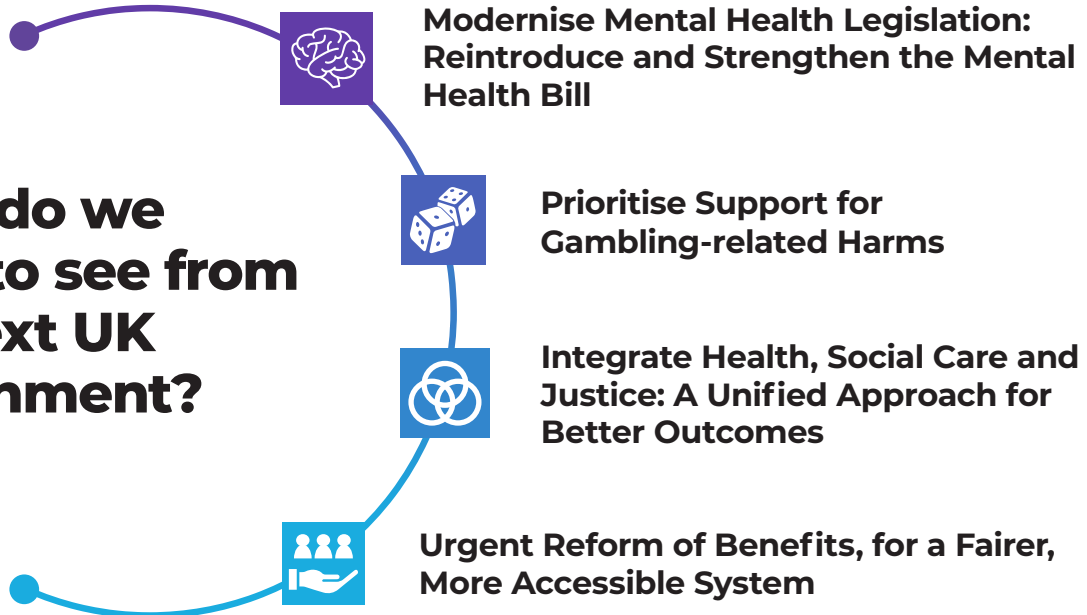


What do we want to see from the next UK Government?



1 Ensure Mental Health Legislation is fit for purpose and appropriate for the 21st century

Between 2022 – 2023, over 50,000 new detentions under the Mental Health Act were recorded in England and Wales. Although this suggests a 7% decrease from the previous year, the number of detentions remains worryingly high. Additionally, there is a concerningly disproportionate number of individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds being detained under the existing Act. The UK Government has previously accepted that processes are out of step with a modern mental health care system. This was the reason the Wessely review was commissioned, and a new Mental Health Bill introduced into the UK Parliament. However, this legislation has failed to progress.

We call on the next UK Government to urgently reintroduce the Mental Health Bill that failed to progress in the last Parliament. This legislation should be strengthened to include all the recommendations from the Wessely review. We also want to see a discussion take place between the UK Government, the Welsh Government, and the mental health third sector in Wales to determine which aspects of the Mental Health Act should be devolved, which cannot, and how people's rights can be better protected within the legislation.

2 Prioritise Support for Gambling-related Harms

In the 2020 YouGov treatment and support survey, 13% of the UK population experiences some level of gambling harm, although the true figure is likely to be significantly higher. Despite current measures, such as introducing limits for online slots, automatic player protection checks, and increased

powers for the Gambling Commission, there remains a significant need for enhanced support to address the growing crisis of gambling-related harms. Increased support is essential to mitigate the significant mental health issues, financial distress, and social costs associated with gambling

dependence, and to protect vulnerable populations, particularly those with poor mental health or substance use issues, from its harmful effects. Given the significant and growing prevalence of gambling-related harms affecting individuals and communities across the UK, action needs to be taken.

We call on the next UK Government to make reducing and preventing gambling-related harms a major priority, and for Wales to receive its fair share of funding from the new statutory levy. We

ask the next UK Government to work more closely with the Welsh Government, to ensure NHS and third sector treatment services are integrated, comprehensive, and accessible across Wales. We ask that research, prevention, and education are prioritised, ensuring support is available, and gambling-related harms are reduced. Furthermore, we urge the next UK Government to strengthen regulations and policies to promote responsible gambling practices, protect vulnerable populations, and hold the gambling industry accountable for its role in mitigating gambling-related harms.

3 Integrate Health, Social Care and Justice: A Unified Approach for Better Outcomes

There is clear evidence of the link between offending and mental health, with estimates of the number of people affected ranging from 39% in police custody and up to 90% in prison. Unfortunately, rather than being diverted to appropriate health and social care services, many individuals with mental health or addiction issues end up in the criminal justice system, leading to further marginalisation and exacerbation of their conditions. It is a common experience for people with a serious mental illness or addiction problem (and their families and carers) to have contact with the police. This can be because they require intervention to ensure their safety, or because they are more likely to be victims of crime. Sometimes this could be because they become involved with the police and other justice agencies as offenders or alleged offenders.

We call on the next UK Government to work with the Welsh Government on developing proposals for seamless and integrated health, social care, and justice services that would offer safe pathways to the most vulnerable, better protect everybody, and reduce re-offending. This should be accompanied by improved collaboration between the criminal justice system, healthcare providers, and social services to ensure a coordinated and effective response. Effective diversion of people with mental health and addiction problems into high quality care and treatment services leads to improved outcomes for people at reduced costs. The third sector has a major role to play, and we call for a national debate to be had in Wales involving justice agencies, NHS Wales, third sector agencies and Welsh Government to bring about the changes that are needed.

4 Urgent Reform of Benefits, for a Fairer, More Accessible System

According to the Money and Mental Health Policy Institute, almost one in five people with mental health problems are in problem debt, and individuals experiencing mental health problems are three and a half times more likely to be in problem debt. Furthermore, many people with mental health or dependence issues face significant difficulties in accessing the range of welfare benefits to which they are entitled. Having to cope with navigating the benefits system itself can affect people's mental health and living with a mental health condition can make applying for benefits a challenge. The process itself is not user friendly, with many of our service users describing the PIP and Universal Credit assessment process as 'degrading, punitive and poorly designed'.

We call on the next UK Government to implement a fairer and more easily accessible Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessment process which gets help to people quickly, and to start a national conversation on the future of welfare benefits in Wales with the goal of improving the lives of people who are most vulnerable and at risk and depend on this 'safety net'. We want to see the next UK Government work more closely with Welsh Government and with the third sector, to ensure that the administration of benefits in Wales is more supportive of people, better meets the needs of those living with mental health and addiction problems and provides reasonable adjustments for disabled people or those with long-term mental health conditions during health assessment determinations. Additionally, we call on the next UK Government to ensure that benefits for disabled people and people with long-term conditions rise annually and in line with inflation.