

# Health and Social Care Committee

## Inquiry into the contribution of community pharmacy to health services in Wales

CP 13 – Mind Cymru



O blaid gwell  
iechyd meddwl  
For better  
mental health

### **Response to National Assembly for Wales Health and Social Care Committee Inquiry into the contribution of community pharmacy to health services in Wales**

**Mind is the leading mental health charity in Wales and England. Mind Cymru is Mind's presence in Wales.**

Mind Cymru welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this consultation process. The views expressed within this response are the views of Mind Cymru and are informed by people with direct experience of mental health problems.

Mind Cymru is well experienced in matters of legislation affecting people with experience of mental health problems, living in Wales. One example is the current consultation on the Regulations for the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010.

Mind Cymru's key messages are that:

- People with experience of mental health problems inform all that we do.
- Because people with mental health problems inform all that we do, we know what the real issues are.
- We are determined to improve society's recognition, understanding and acceptance of people with mental health problems.
- We value diversity and ensure inclusion is at the heart of our work.

Mind Cymru would like to see further development of mental health and wellbeing services within the Community Pharmacy sector. This would help to

address, for instance, issues around prevention and early intervention of ill health, providing both economic savings and health benefits to the population more widely.

There is great potential to provide enhanced mental health support. Community pharmacists already play an important role in monitoring compliance with medication where people have been diagnosed with mental health problems. However, there is scope to move beyond approaches that mainly focus on medication, and develop greater emphasis on other factors that support an individual's mental wellbeing.

The network of community pharmacists means that they are easily accessible and available to people. This is especially important in rural areas where pharmacists can be a vital first port of call to people. Encouraging people to see community pharmacists as able to advise on common mental health problems (stress, anxiety, depression) as well as physical ailments would provide another source of help at an early stage.

The Welsh Government's Rural Health Plan recognised mental health as an important issue in rural areas and also that pharmacies are a vital element of rural health services provision. Mind Cymru believes that there are opportunities to link these areas together to provide better mental health support and services.

Much excellent work is already being done by community pharmacists around physical health. Mind Cymru would support an expansion of work around mental health: for example training pharmacists and their staff in Mental Health First Aid or Youth Mental Health First Aid and Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). We recognise that there is an issue around protected learning time for the pharmacy profession and we are in favour of changes that would set aside time for pharmacists to undertake training that would enable a more comprehensive service to be offered.

Given the high number of GP consultations that have a mental health element, pharmacists and their staff will encounter people presenting with mental health problems, even where these are initially felt to be physical problems by the individual. Community pharmacists are well placed to direct people to sources of mental health support (for example voluntary sector services which might include support groups or counselling) or to GPs as appropriate. For many common mental health problems, interventions such as talking therapies, bibliotherapy, exercise on referral schemes and other non-pharmaceutical interventions can be very effective alternatives. We would like community pharmacists to have up-to-date knowledge to be able to discuss these potential treatments with customers in order for the people of Wales to be able make more informed choices.

Many pharmacists will also have encountered people in severe distress, having thoughts of taking their own lives. ASIST training for pharmacists and other staff

would be highly beneficial in terms of supporting not just individuals thinking about suicide, but the people confronted with someone in that position and being concerned about saying or doing the 'wrong' things. This would help address the objectives set out in 'Talk to me', the Welsh Government plan to reduce suicide and self harm in Wales.

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