

SPRING 2022



Issue focus: Tackling the stigma surrounding addiction



MENTAL HEALTH WALES



Featuring an interview
with actor
Richard
Mylan...



Adferiad Recovery launch 'Only Human' campaign to tackle stigma surrounding addiction

Welsh charity Adferiad Recovery has announced that it will launch a new campaign this May called 'Only Human'. The campaign will focus on addressing and overcoming the stigma that surrounds addiction, and will include 23 campaign events in every county of Wales and in Lancashire.



Addiction is a compulsive need to use a substance or engage in a certain behaviour to the point where it becomes harmful. All forms of addiction have the potential to cause harm to individuals, their families and wider society. The number of drug-related deaths and deaths related to alcohol poisoning have consistently been on the rise in England and Wales over the past decade, while the societal cost of gambling related harm in the UK is estimated to be in excess of £1.27 billion, suggesting that support for these problematic behaviours is not being provided to the people who need it most resulting sometimes in fatal consequences.

Almost all of us know someone who has experienced an addiction problem, and so it is important to ensure that those experiencing addiction, whether it be drugs, alcohol, gambling, exercise, sex, gaming, or any other harmful behaviour, receive the help that they need to recover. However, there seems to be a distinct lack of empathy for those who experience addiction issues, to the extent that some individuals are more fearful of the public condemnation of admitting they have an addiction problem than the harm that their addiction can cause if left untreated. But wouldn't you also be hesitant to come forward and admit you have a problem if by doing so you would be subjected to widespread disdain and criticism? - 'Druggie.' 'Alchie.' 'Waster'. 'Junkie'. 'Bum'; just some of the many derogatory terms used to describe individuals with various addictions. Would we refer to people with a mental health problem in this way?

Those with an addiction issue do not deserve to be vilified for what is essentially a mental health problem. The stigmatization of individuals with an addiction perpetuates the issue as the shame that comes with admitting to others that they have a problem and the fear of being labelled discourages them from seeking the help they need to tackle their addiction. It's time to accept that addiction doesn't define a

person. We're all only human and we all have the right to live in a society where our worth isn't measured by the prejudice of others. Adferiad Recovery is committed to campaigning for improvements in services, legislation, system change and public opinion for the benefit of our beneficiaries and that's why this year they are launching their 'Only Human' campaign.

Adferiad's 'Only Human' campaign will encourage people to question what they think they know about addiction and those who experience it. The key aims of the campaign are:

- To tackle the stigma associated with addiction. Through this campaign they hope to challenge the stereotypical image of someone with an addiction and show that people are more than their addiction and worthy of our respect and support.
- To give a voice to those with lived experience of addiction. The campaign will be led by individuals with lived experience of addiction who each have their own unique stories to tell. The campaign will provide a platform for them to share their experience, inspire others to seek recovery and show that people with addiction don't all fit in to the same mold.
- To celebrate and promote recovery. Recovery is a journey of self-discovery. They want to inspire those with an addiction problem to address their addiction and seek the help they need to recover. They want them to see that recovery is a positive thing and that the judgement of others shouldn't pressure them to hide their addiction and suffer in silence.

For more information on the 'Only Human' campaign visit: adferiad.org.uk/onlyhuman

Mental health support scheme for NHS workers extended to social care staff in Wales

A free mental health support scheme for NHS workers is to be extended to social care workers in Wales.

From April, Canopi, which is run by Cardiff University, will open up its confidential and personalised service of support and advice to social care staff, including frontline social care workers, personal assistants, and administrative and managerial staff.

Social care and NHS staff will be able to access a confidential service staffed by healthcare professionals and face-to-face counselling sessions, self-help resources and virtual therapy sessions.

Funded by Welsh Government, who will provide £1.5m per year until 2025, the Canopi team has recruited additional therapists to support the expansion.



Professor Jon Bisson, Director of Canopi, said: "The last two years has been an extremely challenging time for people working in health and social care. We're delighted to now be able to expand our service to include staff employed by social care organisations in Wales so they can access the same mental health and wellbeing support as staff working for the NHS in Wales.

"Canopi offers a confidential and welcoming space for staff to access various levels of mental health support, including self-help, guided self-help, peer support, and virtual face-to-face therapies with accredited specialists."

Adferiad Recovery responds to Senedd inquiry into mental health inequalities

Adferiad Recovery has responded to the Senedd Health and Social Care Committee's inquiry into mental health inequalities and also assisted people with lived experience of mental illness to take part in focus groups to make their own contribution.

The Health and Social Care Committee is holding an inquiry into mental health inequalities following the Centre for Mental Health's description of a 'triple barrier' of mental health inequality.

Adferiad Recovery has highlighted the experience of ethnic minorities in Wales, suggesting that in-depth research into the experience of Black people who have been detained under the Mental Health Act should be a priority.



Adferiad Recovery is also concerned that support for the most vulnerable patients risks becoming the "Cinderella" within mental health services where the discussion has shifted towards wider wellbeing and prevention.

You can read Adferiad Recovery's full response [here](#).

Nearly four in five young people in Wales waiting over a month for first mental health appointment

Nearly four in five young people in Wales are waiting over a month for their first mental health appointment, according to new Welsh Government data.

The Welsh Government is being urged to step-up provision for young people as new figures reveal the extent of demand for the service.

In figures released in February, 78 per cent of patients referred to the Specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services are left waiting for over four weeks for their first appointment.

Adferiad Recovery has commented on waiting times in the context of the Covid pandemic: "We share the concern that the pandemic can effect the mental wellbeing of many people. However, these problems are almost always best addressed through practical support - economic, educational, and housing-related, for example.

Quarter of home care workers in Wales sought mental health help during pandemic, study finds

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health of domiciliary care workers in Wales has been revealed in the initial findings of a study led by Cardiff University.



The research, unveiled in an interim policy report, found a quarter (28%) sought medical help or received treatment related to mental ill health in the first 12 months of the pandemic in Wales from 1 March 2020.

"Our findings reveal the significant personal burden placed on care workers during the pandemic," said Professor Mike Robling, Director of Population Health Trials at Cardiff University's Centre for Trials Research and principal investigator on the study.



"Where direct help with mental wellbeing is required, non-specialists such as schools (pastoral support and school counselling), colleges, and employers are best placed to provide this.

"Specialist mental health services should not be diverted to support the responsibilities of other departments and agencies to play their role in protecting and enhancing the mental wellbeing of their clients, staff and the public.

"Of course very exceptionally specialist mental health services may support some individuals where the pandemic is the primary cause of their problems. However, a greater concern would be the overuse of treatments such as antidepressants for people whose problems are essentially practical ones caused by the pandemic. It is important that specialist services define their role clearly and avoid medicalising normal reactions to life events."

Mental Health Wales is published by **Hafal**. If you have any comments, please contact us at:

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INTERVIEW: Richard Mylan

We sit down with Welsh actor Richard Mylan to talk about his battle with addiction and what we, as a society, can do to tackle the stigma that surrounds it. The West End and British TV star has been appointed a panel member for Adferiad Recovery's 'Only Human' campaign and wants to open up the eyes of the public in recognising addiction can happen to anyone and that addiction doesn't discriminate.

Can you tell us about your background and what led to your battle with addiction?

I started in the West End at a very young age, earning good regular money in the early 90s. It started with alcohol as a gateway and then recreational drugs followed because that was very much the environment I was in. It wasn't that it was peer pressure, it was just very prevalent amongst peers - that was my main gateway to addiction. What it did was cement certain negative behaviours into my head that then carried on and progressed through my life.

What was your experience of addiction? How would you sum up this period in your life?

Addiction for me started on a reward basis, like a reward mentality. It was like 'I've worked hard here, earned some money, I deserve a little treat'. But of course the true nature of addiction started to show its head in that it became less of a treat and more of a necessity. Slowly over time I became addicted to opiates. I had been very much against opiates: a friend of mine at the time was dabbling with it and I was like 'what are you doing? It's such a dangerous drug and I really



"You realise the reward mentality wasn't reward mentality at all, instead it was periods of self-medication."

don't approve of this'. Then it took one night really, after a few drinks, and I was like 'you know what, let's see what this is all about'. And that was the biggest mistake of my life because when I first tried opiates and the drug took effect, I immediately knew I was in trouble. Immediately.

You realise the reward mentality wasn't reward mentality at all, instead it was periods of self-medication. When I stumbled across opiates it was the answer to my prayers in a self-medical sense and it took away a lot of emotional and psychological pain, it took away past traumas and it just made everything better. I was in trouble because as soon as it wore off my problems were obviously still there and I felt even worse about myself because not only was I feeling those things but I was also dealing with the hangover. It got its claws in me into me very quickly. I found the

“Mental health and addiction are intrinsically linked, they’re the same thing.”

motivation to work was then different because I wanted to use. I was a professional addict so I would work and I would use, clean up, work and use and it became this perpetual, never-ending cycle of abuse that got worse and worse over a period of about 20 years of my life.

In terms of recovery, at what point did you feel like you needed to change and to stop using?

First of all there was a period of my life where I just existed. I trod the very thin line between life and death in that I didn't really care if I lived or died and that's just the blunt truth of it. It's not that I wanted to die, I just didn't have much of a care either way. I just thought I'm in this hellish cycle that I can't get out of because if I do try and get out of it all I'm left with is debilitating mental health issues. Ultimately it's family that pulled me back from that - for me instrumentally it was when I found true love. By that I mean someone who knows me, knows everything I've spoken about and did not judge, would only give me unconditional love and that was my wife Tammie. She said "we'll deal with it together". It was the first time in my life where I had that unconditional love and support. I was really struggling with that notion at the time but it was when she really took me by the hand that I plugged into addiction services and started on my road to recovery. She walked me through every step; she was there giving me unconditional support and that was quite a long time ago now and I've been in recovery ever since. I have never looked back from that point but it took that unconditional support for me to be strong enough to do it.

Do you think mental health and addiction are interlinked?

One million percent. Mental health and addiction are intrinsically linked, they're the same thing. If you don't suffer from poor mental health, you don't become an addict. If you felt good about life, about yourself, the environment around you, your relationships with friends and family, if that's all fine, why would you self-medicate? I don't know any addicts that have great mental health, every addict I know and have known has mental health issues. We're simply medicating against that.

The mental health crisis in the world these days is so severe and pronounced and the wrap-around support for mental health is under immense pressure so more often or not addicts who self-medicate do it because they don't have any other option. The options become available only because they're in the cycle of addiction.



What would you say to others who are in the position you were in and who are now looking to make a positive change in their life?

There are so many levels of addiction and everyone's story is different. Either you're a full-blown addict and it's your life 24/7 or you're a functioning addict like I was: it still is your life 24/7 but you manage it around those times. They're both the same thing though...it's addiction. I would say to anyone who wants to change their life for the better but are scared of what that is, you have to embark on that journey. And it's really important you have that support while doing it: that can be from a family member or loved one or it could be services that you plug into. What's really important is that you make those first steps.

Ultimately what I want to say to my fellow addicts or recovering addicts is that when you plug into services and you go on that road to recovery, it's the beginning. You're not defined by just being a recovering addict. What I do know about addiction is that it robs you of ambition and opportunity, so when you get to a place where you're recovering, it's essential you reconnect to that ambition and the dreams that we all have in our lives. Recovery has to be the springboard for you to reconnect to your ambition and your hopes and dreams. And don't let age get in the way of that either: addiction takes huge chunks of your life away from you like it did with mine but it doesn't matter, you don't have to be young to go for your hopes. In fact you'll have a better time with it with all the knowledge and life experience, going through that adversity and coming out the other side. Use that to your advantage because it's an incredible thing that you will have done. You mustn't look at it as a negative part of your life, look at it as if it's got you to where you are today. Whether it's your first steps to recovery or if you've been in recovery for many years, I hope you know it's not the be all and end all in terms of definition, it's a part of you that you have got to grips with. Go for your dreams.

Do you feel there is a stigma that surrounds addiction? What can we as a society do to combat this stigma?

There is a stigma that surrounds addiction that we need to challenge as a society and what we need to challenge as well is our selective empathy when it comes to addiction. Some forms of addiction are seen to be more socially acceptable than others, so we need to challenge this right across the board. As far as I'm concerned all addiction is valid, all addictions need support and all addictions need empathy. I'm talking from the street, right through to healthcare and further up the chain to government level: we need to challenge from the bottom to the top because it's an issue and one that I want to help. People have an opinion about my public facing persona, what I've spoken about today is something I've never spoken about. The reason I am now speaking about it is because I've now been in a period of recovery long enough to know I am well and truly out the other side; I'm always mindful of it but I know that I'm safe. I want to talk about it now because people will assume this won't have happened to me. I hope it goes some way in making people think differently about people on the street and what they see within their own family and in their own community. I hope it helps.

I hope we can make the invisible more visible. I hope we challenge our selective empathy response to addiction. I hope we challenge the stigma of addiction and I hope it helps addicts feel supported and empowered enough to go on the journey to recovery. Only if we challenge the stigma of addiction can we truly help addicts and help stop the addiction epidemic that is global: we must get better as a society in supporting people and be more forward-thinking like some other European countries about how we treat addiction.

“Only if we challenge the stigma of addiction can we truly help addicts and truly help the addiction epidemic.”



Can you tell us more about why you're going to be linking in with Adferiad Recovery and their 'Only Human' campaign?

It's really close to my heart. Adferiad used to be WCADA and my father was an alcoholic and drug addict for pretty much most of his life up until about 42 when he went into recovery and WCADA was his support. He had such a successful recovery that he became a counsellor for addiction and got his counselling qualifications. My dad turned his life around in many ways and he was a real legend within WCADA. He knew of my struggles before he passed away: he was on hand to help but he struggled with it because even my father was like 'you're a successful actor, you've been in the West End, why you?' This is why I hope what I've talked about helps because even my own father struggled to comprehend it and he was a counsellor.

I've written a play as well to make sense of this time in my life: it's called "Sorter". It's been a cathartic experience. I wrote it in lockdown in 2020: it flew out of me because of my lived experience and I found it incredibly rewarding to write it down and have it on paper. What I want to do with this now is to work with a charity like Adferiad, work with fellow service users to develop this play and that's why I touched base with Adferiad about this campaign and it was an absolute no brainer for me on a personal, professional and an emotional level. I'm at the stage in my life now where I just want to help and give back. I'm delighted to be part of this campaign: I believe in it wholeheartedly and I'll do all I can do challenge stigma.

**Photograph credits: Kirsten McTernan,
@KMTPhotographer**

LIFE STORIES: Caroline and Zoe talk about their experiences of addiction



Caroline

Caroline has been in recovery for two and a half years. Before her addiction took hold, she was living what she described to be the 'perfect life' as a veterinary nurse living in a home she shared with her husband and children. Her issues with alcohol were not evident to begin with; it began with drinking a glass of wine in the evenings and at social occasions.

"Looking back, I don't fit the mold for your typical 'addict'. I didn't have a traumatic childhood, I was married with children and living in a nice area. I didn't think that I had a problem as what I was doing was legal, everyone else did it. I was of a nervous disposition and alcohol allowed me to display emotions I wouldn't normally express, such as anger or sadness. I stepped

over the line when I started drinking in the day, having a glass of wine at lunch times."

Caroline's drinking became more frequent and began to escalate, resulting in her losing her driving licence, her home and contact with her children. She found herself living on the streets of Chester and began consuming other substances on top of alcohol, including cannabis, spice and heroin, to help her cope with her situation.

"Addiction really can take anyone. I have drank in professional situations, and in the gutter. I was in a crisis; my life was chaos! I was getting too old for this lifestyle and decided it was time to pick up the pieces."

Caroline attended rehab in the Wirral and following her discharge began receiving support from substance misuse services and began engaging with Adferiad's Day Programme (now known as their Structured Recovery Programme). She was then referred to the Moving on in my Recovery programme, delivered by Adferiad's CAMFA service which she believes to be a vital part of her recovery journey.

"As part of Moving on in my Recovery you get a mix of professional and peer support which, to me, is a perfect formula to help recovery. It isn't about listening to each other's misery; it's about looking at the reasons behind your addiction and what you need to do after becoming sober to help sustain lasting change."

Caroline has completed her Moving on in my Recovery course and is now looking at her future work prospects. Due to a recent diagnosis of osteoporosis, full-time employment may not be an option for her. However, she is remaining positive and looking at suitable volunteering opportunities for the future. She is also supporting others on their recovery journey regularly facilitating Moving on in my Recovery groups herself.

"Facilitating Moving on in my Recovery groups helps me a great deal; it reminds me what it's all about. Supporting others in their recovery helps me in my own recovery. It helps to give me a focus and keep me on the straight and narrow."

Caroline continues to make great progress on her own recovery journey. In January 2022 she was discharged from the SMS service and is now living in secure accommodation with a support dog; has got her driving licence back and sees her children regularly. She's also an advocate on how society needs to tackle the stigma surrounding addiction, backing Adferiad Recovery's upcoming 'Only Human' campaign.

"In my Moving on in My Recovery group we discussed stigma and I didn't realise how much stigma affected me. I self-stigmatised myself a lot, this is because we are made to feel like an underdog and preprogramed to feel bad about ourselves and that we are undeserving. People with alcohol addiction are seen as different and something to be laughed at. So, recovery is something that should be shouted from the rooftops: I have been in recovery for three years and it's still a daily battle, so for myself and others it needs to be celebrated to help encourage people to carry on. You see a lot of attention around some addictions like gambling more than possibly substances or alcohol addiction, and I believe it's important to talk about them all, and so I hope this campaign can fight stigma for all types of addiction."



Zoe

Zoe works as a Recovery Practitioner at Adferiad Recovery's Hafan Wen Detox facility in Wrexham. She struggled with drug addiction for 26 years, starting when she was only 13 years old. Zoe's life was turned upside down by her addiction, resulting in her spending most of her youth on the wrong side of the law.

"I grew up in the criminal justice system. I first appeared in court at 14 years of age for assault. I was taking drugs to numb my feelings from the age of 13 onwards. It progressed from cannabis to heroin and crack cocaine."

In order to fund her addiction, Zoe turned to crime which eventually resulted in her receiving a jail sentence following a conviction of possession of drugs with intent to supply. Following her release, she was in rent arrears, had lost custody of her children and struggled to find employment due to her criminal record. She continued to get involved in criminal activities to

help make ends meet and fund her addiction which was spiralling out of control, consuming various different substances such as heroin, methadone, diazepam and antidepressants on a regular basis.

"My criminal history stopped me from getting jobs, so I just accepted that was how it was. I will always just be a junkie with a criminal history and no employer will want to take me on. I began engaging in more criminal activity as a way to survive and fund my habit."

Zoe's life turned around when she began engaging with CAIS (now Adferiad Recovery) services in 2015. She began receiving therapeutic interventions and recovery coaching at Champion's House in Wrexham and was housed in supported accommodation.

"There was no help with housing to be able to better my situation. But CAIS supported me to learn how to pay bills, live independently, and gave me volunteering opportunities."

Zoe went on to become a dedicated volunteer for CAIS, undertaking various duties at their Soup Dragon, Champion's House and Hafan Wen sites. In recognition of her dedication, CAIS went on to fund Zoe to complete an NVQ Level 3 in Health and Social Care which led to her becoming a paid member of staff at Hafan Wen where she continues to work as a Recovery Practitioner with Adferiad Recovery.

"They gave me a sense of purpose and enabled me to become a productive member of society - they gave me my life back."

Zoe is now seven years in recovery from her addiction. She lives independently, sees her children and continues to work hard at her job. She cites the support she received from Adferiad Recovery as being the key to her getting her life back on track.

"Adferiad gave me my smile and my dignity back. They have enabled me to be who I needed when I was younger – a positive role model. I am grateful to have the opportunity to be able to pass that light on to others."

Talking about the stigma that surrounds addiction, Zoe believes that we need to change the views our friends, family and communities have on drug addiction and that no one should be left feeling alone and discarded in their journey to recovery.

"There is always a stigma when it comes to drug addiction and a lot of blame placed on the individual. When you talk about being an addict you will always be looked at and treated differently, the stigma is the punishment for addiction when all we need is acceptance and support to help us to overcome it. We need to tackle stigma to help change the views of people in our community, family, colleagues and friends so that beginning the road to recovery can be a lot easier. Your past does not determine your future and we should celebrate change. People shouldn't have to be alone in their desperation. I want this campaign to show people they are not alone, and that there are recovery services out there for them."

Stigma news: Mental health programme Time to Change Wales extended by three years

A campaign to help people to talk about mental health and to end discrimination has received an additional £1.4m to extend the programme by three years, Welsh Government Ministers have announced.

The Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, Lynne Neagle and Minister for Economy, Vaughan Gething have confirmed the additional funding for Time to Change Wales will see the programme extended until 2025.

Time to Change Wales' central aim is to challenge and change negative attitudes and behaviours towards mental ill health. The programme concentrates on four key areas: partnerships; employers and the workplace; health and social care; and social marketing. The campaign is delivered by a partnership of two leading Welsh charities; Adferiad Recovery and Mind Cymru.

The new phase of work will have a particular focus on working with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities and employers in areas of poverty and deprivation. In previous years the programme has focused on increasing engagement with men through the Talking Is A Lifeline campaign and increasing the number of Welsh speakers involved.

One key part of Time to Change Wales is working with employers to create more open cultures around discussing mental health at work and provide employers with practical resources including an Employer Toolkit and training.

Around one in four Welsh workforces have pledged their support to the campaign already, representing around 320,000 employees. Organisations signed up include third sector organisations, all four police forces, all local health boards, private companies and small and medium-sized enterprises. One company who has taken the Time to Change Wales pledge is Safety Letterbox Company Ltd based in Neath, who employ 60 people from the local area.

The company signed up in August 2021 and is committed to prioritising the mental wellbeing of its employees by



running wellbeing activities and establishing an open-door policy to discuss workload and mental health. To date they have nine Mental Health First Aiders who play a key role in supporting the workforce.

Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, Lynne Neagle, said: "I am pleased we are able to provide further funding to help extend Time to Change Wales. The project is helping to end discrimination and encouraging people to have open and honest conversations about mental health. The four strands that Time to Change Wales supports provide great opportunities to share best practice across many parts of our daily life.

"We know that the pandemic has had a disproportionate effect on those from Black and Minority Ethnic communities and I am pleased Time to Change Wales will focus on working with communities utilising this new funding."

The new funding for Time to Change Wales will also see a roll out of a new and innovative learning module for health and social care staff specifically focussing on tackling mental health stigma and improving patients' experiences. This follows a successful trial in 2021-22.

Time to Change Wales will also continue to recruit Champions who have experience of mental ill health. They help to share their stories and deliver presentations and anti-stigma training to community groups, workplaces and organisations. To date there are over 50 champions working across Wales.

For more information, visit
timetochangewales.org.uk