

AUTUMN 2021



## Swimming Special...

# Taking the plunge to improve physical and mental health



See news of a new Swim Wales  
campaign in partnership with  
Hafal on page 2...

# MENTAL HEALTH WALES



now part of



# #GetIntoWater: Swim Wales announces partnership with Hafal for new swimming campaign!

Swim Wales has announced that it is partnering with Welsh mental health charity Hafal for a new national campaign - #GetIntoWater - to jointly highlight how regular aquatic activity can improve social, emotional and physical wellbeing.

The partnership will see Swim Wales, the National Governing Body for Aquatics, and Hafal engage with the population of Wales to not only convey the benefits that aquatic exercise brings to people's physical and mental health but also to highlight the life-changing effects that aquatic activity has already had on the lives of individuals across the country.

The national #GetIntoWater campaign, launched in May 2021, has been created to encourage everyone in Wales to get active in the water in a fun way. This message is fundamental to the vision at Swim Wales which is 'aquatics for everyone for life'.

The joint campaign with Hafal aims to be inclusive, so that everyone can join in regardless of background, age or ability. Both the Swim Wales and Hafal teams look forward to showcasing the many different aquatic activities that run across Wales. The goal is for as many people (and partner organisations) as possible join the campaign by getting into water themselves, by promoting the campaign, or by supporting the campaign virtually by using the **#GetIntoWater** hashtag across social media channels or visiting [swimwales.org](https://swimwales.org).



#GETINTOWATER  
#EWCYHRDŴR

Swim Wales CEO Fergus Feeney (pictured) said: "For many years we have been advocates of the benefits of aquatic activity for both mental and physical health - there is a proven direct correlation between the two: 'healthy body, healthy mind'.

"We are very excited about this new partnership with Hafal as they are a very well respected charity in the area of mental health and support. I know that both organisations will take this national campaign to people and places that we have never reached before, and in doing so improve the lives of many thousands of Welsh people of all backgrounds and levels of ability."

Alun Thomas, CEO of Adferiad Recovery, said: "We're very excited to partner with Swim Wales on the #GetIntoWater campaign.

"It's surprising how many of our clients and members are already regular swimmers, and they are well aware of the very positive impact it has on their mental health and wellbeing as well as their physical health.

"But we want even more people in Wales affected by mental health problems to reap the many benefits of swimming. We look forward to working with Swim Wales to inspire people across Wales to overcome any doubts they have and give swimming a go!"

For more information on the #GetIntoWater campaign visit: [swimwales.org](https://swimwales.org)

## Swansea University to evaluate benefits of outdoor healthcare and greener hospitals

**Researchers from the School of Psychology at Swansea University have been awarded funding to examine the potential health benefits of creating sustainable eco-friendly hospitals and providing healthcare outdoors.**

Professor Jason Davies and Dr Kim Dienes will join forces with Down to Earth – a local award-winning social enterprise and Swansea University spin-out – to examine the impact of the Fit for the Future scheme.

The Swansea team have been awarded £50,000 for the evaluation work, as part of the overall funding of £895,000 provided for the scheme.

Two pioneering health projects for the NHS are being developed by Fit for the Future.



The first is supporting public engagement for a new cancer treatment hospital at Velindre NHS Trust, which will be designed using sustainable construction methods that have a low impact on the environment.

The second project is “Our Health Meadow”, adjacent to University Hospital Llandough near Penarth. A seven-acre field and another seven acres of surrounding woodland will be transformed into an outdoor healthcare and rehabilitation facility.

Both sites will be co-designed and constructed in collaboration with patients, hospital staff and the local community.

[Read more at mentalhealthwales.net](http://mentalhealthwales.net)

## Thousands of people with a mental disorder sent to prison ‘when they need treatment’

**Thousands of people with a mental health disorder are in prison because no safer alternatives were available when a court had to pass sentence, according to a new report by the Royal College of Psychiatrists.**

Up to 8,000 prisoners — around 10% of the current prison population in England and Wales — could have missed out on a community sentence or a suspended prison sentence with a Mental Health Treatment Requirement (MHTR) because specialist mental health services do not have the resources they need to deliver them.

Professor Pamela Taylor, lead author of the Royal College of Psychiatrists’ report, said: “Too many people with mental disorders who get involved with criminal justice are being failed by a system that overlooks the use of Mental Health Treatment Requirements.”

[Read more at mentalhealthwales.net](http://mentalhealthwales.net)

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**We hope you found the latest issue of our journal useful! To support our work in providing the latest mental health news and information you can make a donation to Hafal at our JustGiving page.**

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**For more of the latest news visit: [mentalhealthwales.net](http://mentalhealthwales.net)**

#GETINTOWATER  
#EIVCHIRDWR

# INTERVIEW: Dafydd James

We talk to Dafydd James, Hafal's Promise Ambassador and Wales and British & Irish Lions rugby star, to get his thoughts on breaking down barriers to physical activity and the benefits of swimming.

**What would you say to people who are struggling to get past that first step in improving their physical health and want to overcome the barriers?**

Breaking barriers is difficult. Taking the first step is the hardest part of the journey. You have to take baby steps first. You know the benefits of exercise, it speaks for itself, but the hard part is getting up off the sofa or getting out of bed to do it. My advice is to surround yourself with a support mechanism, or do it with a couple of other people if you can. There are plenty of resources out there so I would say getting over that initial hurdle, doing it with someone and planning it into your day, that's probably where best to start. There's no set regimented plan you have to follow, doing any amount of exercise is better than doing no exercise at all.

**Hafal has recently partnered with Swim Wales for a new campaign. Do you swim? How beneficial do you find swimming?**

Yes, I do. I swim quite a bit. I'm actively involved in lifeguarding and I swim across the bay in Porthcawl. I've done it numerous times in the last few weeks and I find it very therapeutic. I've been reading up on the Wim Hoff method of cold-water treatment for an improvement in your cardiovascular system, depression and body ailments - there's a lot of science behind it. But to sea swim takes me back into nature, you have to focus on the here and now and it's good

**Swimming in a pool, swimming in the sea, it allows your mind to detach from whatever's going on in your life.**



Dafydd (left) recently held an informative gym session for Adferiad Recovery EIP service user Stephen and staff members Chloe and David at High Street Fitness in Pontypool.

therapy. Swimming in a pool, swimming in the sea, it allows your mind to detach from whatever's going on in your life.

**Would you say swimming can help people's mental and physical health?**

Water is a great tool. I think being by the sea and listening to the waves is good but swimming is great. A lot of people can't swim though so the #GetIntoWater initiative is fantastic. It's therapeutic and if you have bad joints from previous sporting activities or life as a whole, it takes the pressure off the joints and is probably the best full body exercise you can do. Once again, through swimming you could end up meeting people and building up a network which is then your support mechanism. It's a tough sport if you get into it properly - I'm thinking of doing an ironman! - but it's absolutely great for the mind.

Read our full interview with Dafydd @ [www.mentalhealthwales.net/2021/09/physical-health-interview-dafydd-james/](http://www.mentalhealthwales.net/2021/09/physical-health-interview-dafydd-james/)

# INTERVIEW: Ruth Dodsworth

#GETINTOWATER  
#EIVCHIRDŴR

We caught up with ITV weather presenter Ruth Dodsworth to discuss the link between good physical and mental health. Ruth also talks about her 'newfound love' for swimming across Wales!

## Do you think good physical and good mental health are interlinked?

Absolutely. I would say, in a sense, you need one to balance the other. You don't have to be hitting the gym 24/7, it's not about that, it's just about keeping yourself going, keeping your blood flowing, getting oxygen in your lungs, and with that sense of physical wellbeing comes that sense of mental wellbeing. The two are completely interlinked and I think it's important we recognise that. The old saying 'a healthy body, a healthy mind' has stuck around for good reason!

## How beneficial do you find just getting outdoors in the fresh air and into nature?

For me it's absolutely essential. I think for everybody, just the ability to get outside and breathe fresh air is so important. We're lucky in Wales to have the landscape, the coast and the country that we do. It benefits us physically and mentally.

## Do you like swimming? What are the benefits you get from it?

I do swim. I swam all the way through university and then when I had my children - swimming is something I've always done. I grew up near the coast so for me swimming was effectively part of my education: we learnt to swim and rightly so. I've noticed with lockdown how swimming has very much become part of life for a whole new generation: there's a newfound

**I think people are really waking up to the benefits of swimming and getting into the water. I'm so pleased to see how popular it's become.**



love for swimming, especially outdoor swimming and wild swimming which seems to be going from strength to strength. We have hundreds of miles of coastline here in Wales, you don't have to pay, anyone can go, and I think people are really waking up to the benefits of swimming and getting into the water. It's lovely because people are forming groups and relationships and it's opening up a whole new world. You don't have to be an Olympic standard swimmer, as long as you're safe and you know your water, that really is key. It's fantastic!

## Would you recommend it to others as a way to improve wellbeing?

Without a question. Like I said, even if it's just dipping your toes in the water, there's something about that connection with the water: it's the freedom, it's liberating, the water takes you away from the world in a sense, I can't speak highly enough of swimming. It's absolutely beneficial - physically, mentally and in every possible way.

# HOW HAS SWIMMING HELPED YOUR MENTAL HEALTH?

We caught up with four individuals whose mental health is hugely boosted by getting into the water and swimming. Here's what they had to say!

#GETINTOWATER  
#EUVCHIRDIVA



## Eilian:

"When I first got exposed to cold water swimming, I only went in to just above my knees. Once it goes past your waist it sort of takes your breath away and I said, 'I can't do this, it's too cold' and I walked out... but as I walked out it was the first time I felt no pain in my knee and my ankle in about 15 years. When I got out I started giggling, I felt amazing. So I started cold water dips from that moment.

"I'm dealing with my PTSD much better because of the cold water therapy. My sleep is better, my mood is better, I feel like my body is rejecting junk food and I went for a whole month without a drink. It may not be everyone's cup of tea, you've got to have the drive to do it, but it's really the only thing that's worked for me. I'm not saying it's going to cure me but it definitely helps. It has improved my relationship with my kids, my friends and everyone around me. By doing this I've also managed to reduce my medication, especially the painkillers. As soon as I started the cold water therapy, it changed everything. I'd definitely recommend it."



## Jo:

"I swim because it makes me feel good. It's a nice, gentle exercise and I feel close to nature. Just being in water is an amazing feeling. Exercise definitely helps me in my recovery. Any exercise boosts my mental health but I would prefer to swim - if there's any tension it helps me to relax and it reduces my anxiety and depression. Since I started, I feel I'm not as ill as I was - it simply makes me feel good in so many ways!

"I started my recovery and now I'm keen to get as well as I can. I can see it happening – the last two times I tried recovery, I wasn't trying any of these things such as swimming, I was in major pain and being in major physical pain affected me emotionally and it was draining.

"There are so many benefits to swimming. If I can't sleep I go for a swim and that tires me out enough to have a good night's sleep and other times it gives me enough energy to get through the day. It's just one of those magical things that you can do when you need it.

"I now plan to do a sponsored swim. I am diabetic and I am passionate about helping people with diabetes and making people realise that being type-2 diabetic isn't the be all and end all. I was on four tablets a day and an injection but I just love being in the water and it was a good reason to get back into it and raise my confidence."



## Mark:

"The main reason I swim is to keep fit. I'm now of a certain age where it's important and I find there's less pressure and no one can bother you when you're swimming. I feel that in a gym you're expected to put on a show, but with swimming I just get in and do however many lengths as I like and it keeps me fit.

"It's beneficial because it keeps me active and it's a nice, gentle exercise. From a mental health point of view it has helped me to build my confidence to go back out and mix with people because I went through a period last year when I wasn't going out at all. If I go swimming a couple of times a week, I know that I can mix with people and of course I can have a little conversation with the regulars. It's beneficial on two fronts – physically and mentally. I think there is a correlation between good physical and mental health.

"Physical health is really important. Even if it's going for a walk for half an hour, it's fine, everybody does their own thing to fit in with their lifestyle. Walking is fine but it's swimming for me that I find beneficial on so many levels. With swimming there's less pressure on you compared to going to a gym because a lot of men especially go to the gym because they feel obliged by society to go and pump weights. But with swimming nobody looks at you twice and you just get to swim away on your own and everybody leaves you to it.

"There also aren't many barriers to swimming. If you want to go swimming in the sea, it's free! But then again my local leisure center in Llanelli is not very expensive, it's only £4.50, so you can't argue with that! As a semi-retired member of the NHS, I would recommend swimming because it's so good physically on so many levels. I'd recommend it over anything."



## Maggie:

"When I did my first dip in the sea there weren't many people around so I didn't feel safe enough to swim, but I love swimming and have done since.

"I've done this as part of a self-body love project to try and overcome body dysmorphia. The biggest hurdle was actually getting from my car to the sea in a swimming costume – getting in the sea was easy in comparison – but I did it and filmed it.

"It has really helped to lift the lid on a soul crushing thing that was stopping me from getting in the water. I struggle with my mobility but now I am planning more swims both in the wild and in baths as a way to help my overall health. Fundamentally this is a huge step in my recovery.

"I've met some ladies who I will be going dipping with so not only will I enjoy socialising again but I will be doing something really positive about my mental health and complicated body issues. I believe this is the first step of many and I will be documenting my ongoing progress.

"I'd definitely recommend trying this – there are many groups online and swimming actually seems to be an in-thing at the moment so there are probably other people nearby you can link in with. I'd definitely recommend going with someone wild swimming for safety. Make sure you check it's clean and safe, and have things like swim shoes, a hooded towel and a flask. This has definitely given me a new lease of life!"

## NEWS: Michael Sheen announces “Talk to Adferiad” national campaign which asks you to shape new charity’s future

Michael Sheen, Ambassador of Adferiad Recovery, has announced a 2021 campaign which will see thousands of people across Wales and beyond engaged in shaping the new charity’s future.



The charity launched earlier this year when Adferiad Recovery, CAIS, Hafal and WCADA merged into one.

Adferiad Recovery’s trustees and senior management are now inviting all the charity’s stakeholders - clients, members, carers, staff, volunteers, supporters and funders – to share their aspirations and define the new organisation from the very start.

Announcing the campaign, Michael said: “Talk to Adferiad will see us holding a big conversation involving all our stakeholders across Wales and beyond.

“We’re a new and ambitious charity, and we want you to discuss exactly what type of charity we should be, what our goals should be, and what we should be campaigning for. What you tell us will decide what we do in the coming years.”

Alun Thomas, Chief Executive of Adferiad Recovery, said: “The important thing to remember is that Adferiad Recovery belongs to its members - mainly clients and their families – and also its other key stakeholders including volunteers, staff, partners, funders and supporters.

“The trustees and management of Adferiad Recovery are at their service and ready to act on what they tell us. The point of this campaign is to provide that opportunity and stimulate a far-



reaching and diverse conversation about what we should be aiming to achieve as a charity.”

23 local campaign events which will cover all 22 counties of Wales and Lancashire will provide key opportunities for stakeholders to join the discussion; an online survey and social media campaign will also provide opportunities for stakeholders to engage virtually.

A report on the “Talk to Adferiad” campaign will be launched at a celebration event in the autumn sponsored by Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing Lynne Neagle MS: this will set out the steps Adferiad Recovery will take to put its stakeholders’ views into action.

To find out more and to take part go to  
[ADFERIAD.org.uk/talk-to-adferiad](https://ADFERIAD.org.uk/talk-to-adferiad)