

National Assembly for Wales elections,
Thursday 5 May, 2016



Mair's MANIFESTO

Hello, my name is Mair Elliott. I'm a mental health service user and a Trustee at Hafal – a service user and carer-led charity for people in Wales affected by mental illness.

The National Assembly elections are very important for Hafal Members, particularly as health is the responsibility of the Welsh Government in Cardiff. So if you want to improve services for people with a mental illness and their carers, remember to use your vote - and to ask candidates to commit to these five key actions!

1. Increase and protect funding for mental health

Mental health is often called the "Cinderella service" because it gets such a small proportion of the health budget. We need candidates' commitment to **increasing the spend on mental health in the next Assembly, and ensuring that resources for mental health are fully protected:** both NHS funding and funding provided to local authorities for mental health social care.

We are calling on all candidates and all political parties to ensure that Health Boards and local authorities are held to account for their spending on mental health services, that any efficiency savings are re-invested back into mental health and that there is clear and transparent financial reporting of this.

But it's not just about the money. We also call for a clear and robust system for measuring what good is being done as a result of investment in mental health - a system which shows how people across Wales benefit as a result of receiving services.

2. Improve support for young people

With referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in Wales **increasing over 100 percent** from 2010 to 2014, and experts saying the service is 'in crisis', we call for a commitment from candidates to address the over-referral of children and young people to CAMHS.

Non-mental health professionals such as teachers, school counselling services and youth groups need support and training to share the responsibility for the majority of children and young people's emotional needs and overall development. **Specialist CAMHS should support the much smaller numbers of young people with the highest needs** - and they should be provided at the earliest possible point.



3. Increase access to psychological therapies

We find it astonishing that someone with anxiety or mild depression will receive talking therapies within 28 days when referred by their GP, and yet people in hospital - at a cost of thousands per week - have to wait up to six months for this effective treatment. We want a commitment from candidates to improve access to talking therapies for those who most benefit from them: people with a serious mental illness.

We call on candidates to ensure that **a full range of psychological therapies are available across Wales for people who experience a psychotic illness**, including within mental health units and hospitals, and for those therapies to begin as soon as possible so that patients can work towards recovery.

4. Support equality for people with a mental illness and their carers

People with a mental illness and their carers face a number health and social care, housing, income, education, and employment inequalities.

For example, people with a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder can have **a life expectancy between 15 to 20 years lower than the general population** and over 8 in 10 carers have seen a negative impact on their physical health. Only around 27% of working age adults with a mental illness are in employment. The list continues...

We call on candidates to commit to reducing these inequalities in the next Assembly by providing targeted support to people with a serious mental illness and their carers - and creating a fairer Wales. We also call on candidates to commit to funding **Time to Change Wales anti-stigma campaigns** throughout the next Assembly so that we can continue to change negative attitudes to mental health and create a more equal Wales.

5. Work with us!

Service users and carers know that positive change is only possible if we roll up our sleeves and take charge both of our own circumstances and of wider services. We need candidates' assurance that they will empower us to choose the services we personally receive and also to have a full say in developing policy and commissioning mental health services.

How can I voice my concerns about mental health?

If like me you feel strongly about any of these issues, ask your candidates what they plan to do about them! You can do this face-to-face if they knock on your door, or you can:-

- Write to candidates
- Attend public hustings events in your constituency
- Request meetings with your candidates
- Contact your candidates via e-mail or social media.

And make sure you are registered to vote! Because without a vote you can't be heard. Find out more at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

Mair

hafal.org  

Hafal is a Member-led Welsh charity run by the people it supports: people with serious mental illness and their carers. To find out more, or to get involved, visit hafal.org, email hafal@hafal.org, find us on Facebook and Twitter, or write to us at: Hafal, Former Gellinudd Hospital, Lon Catwg, Pontardawe, Neath Port Talbot SA8 3DX Charity number 1093747. Registered company number 4504443.