

We are North East Wales Mind

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North East Wales Mind was founded in 2008. And since then we've come a long way.

Mental health isn't hidden anymore. It's on the front pages. It's on the political agenda. It's discussed at mealtimes, in the pub and on the terraces. For millions of us mental health is now something to be honest about – not ashamed of.

North East Wales Mind has been part of this change. Over the past 10 years we've developed and delivered life-changing help and support that's made things better for people living in Flintshire and Wrexham; in 2021-22 supporting almost 2,500 people.

And we've worked with others to make changes in our regional health system by being actively involved in the Clinical Strategy Group and Local Implementation Team. But there's still much more to be done. That's why we're doubling down on our efforts to fight for mental health and wellbeing for people in Flintshire and Wrexham.

Research shows that local people still find it very difficult to get access to the services they need, when they need them. They often feel rejected when they reach out for help, especially when they're in crisis. Waiting lists are long and people often bounce from service to service, having multiple assessments but not getting the support they need. People tell us their traumatic experiences aren't recognised and they can face discrimination based on their mental health diagnosis, neurodiversity, their race or sexuality¹.

And young people (and their parents) who are dealing with anxiety, trauma and self-harm have particular problems. They find it extremely hard to get help with local CAMHS services overstretched, particularly following the challenges of the pandemic. The move from CAMHS to adult services is still very difficult, with many failing to get the help they need as they negotiate the difficult move towards adult-hood.¹

The pandemic has shown us how isolation, loss, hardship, and work stresses affect us all. The cost of living crisis adds another layer of complexity: we know from our clients that people are pushed into poverty because of their mental health and others experience poor mental health because of poverty. Local community groups are working hard to help, but the risk of more mental health problems emerging is growing by the day.

That's why we're reaffirming our commitment to fight for mental health, to speak up for everyone with mental health problems and empower people to live their life to the full and have hope for the future. This is our strategy for 2023 – 2027; the framework we'll use to make decisions in the years ahead. It will help us to prioritise and remain true to our purpose.

No matter what, we will keep going. We won't give up until everyone has the support and respect they need to make sure they have the good mental health and wellbeing we all deserve.

Jenny Murphy/Margaret Jones

CEO/Chair

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Our vision

Good mental health and wellbeing for everyone in North East Wales.

Our purpose

We fight for mental health. For support. For respect. For everyone in North East Wales.

We empower people to live their life to the full and have hope for the future

We speak up for those of us with mental health problems

Our values

Open: we reach out to those who need us

Accepting and responsive: we listen and act to make things better

Kind: we meet people with compassion and respect

Hopeful: we believe a better future is possible

Experienced: we bring together knowledge, lived experience and expertise

Our priorities

Developing support for children and young people aged 13+

We'll start two new services for young people

Embedding a trauma informed approach throughout our work

We'll become a Trauma Enhanced organisation as described in the Trauma Informed Wales Framework

Developing services and support in Wrexham and its surrounding communities

We'll triple the number of people we support in Wrexham – raising the number supported to at least 750 each year by 2027.

Fighting for the mental health of marginalised people and those in poverty

We'll work with local people and organisations to set up a network of at least 10 peer support groups of people from marginalised groups

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We'll do this by ...

Delivering life-changing community and peer support: bringing people together to support each other and make change in their communities

Being there for people when they first need help and support them with early intervention and prevention resources

Working with partners to share learning and generate new ideas, address complex issues and tackle injustices in the mental health system

Working together with Mind Cymru and local Minds in North Wales to increase our joint impact and influence

Working on our organisation to ensure it is high quality, strong and sustainable

About us

North East Wales Mind is a mental health charity that supports people living and working in Flintshire and Wrexham. We also work with partners throughout Wales to influence services across the country.

We're part of the Mind Federation, the largest charity provider of mental health services in England and Wales. We are united by our common purpose with Mind, Mind Cymru, local Minds and Mind Retail. Our work is enabled by our funders, supporters and volunteers.

We're focussed on supporting people aged 13 and over

Our work will always respond to the needs, views and preferences of people with mental health problems

We put people first, so our work isn't defined by mental health diagnoses but by what matters to each individual

Many people have experienced trauma and stressful life circumstances and we work in a way that does no further harm, is person centred, relationship focussed, strengths based and inclusive.

Our people and communities

Flintshire and Wrexham both have significant urban areas, particularly the city of Wrexham and the northern part of Flintshire following the northern coastline and the Dee Estuary. They are the most densely populated counties in North Wales and make up 42% of its population. Poverty and deprivation are increasingly present, particularly in the rural communities, with three areas in Flintshire and six in Wrexham being in the 10% most deprived areas in Wales.

Our communities are less diverse than many in Wales, but we know that a significant number of children are living in poverty and/or have poor mental health.

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Our communities	% of Flintshire people ^{3 4}	% of Wrexham people ^{3 4}
People who speak Welsh (average for Wales is 20%)	11%	14%
People who are black or from an ethnic minority	2%	2%
Adults who feel part of their community	56%	49%
Adults in good health	81%	75%
People who are lonely	17%	15%
Children aged 10 or over with mental health problems	19%	19%
Children living in poverty	19%	22%

Our mental health landscape

We have lots to do and are a long way from a world where everyone in our counties has good mental health.

Based on the 2021 census we know that the population of Flintshire and Wrexham is around 290,000 people and is growing. This means that we could expect that 1 in 4 or 72,500 people will experience mental distress each year². In Wrexham there has been a decrease in people's mental health since 2016 and this is against the trend in Wales as a whole.

Despite this, only 2% of people (5,800) are receiving specialist support for their mental health^{3 4}. So there is a huge disparity between the need for and the availability of support. This is of further concern as given the challenges of the pandemic, the cost of living crisis and the energy crisis we might expect these figures to go higher still over the lifetime of this strategy.^{3 4}

This disparity has been recognised by the Public Service Boards (PSBs) in Flintshire and Wrexham who have worked together to identify priorities for action in each county. Mental Health and Climate Change have been recognised as emergencies and the top two priorities to be tackled in both counties. This work flows from the legal framework provided by the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Statutory mental health services are delivered by Betsi Cadwaldr University Health Board (BCUHB), Flintshire County Council and Wrexham County Borough Council and their work is governed by "Together for Mental Health", the Welsh Government's mental health strategy. BCUHB in particular are looking for ways to improve and expand mental health services in line with greater demand, with an emphasis on increasing support in the community, early intervention and reducing inpatient stays. We will actively support this work.

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Third sector mental health services are limited, with North East Wales Mind, Adferiad and Kim Inspire being the largest providers. Whilst these have grown over recent years, there is still a reluctance amongst some commissioners to recognise the value that the third sector brings, particularly in identifying those in crisis or at risk. It is probably no coincidence that funding for services is not evenly spread across North Wales with much of the statutory sector funding for voluntary organisations being focussed on North West Wales. This is a disparity we would like to see reduced.

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Our development priorities

Our development priorities are areas where we believe we must focus our attention to respond to the most urgent needs our communities face. The priorities link into national Mind's priorities, our understanding of our local area and the things people told us were most worrying them or where other services are just not there.

Developing support for children and young people aged 13+

The mental health needs of young people are increasing rapidly.

In 2017 one in ten young people in England and Wales had a mental health problem. We know that in Flintshire and Wrexham it is now one in five^{3 4}

Research from Mind showed that trauma from abuse, bereavement, bullying and broken relationships are a major part of the problem. And that young women are particularly affected. Many young people don't feel able to ask for help. And when they do they're often don't get it.

In Flintshire and Wrexham long waiting lists for CAMHS services, a lack of support for 16 and 17 year olds and difficulty in moving between CAMHS and adult services mean that many are struggling without help.

Our ambition is to develop a substantial support offer for young people living in Flintshire and Wrexham.

Embedding a Trauma Informed approach throughout our work

Adversity and trauma can happen to anyone at any time in their life.

As well as one off traumatic events, people can be ground down by abuse, racism, homophobia, poverty, poor housing or health problems. Trauma is common in many parts of our community and different people will find different things traumatic.

People often have a long and complex journey as they battle to overcome the impact of trauma and the distress it causes. Many, if not most, of the people who come to us have experienced trauma and seek our help because nothing else has made a difference.

Listening and responding to people in need is fundamental to who we are.

But we know that for many people who've experienced trauma that is just the start of the help they need to feel connected, valued and safe.

We know that people need consistent and long term support that helps them to reduce exposure to ongoing trauma and gives them the right conditions to thrive.

We've already embedded that into much of the support we give and into the way we work and engage with people. And we're lucky to be located in Wales where trauma informed approaches are supported by government and Public Health Wales.

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Despite that there are vanishingly few services in North East Wales that provide the help that is needed and that recognise the subtleties and nuances of the experience of people who've experienced abuse, exploitation or have lived in a racialised community.

We want to play our part. We'll adopt the Trauma Informed Wales Framework to embed the principles further in our organisation. And we'll reach out to partners in racialised communities, particularly in Wrexham and North Flintshire, to build our understanding of how we can start to build support that is effective and relevant to them.

Developing services and support in Wrexham city and its surrounding communities

Although Flintshire and Wrexham are similar in many respects, we know that Wrexham's communities experience more poverty and deprivation and poorer health and that some areas of Wrexham are amongst the most deprived in Wales.

We learn from the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019) that Queensway, Wynnstay, Queensway 2, Plas Madoc, Cartrefle 2 and Smithfield 3 are in the top 10% of the most deprived areas in Wales and that this will mean worse health, education, employment prospects and community safety for local people.

In Wrexham there are high rates of in-work poverty, and this looks likely to get worse as living costs and personal debt are rising and living standards are being squeezed.⁴ This, together with areas of poor housing, the lack of cohesive communities and access to green space mean that people's mental health is under greater pressure.

People in Wrexham face other challenges including high proportions of homeless people, people addicted to drugs and alcohol and a population of ex-prisoners who have left HMP Berwyn.

We are already working in some of Wrexham's most deprived communities of Caia Park and Plas Madoc. However, we have only relatively recently started delivering services in Wrexham and we know there is much more still to do.

There are also exciting opportunities to work with others to support the community including Wrexham Football Club, Glyndwr University and employers large and small.

We will continue to seek out funding and partnerships to expand our work in Wrexham and support more people in the city.

Fighting for the mental health of marginalised people and those in poverty

We know there is a strong link between poverty and poor mental health.

People with mental health problems are more likely to end up in poverty. And people who live in poverty are more likely to have mental health problems. They are also more likely to live in racialised communities and to experience trauma in childhood.

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The economic impact of the pandemic and world events has led to the cost of living crisis which is reaching large parts of our society, including many of those in work. It doesn't look likely the impact of this will change any time soon.

In recent years we've begun to locate our support in some of the most deprived communities in North East Wales, particularly Caia Park in Wrexham, Flint, Shotton and Plas Madoc. And we've built partnerships with Citizen's Advice Flintshire, Warm Wales and others through Community Hub Working.

But we know that this is just the beginning.

We will continue to focus support in places where people are struggling with poverty and deprivation.

And we'll join with other local and regional partners, including the 2025 movement to provide joined up support for those struggling with financial hardship.

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Meeting the challenge

With the support of our funders, supporters and volunteers we're committed to doing our part to turning our ambition of good mental health and wellbeing for everyone into reality. Over the next four years we'll:

1. **Deliver life-changing community and peer support:** bringing people together to support each other and make change in their communities

- **Community Wellbeing Hubs:** We'll work with partners to make sure people can get help when and where they need it. We'll develop, expand and promote our network of community wellbeing hubs to reach many more communities, developing them to become 'go to' places for information and support with a mix of social prescribing, information, wellbeing coaching, wellbeing groups/activities and self-development training.
- **Wrexham:** We'll prioritise expanding and setting up more community support in Wrexham, both urban and rural. In particular we'll focus on communities experiencing poverty and racial discrimination, including the Polish and Portuguese communities.
- **Peer Support:** We'll further develop the therapeutic community/peer support model to support people to live with and recover from the effects of trauma, discrimination, poverty, neurodiversity and other challenges. We'll explore the value of storytelling to support this work.
- **Widening peer support in the community:** We'll champion the value of peer support and we'll support people to develop and expand independent peer support groups in the community to make finding help easier and widen choice.
- **Out-of-hours:** We'll provide more evening and weekend support, recognising that people are not always able to access help during office hours.
- **Support in the workplace:** we'll continue our work with employers to create thriving places to work where mental health is a – especially those struggling with their emotional health
- **Support in schools:** We'll explore opportunities to support the CAMHS "Whole School Approach"

2. **Be there for people when they first need help** with early intervention and prevention resources

- **Easy access activities:** We'll attract people to find out more about supporting their own wellbeing by providing attractive, popular and easy access/non-stigmatised events and training.
- **Wellbeing coaching/guided self- help:** We'll expand the availability of the "Active Monitoring" service to more settings, including health, education, community and workplace.
- **Counselling:** We'll expand our in-house counselling service to offer support to more people and work to achieve funding for a 'free at the point of access' service.
- **Support for Young People:** We'll work with colleagues across North Wales to develop a paid-for counselling service for young people to provide support for those

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unable to get help from CAMHS or school based services. We'll ensure any services for young people support them up to the age of 25.

- **Workplace:** We'll further develop our workplace offer, to include wellbeing activities, counselling and Active Monitoring as well as workplace training.
- **Family and perinatal support:** As part of our community offer we'll expand our psycho-educational support for new parents and families
- **Guided self-help for young people:** We'll expand the availability of Active Monitoring for Children and Young People through schools, colleges and youth services
- **Digital access:** We'll develop and expand access to our services through telephone and online platforms

3. Work with partners to share learning and generate new ideas, address complex issues and tackle injustices in the mental health system

- **Movement for Good Mental Health and the 2025 Movement:** we will lead the mental health strand of these initiatives which bring together a wide range of partners to tackle the social determinants of poor health
- **Mental health support in North Wales:** We will work with partners in health, local authorities, the third sector and others to improve mental health support available for people across North Wales and to reduce the inequality in funding between North East and North West Wales.
- **Diversity:** We'll develop links with racialised communities and BAME groups to explore culturally competent ways to make things better for people struggling with the impact of discrimination and racism. We'll particularly focus on the Polish and Portuguese communities in Wrexham.
- **Engagement and co-production:** We'll improve our engagement with people with lived experience of mental health problems, including our clients and others in our communities. We'll create more opportunities for people with lived experience to lead our work and get involved with partnership working.
- **Communication:** We recognise the importance of everyday language in making our interactions with people real and helpful. We'll focus more on communication with our communities to reach out to more people, both the public and mental health professionals

4. Work together with Mind Cymru and local Minds in North Wales to increase our joint impact, local influence and range of services

- **Expanding support across North Wales:** We'll work with local Mind's in North Wales to widen our influence, grow our joint income, take advantage of efficiencies of scale and expand the amount and quality of support available to people across North Wales
- **Widening our supporter and funder base:** Mental health is now firmly on the agenda with senior leaders in Flintshire and Wrexham's local authorities, housing associations and other public and private sector organisations. We'll reach out to potential supporters and funders in a wide range of sectors, not just health and social

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care. This could include housing, education, environment, the arts and community development.

- **Taking advantage of being part of the Mind Federation:** We'll be actively involved with Mind's Networks and Communities Teams to help us develop new approaches and share best practice
- **One Mind in Wales:** We'll be actively involved in One Mind in Wales to help grow and strengthen Mind's presence in Wales

5. Develop our organisation to ensure it is high quality, strong and sustainable and can meet the challenges of the future

- **Governance:** We'll recruit a diverse group of new trustees with the right skills, knowledge and experience to oversee the organisation as it grows. These will include young people, people from racialised groups and those with experience of living in poverty.
- **Diversifying income:** We'll expand the income we make from fundraising by applying for more grants and tenders and increasing our community and corporate fundraising. This will mean we can maintain reserves and invest in new services and the future of the organisation.
- **Inclusion and support for our teams:** We want to be a great place to work which values, respects and supports all our staff and volunteers. We'll invest in recruitment, training and staff/volunteer wellbeing, listen and respond to concerns and ideas and will actively seek to diversify our workforce.
- **Premises and Digital Working:** The way we use building and technology has changed over the past two years. We'll review our premises and IT requirements based on our widened community focus and what we have learnt from the pandemic about how digital working can help us to work and deliver services more flexibly.
- **Quality marks and ongoing development:** We'll continue to regularly assess and improve our performance so as to achieve the Mind Quality Mark and other external Quality Assurance Schemes

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How this strategy was developed

This strategy is the result of research, and of listening to the views of a wide range of people inside and outside the organisation.

We started by looking at what we thought were our strengths and areas for improvement, based on the work we have done over the past five years. To do this we talked to our staff team and volunteers and looked at feedback from people who had used our services.

After that we did a lot of reading and listening to identify what were the needs and level of demand around mental health, both locally, regionally and nationally. We considered the impact of the pandemic and the emerging cost of living crisis. Key to this understanding was research carried out by Mind, who listened to over 25,000 people with mental health problems who all shared their experiences and priorities for Mind's future work. We shared our thoughts with groups of our clients, and are especially grateful to the Life Warriors Group for their valuable input.

Finally, we were informed by our funders and partners in North Wales who generously shared their thoughts on the complex challenges we face and the place that North East Wales Mind might have in the wider system.

How this strategy will be monitored

The board of North East Wales Mind are responsible for monitoring this strategy. Implementation plans will be drawn up with specific targets which will be monitored by the board every six months. The plans will form the basis of service plans which will inform individual work programmes and will be monitored by the Chief Executive and senior management team.

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