

Hafal's Manifesto

National Assembly Elections 3 May 2007



Hafal is Wales' principal charity for people with severe mental illness and their carers, and it is a charity run by the people it supports. Here, in a manifesto for the Assembly Election 2007, we present the concerns of people in Wales who live with severe mental illness.

We believe that mental health is an essential part of everyone's health, but is not given the same importance as physical health. Yet 1 in 4 people will experience mental health problems in their lifetime, and 1 in 30 of us will experience a severe mental illness. **It's time to put mental health on the agenda – and make it a priority.**

Three key issues for 2007

Hafal is calling upon parties and candidates in Wales to give priority to mental health and to engage with these three issues:

1. **Wales needs quality mental health services.**
2. **Wales needs an Assembly which advocates for mental health.**
3. **Wales needs a streamlined system for commissioning health and social services.**

Let's look at these points in more detail.

1. Quality services, quality resources

We need to see well-resourced, first-rate services for people with severe mental illness and we need them to be equally available across all 22 local authority/Local Health Board areas in Wales.

At Hafal we understand that the more control people have over their own treatment, the more likely that treatment is to be effective and to lead to recovery. That's why we think it's so important that service users and carers are integrated into care planning and evaluation of services.

We also understand that treatment isn't just about medication. This can be very important, of course, but we want to see improved access to "talking therapies", including psychotherapy, cognitive behavioural therapy, group therapy and family therapy. In-depth counselling or psychotherapy should be available to all people with severe mental illness who request it.

And every patient must be given control over their recovery with a full range of life choices. Mental health is built on much broader foundations than treatments which deal directly with symptoms. For any one individual the biggest step to recovery may be finding a place to live, getting a job, establishing a good relationship with their family... usually there are a set of different things which are important to an individual's recovery.

Quality mental health services **must** be based on a holistic approach and explicitly address the following eight areas:

- Physical health
- Medication for Mental Illness
- Other Treatment and Therapy for Mental Illness
- Employment
- Training and Education
- Money
- Accommodation
- Social Life

2. An Assembly which is a good advocate for mental health

We need an Assembly that is prepared to engage with Westminster on mental health issues.

Mental health legislation, provision of benefits to people with a mental illness and their carers, and the treatment of mentally disordered offenders – all these issues need a strong, clear voice from the Senedd. Wales needs its Assembly to be a good advocate for mental health, to actively seek a fair deal from the UK Government for people with a mental illness and their carers.

We need an Assembly that will:

- Make its voice heard to ensure that mental health legislation fits with the consensus in Wales for service user empowerment, whether that is achieved through Westminster legislation or through framework powers at the Assembly.
- Speak up for people with a mental illness who are inappropriately placed in the criminal justice system or who have limited access to mental health services in prison.
- Ensure that there is a fair deal for people with a severe mental illness on benefits, and that while there is support to help people back to work, there is also a proper understanding of mental illness and a sensitivity to those unable to work for long periods or intermittently.

3. Streamlined commissioning for Wales

We are calling for a commonsense policy of commissioning mental health services, one that cuts through bureaucracy, inconsistency and unnecessary expenditure.

At present in Wales health services are commissioned by 22 Local Health Boards, while social care is commissioned by 22 Local Authorities. This means that commissioning of the services vital to people with severe mental illness and their carers depends on 44 separate local bodies – and this is causing day-to-

day obstacles to users. This is an expensive rather than an efficient way of commissioning services for a population of just 2.9 million (half the population of Yorkshire for example).

Our clients tell us there is lack of co-ordination between health and social services, which complicates the system and can cause confusion, leading to a less co-ordinated package of care.

So what's the way forward?

We think Wales should learn from the example of the Republic of Ireland, which has moved to simplify and rationalise its health and social care commissioning – moves aimed at ending the so-called postcode lottery. Hafal calls for the Assembly to consider a single, all-Wales commissioning body for health and social services, a system that makes Assembly Members accountable for services across the country, and leads to a set standard of services across Wales.

We would also like to see more patient, carer, and staff involvement in managing and delivering services at a local level. We believe that users and front-line staff should be enabled to directly support and help run their hospital or other local services without the current bureaucratic barriers.

If services are managed by those who use them and deliver them, they improve.

How can I get involved?

If you feel strongly about any of these issues, you could join a political party of your choice.

You can also get involved independently – for instance, you can participate in non-party political campaigning through groups like Hafal or other national voluntary organisations and local groups.

You can also ask your candidates about any matters that concern you, for example:

- What are their policies for mental health?
- What about the areas of concern in this manifesto?
- What are their priorities for health services?
- What are their priorities for social care?

Remember – it's your right to have your say. So use your vote!

About hafal



Hafal is Wales' principal charity for people with severe mental illness and their carers.

Every day, in every county, we work with clients who are living and dealing with severe mental illnesses such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

Hafal is founded on the belief that people who have direct experience of mental illness know best how services can be delivered.

We are dedicated to empowering people with severe mental illness to:

- achieve a better quality of life
- fulfil their ambitions for recovery
- fight discrimination
- enjoy equal access to health and social care, housing, income, education, and employment

Where can I find out more about mental health issues? For the latest news and information on mental health matters in Wales, log on to: www.mentalhealthwales.net



For the latest Hafal news, log on to www.hafal.org

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