

National Assembly for Wales
Environment and Sustainability Committee
WFG 58
Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill
Response from Mind Cymru



Environment and Sustainability Committee Consultation on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill

Enquiry into the general principles of the Bill

Response from Mind Cymru

Introduction

Mind is the leading mental health charity in England and Wales. Mind Cymru is Mind's force for change in Wales.

Mind Cymru welcomes the opportunity to respond to the enquiry into the general principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill, and would be happy to give oral evidence based on our submission if required. The views expressed within this response are the views of Mind Cymru and are informed by people with direct experience of mental health problems.

Mind Cymru is experienced in matters of policy and practice development affecting people with experience of mental health problems, living in Wales.

Mind Cymru's key messages are that:

- People with experience of mental health problems inform all that we do.
- Because people with mental health problems inform all that we do, we know what the real issues are.
- We are determined to improve society's recognition, understanding and acceptance of people with mental health problems.
- We value diversity and ensure inclusion is at the heart of our work.

General Comments

Mind Cymru welcomes the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill, as it has the potential to bring a positive impact to the emotional and mental well-being of the population. The face of the Bill contains some pleasing commitments, such as equal status between physical and mental health.

Mind Cymru supports the broad aims of the Bill and its principle of putting sustainability and sustainable development at the heart of government and the wider public sector. However, as the Bill contains such a broad scope of aims and objectives, it is vital that aspects of the Bill pertaining to mental health are further developed in partnership with stakeholders and colleagues with expert knowledge in this field.

Our response focuses on the aspects of the Bill with a close relevance to mental health, and aims to highlight some shortcomings which we feel could be addressed to make the language of the Bill more meaningful to those with mental health problems.

1. The approach to improving well-being

Mind Cymru is pleased to see increasing recognition of the importance of the well-being of the population in Welsh legislation, yet we feel that without a clear definition of what the term means, subsequent objectives can become too vague. While the narrative around well-being on the face of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill is a positive one, it lacks a clear definition which could limit the success and scope of well-being objectives. There are many areas of a person's life and the environment and community around them which can impact on their well-being, and the Bill has the potential to form partnerships between public bodies around well-being that have previously been lacking. This must be accompanied by a narrative that is shared and resonates across people's lives and across the diversity of the population of Wales.

The New Economics Foundation's Five Ways to Wellbeing¹ is an evidence based set of actions that could provide a good basis for this.

Mind Cymru asks the committee to consider seeking an amendment to place a firmer definition and narrative around what well-being means for

¹ <http://www.neweconomics.org/projects/entry/five-ways-to-well-being>

people in Wales on the face of the bill, including a recognition of good mental health as a core factor in well-being.

2. The approach to measuring progress towards achieving well-being goals

Mind Cymru is unsure if the impact of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill can be successfully measured in its current form, particularly its goal for A Healthier Wales. Without a clear definition of mental and physical well-being it is unclear how this will be achieved.

The Bill will place duties on a broad range of public bodies, some of which will have expertise in mental health, the needs of people with mental health problems and the delivery of mental health services. However, many of these public bodies will not have such knowledge and will require partnership with those who do to successfully deliver on the goal of A Healthier Wales. It is vital that the Bill supports and progresses existing services and legislation around mental health.

Mind Cymru asks that the committee seek evidence based assurance that The Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010 and Together for Mental Health have been fully considered and informed the Bill, and that future well-being objectives set by the Bill will be informed by expert knowledge and close partnership with the mental health sector.

3. Parity of esteem between physical and mental health

Mind Cymru are pleased to see mental well-being receiving equal status to physical well-being in one of the Bill's six goals, A healthier Wales. The principle of parity of esteem between physical and mental health is a principle which we found lacking in the recent Public Health white paper, and are hopeful that the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill can take a more positive direction for the status of mental health within a healthcare context.

However, the goal's description as 'a society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood' raises some concerns around the language used.

The classification of behaviours that impact on physical health such as exercise, eating habits and weight, alcohol consumption and smoking as 'choices' ignores the strong link between all of these behaviours and mental health problems. The language used in the bill fails to understand these complex relationships.

To afford parity of esteem between physical and mental health in legislation is a positive move that Mind Cymru have long argued for, but it is important that legislation and health service delivery also recognise the interrelationship between physical and mental health and the impact that each can have on the other. It is also vital that the public bodies that fall within the scope of this Bill are effectively scrutinised to ensure that the principle of parity of esteem between physical and mental health is being consistently adhered to.

4. Co-production

The Bill provides the opportunity to improve the resilience and well-being of people's mental health in a multitude of ways. The delivery of a society in which people's mental well-being is maximised will be impossible without the involvement of people with mental health problems in the design and delivery of the services they need. The principle must push beyond tokenism and occasional consultation and must be embedded at every stage of the well-being objectives set by the Bill. Wales has a diverse population which includes several marginalised and hard to engage groups.

The principle of co-production is not explicitly referred to in the Bill and is only loosely embraced; section 8.2 of the Bill requires public bodies to take into account 'the importance of involving those with an interest in the objectives, by seeking their views and taking them into account'.

Mind Cymru would welcome a stronger commitment than this to truly involve citizens, including those with mental health problems, in the delivery of the Bill's goals. We firmly believe that seeking the views of those with mental health problems cannot be a meaningful exercise without commitment that the objectives within the Bill will be directly co-produced between public bodies and the people whose lives their objectives will impact on.

Mind Cymru asks the Committee to consider an amendment to include a truly citizen centred approach to involving service users in planning and delivery, beyond its current stated intent to take views into account. Mind Cymru asks for an evidence-based co-production model to be laid out on the face of the Bill.

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