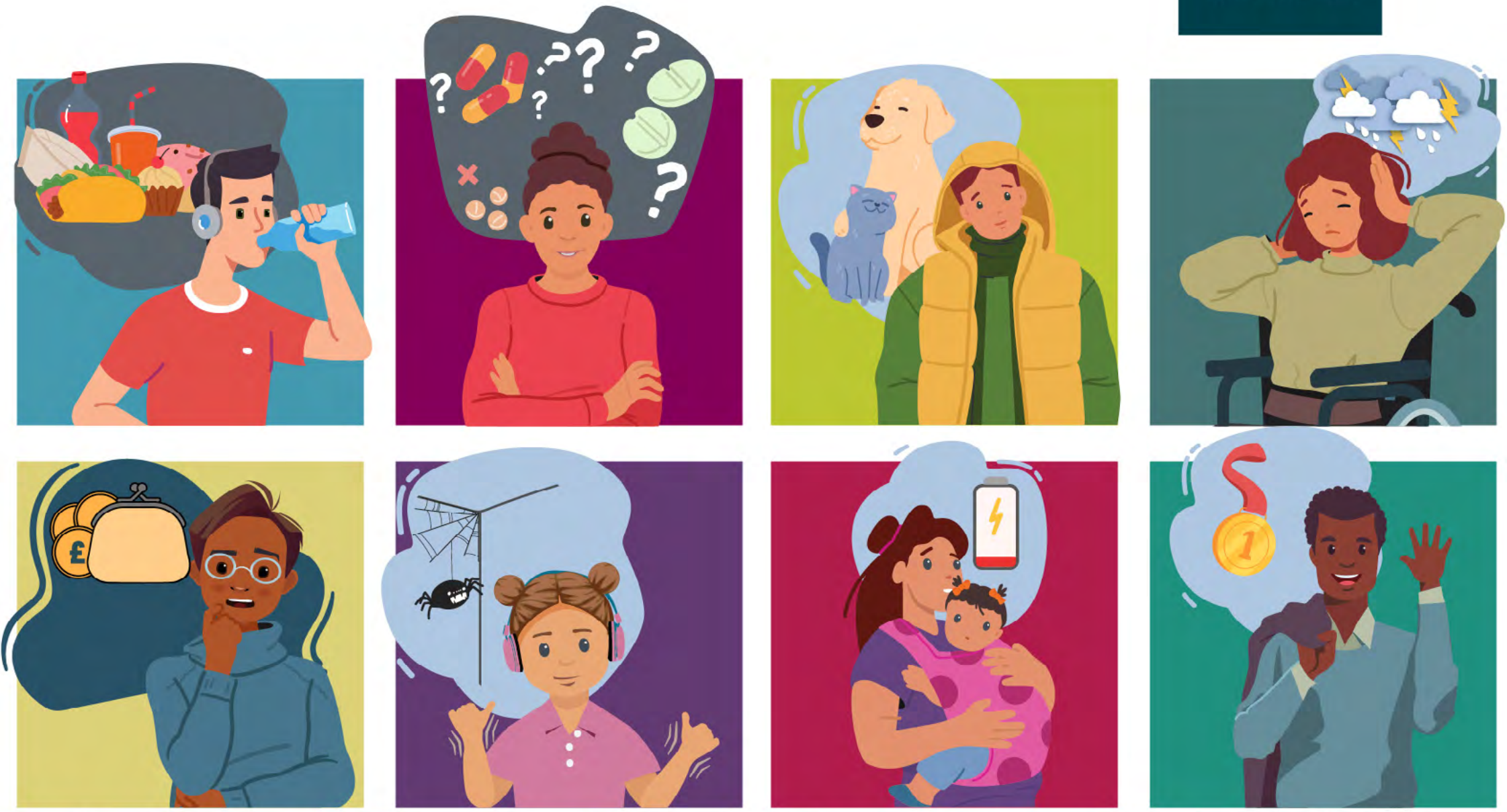
All-Age Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

2025-2035

Making sure people in Wales live in communities that promote and support mental health and wellbeing.

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Hello

Mental health and wellbeing are important – they're just as important as your physical health.

Our mental health plays a big part in the way we think, feel and act. It affects:

- how we handle life
- how we care for ourselves
- how we handle stress
- our relationships with others
- our ability to learn or work
- our ability to get involved in activities
- our sense of belonging
- how we make choices

The Welsh Government wants everyone in Wales to have good mental health and wellbeing. We want everyone to have the right support, at the right time.

This tells you about our new plan to make sure people in Wales live in communities that promote and support mental health and wellbeing.

It's called the:

All-Age Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2035

This strategy is based on rights

All children and young people have rights set out in the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**. This strategy helps make sure everyone has their right:

- to be supported to live and grow (Article 6)
- to be listened to and taken seriously (Article 12)
- to good quality health care (Article 24).

This is a 10-year plan. There's also a Delivery Plan of the actions we're going to take over the first 3 years to deliver change.

You can read it here:

Our vision

People in Wales live in communities that:

- **promote and support mental health and wellbeing**
- **give them the power to improve their mental health and wellbeing**
- **are free from stigma and discrimination.**

Stigma — when people view you negatively and judge you because of your mental health.
Discrimination — when people treat you differently because of who you are.

This supports the UNCRC:

- **Article 4:** The Government should make sure that all children and young people get these rights.
- **Article 12:** Every child has the right to be listened to and taken seriously.
- **Article 24:** Every child has the right to good healthcare.

Stories

To help explain this strategy we have character stories to show the kind of support we want to see happen.

Principles

This strategy is built on **principles** to make sure Wales is a place where:

Support is for all ages.
Everyone gets the support they need — from babies to older people.

Support works together and has 'no wrong door'.
It connects together and is open to everyone. People get the right support, at the right time, in the right ways, without delays.

Support steps in quickly and we promote good mental health and wellbeing.
Services step in quickly so issues don't get worse.

Support is based on evidence and focuses on outcomes.
People get the best support possible.

Support puts people and their needs at the centre.
Services and staff:

- help people develop their strengths so they can make decisions about their health
- are compassionate and treat people with dignity and respect.

Support understands trauma.
Everyone working in Wales understands what trauma is and how it affects people's mental health and wellbeing, in line with the Trauma-Informed Wales Framework.

Trauma — is any experience that's unpleasant and can cause us distress or anxiety. Trauma can also refer to the effects of a traumatic event. Trauma can be a one-off event, a series of events, or an ongoing situation.

Support is free from stigma and shame, blame and judgement.
We will make sure people feel able to come forward and ask for support without fear.

Support is built on co-production.
Services and staff:

- treat people as equal partners
- involve people in designing, developing and delivering policies and services.

Support looks at everything that affects mental health.
Government, public bodies and services use their powers to create the right environment for mental health and wellbeing.

Support is based around your rights.
Services and staff promote and protect people's rights. Everyone has rights. Children have extra rights set out in the UNCRC.

Support helps to promote equity of access, experiences and outcomes: it's open, fair and there's no discrimination. Services understand the barriers people face. Staff make sure support is right for people's age and life experiences, so they can reach the best outcomes.

About this strategy

This strategy is about:

- protecting and promoting good mental health and wellbeing
- supporting people with poor mental health and mental health conditions.

What we mean...

Mental health means having mental wellbeing that helps people cope with the stresses of life, learn well, work well, and add to their community. It affects our ability to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in.

Poor mental health might mean someone has a mental health condition but not always.

Mental health conditions can impact daily living, including our ability to work, care for ourselves, our family, and our relationships. Mental health conditions can be mild or severe. This covers lots of conditions (e.g. depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, schizophrenia) with different symptoms.

People with mental health conditions often have lower levels of physical and mental wellbeing, but not always. Some mental health conditions like eating disorders can put people at risk of an early death.

Mental wellbeing is feeling like we're coping with the everyday stresses of life.

Emotions are how we feel about something and how our body reacts. For example, if we feel fear we might also feel our heart beating faster.

Feelings are how we experience our emotions and give meaning to them. They are different for everyone.

Meet Tareq

My name is Tareq. I'm 10 years old. I like sea creatures like whales and dolphins. I know loads about them. It's important we look after all the animals otherwise our planet won't survive. I get worried when I think about all the animals dying because of pollution and the planet getting hotter.

When I think about climate change, I get scared and it makes me feel sick. When that happens, I talk to my teacher, or my mum and dad. They help me by naming my feelings and helping me understand why I feel worried and what I can do to feel better.

I've joined my school council, and we are doing things to help the environment, like recycling in school and turning the lights off when we don't need them.

I'm learning about everyday feelings, like feeling worried or sad and how to make myself feel better, by talking, playing with my dog, taking deep breaths and spending time outside.

Goal 1:

We want to make sure the building blocks are in place to support good mental health and wellbeing.

This means — when basic building blocks in life like a safe childhood, a good home, a job, money, relationships and friendships are missing it can have a big impact on our mental health and wellbeing.

To help give people these building blocks, we'll raise awareness of how important it is to consider mental health and wellbeing in plans and policies for Wales.

You should be able to say:

Actions

We will:

- Measure the difference this strategy is making so we learn what works and what needs improving.
- Put the principles of this strategy at the heart of all our work and make sure public bodies do health impact assessments that consider mental health.
- Raise awareness of mental health and make sure it's considered in any new policies and plans.

Public bodies — get money from the Government to provide services to the public, like hospitals, schools and social services. But they are separate from the Government itself.

Meet Elijah

I'm Dan - I'm Elijah's Dad.

I'm Elijah, I'm 18 months old, I have a daddy called Dan and a mummy called Tara. I like cuddles, stories and making noise.

When I was a very little baby I wanted to be close to my mummy and I would get upset if she wasn't holding me, her smell and heartbeat was comforting to me, it was what I knew. My daddy didn't hold me a lot or talk with me so I didn't feel as comfortable with him. An adult my mummy and daddy trusted (our health visitor) came to talk to my mummy and daddy, she also talked with me and smiled at me and this made me feel happy and included.

My daddy started taking me on walks which made me happy because I could see the trees and feel the wind and sun. My daddy also started taking me to a fun place with lots of books. We looked at books together and I liked holding the books and listening to his voice. We go there every week now and they have lots of things to play with and make noise with. I like it when I can make a big noise with my hands and my voice.

My daddy plays with me now, he makes me laugh playing peekaboo and tickles. I like it when he looks at me and sings with me, it makes me feel calm and loved. I still love being with mummy but I also love cuddles and time with daddy too.

Goal 2:

Everyone has the knowledge, opportunities and confidence to protect and promote good mental health and wellbeing.

This means – making it easy for people to look after their mental health and wellbeing. Everyone is different and some people may need more support than others. This goal is helping people take action, by removing barriers and giving them support.

You should be able to say:

Actions

We will:

- Collect evidence so we understand the best ways to protect and promote good mental health and wellbeing for everyone.
- Empower people to do the things that protect and promote their mental health and wellbeing.
- Create an environment that protects and promotes good mental health and wellbeing so it's normal to talk about it and get help for mental health conditions.

Meet Max

My name is Max, I'm 7 years old and I live with my foster carer Marie. I like building things and drawing.

I can't live with my mum because she can't take care of me. Adults told me my mum's job was to keep me clean and safe, take me to school and see the doctor when I'm poorly. Other adults noticed my mum couldn't do these things for me, and a Judge decided that although my mum loves me very much, I need to live with an adult who can do these things for me. Marie had special training before she started looking after me, so she understood how to help me deal with the trauma this caused, and she often talks to a specialist about how best to care for me. Marie and my social worker David helped me make a book all about my life so far which we add to all the time, and this helps me to understand where I come from.

Sometimes I get angry and sometimes I get sad, but Marie is patient with me and gives me cuddles and helps me to understand my emotions. Sometimes, Marie needs to talk to other people looking after children who can't live with their families, and we go to a meet up with other foster carers. I love this because I get to play with my friends in soft play while Marie talks to the other carers.

I am starting a new school in September, and I am feeling nervous about it. Marie is feeling nervous too, but we have met my new teacher Mrs Jones and she is very friendly. Marie and David have spoken to her about how I behave when I feel stressed or worried and how to help me feel better. She has made a sensory area for me in the classroom which I can use if I need to have some quiet time and do some drawing to relax. All the teachers in my school have done training to support children who have experienced trauma so they understand how trauma can affect my learning and behaviour, and that makes me feel supported. My teachers can also talk to the specialist about how I am doing in school.

When I'm a bit older I will start some support with a trained therapist. The therapist will work with me and my foster carer to help me work through what happened when I was younger and to help me understand and process my feelings.

Goal 3:

We want a connected system so everyone gets the right support when they first ask for help.

This means – making sure people get the right help, at the right time, in the right ways without having to wait.

People often need extra support from Health services, Social care, Housing, Advice Services or others. We want all these services to connect together so there aren't any gaps.

You should be able to say:

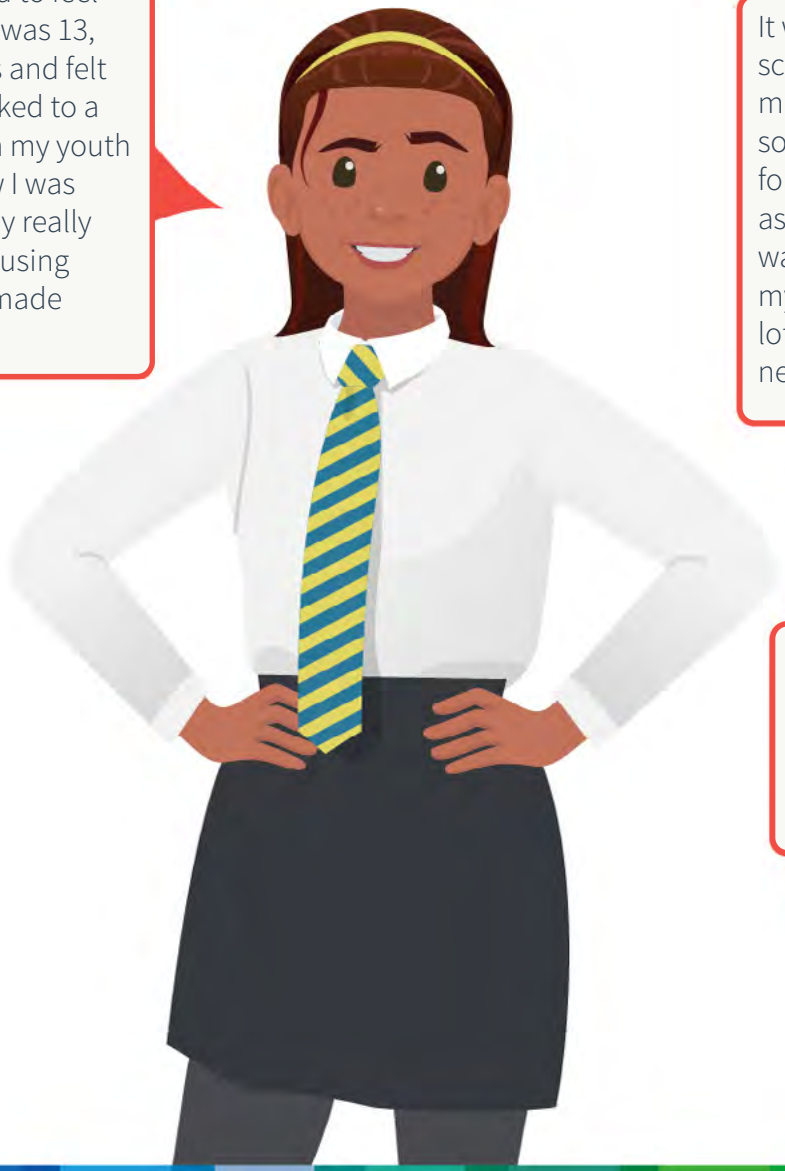
Actions

We will:

- Make sure services step in early and give people the right support and advice.
- Make sure health and social care services can work together without gaps.
- Make sure services and staff know about trauma and use the Trauma-Informed Wales Framework.
- Improve the advice and support for staff who need help to support people with poor mental health.
- Make sure all services working with babies, children and young people put their mental health first and follow the NYTH / NEST Framework.
- Focus on improving support for the first 1000 days in a baby's life.
- Develop actions that help all the systems work together better like education or substance misuse, particularly for the needs of groups of people including children and young people.

Meet Nia

I'm Nia, I am 15 years old. I like spending time with my friends, gaming and hockey. I started to feel anxious when I was 13, had low moods and felt depressed. I talked to a youth worker in my youth club about how I was feeling, and they really listened to me, using language that made sense to me.



After talking it through with me and my mum the youth worker rang the Single Point of Access (SPoA) which is the number to call to get support in our county and spoke to a worker from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The CAMHS specialist told my youth worker about some different coping mechanisms and techniques I could use to help me deal with how I was feeling. They also contacted my mum to let her know how to help me.

It was about this time my school said they thought I might be neurodivergent so they put in a referral for a neurodivergence assessment and whilst I was waiting for the appointment my mum and I were given lots of information about neurodivergence.

When I was 14 my youth worker rang the SPoA again to say my low moods and anxiety had got worse. We had a meeting with me, my mum, youth worker, school and CAMHS. They asked me what helped and I told them about the calming techniques and playing hockey. I felt like I was in control and the adults were listening to me. All of my trusted adults worked together to help me practice my coping techniques, go to youth club and carry on seeing my friends. They also helped me go to an under 15s hockey club. I was glad I got support early, before my problems got any worse.

My trusted adults accessed neurodivergence training to understand how my brain works differently to others and I did some young person friendly training too. That training also introduced me to a safe internet forum for teenagers with neurodivergence. Now I understand myself a lot more, my differences are what makes me, me, and I have friends I can talk to that understand.

Everyone working together and people listening to me meant I didn't have to tell my story lots of times or go from service to service to get support. Rather than passing me on to someone else, the people I trust supported me in the ways I needed at the time.

Goal 4:

We want all mental health support to put the person first, to meet their needs in the right way, at the right time, without delays.

This means – people get support quickly. We don't want people having to keep asking or waiting for help.

You should be able to say:

Actions

We will:

- Develop standards so services put people first and give support in the language people choose.
- Focus on services that step in early to stop mental health issues getting worse.
- Make sure there's community-based mental health support to help people recover.
- Support actions to improve inpatient stays so they make a purposeful difference in lives and are in high-quality, safe environments.
- Support the physical health of people with severe mental health conditions, so they don't die sooner than normal.
- Support new mental health laws.

Meet Anita

My name is Anita, and I work in Cardiff as a community mental health nurse.

Helping people is my passion, and I find my work to be really fulfilling. But I was having mental health issues last year, and I noticed that I was becoming worried and losing confidence in my professional skills. When I told my manager, she was quite sympathetic and helped me get access to the wellbeing resources accessible to social workers and health care providers. In order to support my professional growth, she also recommended a few training programs and ensured that we have frequent supervisory meetings.

Following my manager's advice, I attended a session that improved my ability to collaborate with Cardiff's varied groups. I was better able to comprehend the cultural environment in which I operate because the training was co-produced with youth from ethnic minority backgrounds. Hearing the tales of young people has given me more confidence and taught me a lot.

I have completed extra specialised training, which has increased my confidence in my ability to provide psychological interventions and assist individuals in reaching their recovery objectives. I chose to pursue my studies to become an accredited therapist because I loved that training so much.

In addition, I've had access to tools and training that have boosted my confidence in my ability to use Welsh at work. By using a bilingual greeting to patients and offering an "Active Offer," I keep helping people. If a patient wishes to speak Welsh, I can ask my team members who speak the language for assistance. I practise my Welsh language skills, and we all wear our Iaith Gwaith badges.

It can be challenging to work in the community when we're constantly on the go and not in the office. I can now access records while I'm not at my base, though, because we were recently given electronic tablets. This facilitates improved departmental and staff collaboration and helps me stay current on reports and records.

My mental health has improved, and I feel supported.

Going forward

Supporting the whole mental health system

Lots of people said we needed to take action and improve the whole mental health system. We will make sure:

- people can get information and support online and can use technology
- the mental health workforce is skilled and can support people in the right ways
- all buildings, land and properties where people get support are fit for purpose and meet people's needs
- research in science and new ideas are used to improve services
- information is communicated better.

Next steps

We will work with other government departments, local authorities and organisations to deliver this Strategy using our Delivery Plan.

The Delivery Plan sets out:

- the actions we will take
- who needs to deliver them
- when they need to be done.

Checking it works

We've set up a Mental Health: Joint Ministerial Assurance Board. This group will check our work and make sure the Strategy is making a difference to people's lives.

We have developed a "theory of change" tool. It has indicators that measure how well this Strategy is doing. We'll use this tool and report back to the Board every six months.

Thanks

If you want to know more, contact:

Mental Health and Vulnerable Groups
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

mentalhealthandvulnerablegroups@gov.wales

Getting support

If you feel you can't keep yourself safe, it's a mental health emergency. It's important to get some help.

Whatever you're going through, these people are there to talk to:

- C.A.L.L. on **0800 132 737**
- text SHOUT to **85258**
- **111 Press 2** NHS Helpline for Urgent Mental Health Support
- Childline on **08000 1111**

These services are for anyone who's struggling. They won't judge you.
They're free, they're anonymous, and they're always open.