



Only Human Campaign Mini-Report

Tackling addiction-related stigma in Wales

2022



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Introduction

In the Summer of 2022, we launched our Only Human campaign which aimed to tackle the stigma associated with **substance-use disorders**, such as alcohol or drug dependency, and **behavioural addictions**, such as harmful gambling, gaming, or shopping.

Addiction is a compulsive need to use a substance or engage in a certain behaviour to the point where it becomes harmful. People suffering from addiction problems are often **unfairly labelled or stereotyped**, creating division between them and non-stigmatised people in the community.



This division can lead to discrimination or harmful stigma which often becomes internalised as **self-stigma**. This is when a person begins to view themselves in the same negative way as society does, resulting in feelings of shame and worthlessness.

Unfortunately, self-stigma presents a **major barrier** for people suffering from addiction who often feel undeserving of help or support. As a result, people often do not receive the treatment they so desperately need, and cope by retreating further into their addiction.

At Adferiad Recovery, we are **committed** to challenging the way that society views addiction by opening up dialogue, breaking down stigma, and supporting individuals in overcoming their addictions.

The aim of our campaign was to raise awareness about the harmful consequences of addiction-related stigma, and to encourage people to **question their beliefs** about addiction and the people who experience it.

As part of our campaign, we also developed the 'Only Human' survey, which aimed to **provide insight** into people's lived experience of addiction-related stigma and gather suggestions on how best we can **overcome stigma** and **support** people struggling with addictions.



The following report summarises the findings of our survey and considers the overall **success** of our campaign.

Our Panel

Our campaign was led by a panel of individuals with a range of **lived experiences of addiction**. Members of our panel know first-hand how stigma affects those experiencing addiction and wanted to help the campaign by sharing their experiences, knowledge, and views on this important issue. Here is what they had to say...

"I believe tackling the stigma of addiction is important, as it then enables and gives addicts permission to speak up without fear of judgement" - Zoe Davies, Recovery Worker, 7 years in recovery



"Recovery is attractive, it's achievable, and it's available to everyone who wants it. Stigma can prevent people from experiencing these truths. I always wanted to find out who or what was doing the living and the dying in my name, so recovery for me became a journey of self-discovery - the most exhilarating journey known to mankind. Who am I? Well, I found out that I am nothing. Once I found that out, however, the 'nothingness' imploded, and I became everything. I had achieved wholeness!" - Wynford Ellis Owen, Specialist Counselling Consultant, 30 years in recovery

"Stigma prevents people from coming forward for help, it causes a significant amount of shame associated with the addictive behaviour and prolongs the agony for many" - Karen Ozzati, Trustee of Adferiad Recovery, 32 years in recovery



"The social stigma associated with addiction is recovery's greatest enemy. I didn't wake up one morning and decide to be an addict. However, I can say that my 15 years spent in active addiction were seriously prolonged because society made me feel even more worthless than I already felt at that time.



In the early stages of my drug use (aged 16) it was the stigma and discrimination that kept me from seeking help. When I finally decided enough was enough, no-one wanted to employ me, therefore it wasn't long before I relapsed back into drugs; that's stigma for you! What followed was years of disadvantage, social isolation, and poor physical and emotional health. Addiction is not a personal choice, it's a public health issue that urgently needs to be addressed. I and many others with lived experience were saying this back in the 90's. Imagine where we would be now if only we had listened" – Yaina Samuels, Project Development Officer, 35 years in recovery



"Addiction itself can rob you of ambition, of opportunity. The stigma around addiction means that you are generally denied the chance of reconnecting with your ambition and opportunity, because stigma almost brands you for life as unworthy, untrustworthy, underserving of opportunity, of wanting to progress. It's why I've never spoken about it publicly before. Stigma is the root cause of a distinct societal lack of empathy and understanding. We have to challenge that. If we shift the stigma, we shift recovery towards more meaningful, prosperous outcomes that reconnect people more to who they really are" – Richard Mylan, Company Director & Founding Member of Grand Ambition, over 10 years in recovery

*"As people with **lived experience** of addiction we are proud to be leading Adferiad Recovery's Only Human campaign. We know personally how **stigma** affects those experiencing addiction and we want to share our experience, knowledge and views on this important issue and show that we're all only human and **addiction doesn't define us**"*

Key Aims

To tackle the stigma associated with addiction

Through this campaign we hoped 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

Our campaign was led by individuals with lived experience of addiction who each have their own unique stories to tell. The campaign provided a platform for them to share their experiences, inspire others to seek recovery, and show that people with addiction don't all fit in to the same mould.

To celebrate and promote recovery

Recovery is a journey of self-discovery. We wanted to inspire those with an addiction problem to address their addiction and seek the help that they need to recover. We wanted them to see that recovery is a positive thing and that the judgement of others shouldn't pressure them to hide their addiction or suffer in silence.



Our Impact in Numbers



We brought our campaign to

27

different events...

...across all



22

counties in Wales

We had survey responses from people of all ages, ranging from

20 - 82

years old

Over

100

members of staff and volunteers helped run our event days

Over the course of the campaign we had

37,311

visits to our website...

...and our social media pages reached over

204,000

people!



Adferiad Recovery has over

30

services dedicated to helping people with addiction...

...and since 2021 we have supported over

4,500

people with their addictions



Our Survey



- Our survey was open to people across the **whole of Wales**, both with and without first-hand experience of addiction.
- The survey comprised **24** questions and was split into two sections; Part A for people with lived experience of addiction, and Part B for people who had no personal experience of addiction.
- Paper versions of the survey were available at all of our campaign event days and people could also complete the survey online through links posted on our website and social media pages.
- The survey was made available in both **Welsh** and **English** and a combination of **quantitative** and **qualitative** data sets were captured.
- **Quotes** are included throughout this report in order to highlight the unique perspectives of our respondents.
- The information following each quote shows the participants' unique survey number, gender, and age e.g., (P#41, F, 27).
- In total, **206** individuals took part in our survey.

Summary of Findings

- **Almost half** of our survey respondents **had experienced addiction** at some point in their lives (102/206)
- The most commonly reported addictions were **alcohol, smoking, and substance use**, although a number of behavioural addictions were seen within the sample, and the types of addictions reported differed between the sexes and age groups
- Our respondents often had several **co-occurring** addiction problems
- **Older adults** were significantly more likely to have experienced addiction compared to younger adults, and people **aged 60 - 69** were the age group most likely to report having **first-hand experience** of addiction
- In general, **men** were more likely to have an addiction than women, and the ratio of males to females was higher across all addictions except for shopping addiction
- **80%** of respondents with lived experience of addiction had **experienced stigma or discrimination** as a result, and nearly **70%** of these respondents felt this **prevented them from seeking support**
- Respondents without lived experience of addiction believe there are **high levels of stigma** towards people with addictions in society, with **younger adults** and **women** more likely to estimate greater levels of **contempt** within society
- Self-reported **knowledge** of addiction was overall high (**3.6/4**)
- Almost **96%** of respondents were **in favour** of treating addiction in the same way as other health conditions
- The **vast majority** of our respondents felt that our campaign **would make a difference** to people with addiction problems
- Respondents were **in agreement** with our proposed methods for combating addiction stigma

*Readers are asked to keep in mind some limitations when considering the findings; modest sample size, under representation of males, limited number of BAME respondents

Recommendations

Yn seiliedig ar ganfyddiadau o'n harolwg a'r ymgyrch gyffredinol, rydym yn cynnig pedwar syniad er mwyn mynd i'r afael gyda'r stigma sydd yn effeithio ar gaethiwed yng Nghymru:

1) Strategy

Develop a substance (mis)use early intervention and prevention strategy supported by policy and service developments

2) Education

Provide public health support to demystify addiction:

- Targeted and specific evidence-based addiction education in schools, colleges, and universities
- Invite people with 'lived experience' to share their stories with children and young people to increase awareness about a range of addictions, associated stigma, and their wider impact on society
- Break down the stigma of addiction and see it as an illness that can affect anyone
- Link addiction to other physical and mental illnesses to end the demarcation and stigmatisation
- Open a debate on the word 'addiction'

3) Policy and Guidance

Develop an 'addiction' document which provides guidance covering all types of addictions (both substance and behavioural addictions) as a point of reference and go-to guide

4) Signposting

Provide clear and up-to-date information, support, and advice on where people can go to for help for different types of addictions, and facilitate people accessing that help, support and advice

Resources

If you or somebody you know is struggling with addiction and would like more information or support, the following resources are available:

Support from Adferiad Recovery

- **Treatment services** - A range of services for people with substance-use problems; Drop-in Service, Family and Significant Others Service, Psychosocial Interventions and more
- **Hafan Wen** - A detox centre for people with substance use conditions
- **Parkland Place** - Provides rehabilitation for people in recovery from substance use disorders, gambling addiction and other harmful behavioural conditions
- **Salus** - A detox centre for people with substance use conditions
- **CAMFA** - Provides a range of therapies, to those requiring specialist substance use psychological interventions
- **Dyfodol De Cymru** - Provides support to people with drug and alcohol issues in the criminal justice system in the South Wales area
- **Champion's House** - A supportive environment for people who have experience of drug and alcohol addiction, mental health conditions and the criminal justice system seeking recovery in Wrexham

External Resources & Support

For alcohol support:

- alcoholchange.org.uk
- alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

For substance use support:

- dan247.org.uk
- talktofrank.com

For support with sex addiction:

- relate.org.uk
- atsac.org.uk

For gambling support:

- gamcare.org.uk
- begambleaware.org

For help quitting smoking:

- blf.org.uk
- nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking

For general support and information:

- beatingaddictions.co.uk
- rehabsuk.com

**Thank you to our service users, staff,
volunteers, and the general public for taking
part in our Only Human campaign!**



To find out more...

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