

Mental health matters

Annual Meeting Resolution Briefing Notes



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Mental health matters

Mental health matters as much as physical health. The NFWI urges all WI members to recognise the importance of parity between mental health and physical health, and take action to make it as acceptable to talk about mental health issues as much as physical health issues, and to lobby government for better support for mental illness.

Proposer's position

The proposer is concerned that mental illness can affect any sector of society, but there is still a stigma around talking about this illness. The proposer wishes to see the WI work to reduce the stigma around mental health by learning about the issue and discussing it openly in local communities.

What is the scale of the problem?

Each year, around 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem and almost all (9 out of 10) will face discrimination and stigma including from friends, family and at work. This can worsen someone's mental health problems and delay or impede their getting help and treatment, and their recovery.

The Mental Health Foundation estimates that around 1 in 10 children and young people are affected by a mental health condition such as depression, self-harm and eating disorders.

However, 75% of people with mental health conditions do not have access to the care they need. Research also suggests that access to services and waiting times can vary significantly depending on where you live.

The current situation in the UK

In 2011, the Government set out a strategy to improve mental health and wellbeing, 'No Health Without Mental Health'. This was shortly followed by a strategy for mental health and wellbeing in Wales.

In April 2013, the Health and Social Care Act 2012 came into force, enshrining the strategy for England into law and introducing an explicit recognition of



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the Secretary of State for Health's duty towards both physical and mental health.

This Act placed a legislative requirement on the health service to address the disparity between mental and physical health through a concept known as parity of esteem. Parity of esteem recognises that mental health impacts on physical health, and vice versa, and therefore they should both be treated together and equally. A key aspect of implementing this parity is an equal distribution of resources, as well as equal consideration given both aspects of health when commissioning services.

Mental health services were given a boost in the 2015 coalition government budget when the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, announced he had secured £1.25bn to enable the NHS to treat more than 100,000 young people by 2020. The announcement built on Clegg's 2014 announcement of the first waiting-time standards for mental health treatment and £120m funding for service improvements designed to put a stop to 'discrimination against mental health'.

Since then, the Government has continued to take action to tackle the stigma associated with mental health and improve the provision of mental health services. In January 2016, the Prime Minister announced investment of £290 million in specialist care for new mums, £247 million in mental health services in hospital emergency departments and £400 million in community-based services.

This was followed by the announcement in January 2017 of a package of measures, targeted at schools, the work place and local communities, to ensure that children and young people receive the support they need for mental health conditions. These included:

- offering all secondary schools in the country mental health first aid training;
- reviewing children and adolescent mental health services, led by the Care Quality Commission;
- publishing a green paper on children and young people's mental health;
- partnering with employers to improve mental health support in the workplace;
- building on the availability of community-based support services for mental health; and
- expanding digital services for mental health.

In July 2017, the Health Secretary announced plans to create 21,000 new posts in mental health services in order to treat an extra 1 million patients by 2021. However, the NHS Confederation and Royal College of Nursing have raised concerns over whether there is enough time and funding to deliver this. Campaigners have also warned that local authorities are not spending enough of their public health budgets on mental health services. On average, this is less than 1% according to figures obtained by Mind.

The Government has also revealed plans to improve the public's understanding of mental health. In October, it was announced that Public Health England will lead a £15 million programme to train around one million people in basic mental health awareness and first aid. The online campaign will be launched in 2018 and run until 2021.

A number of local and national campaigns have also been launched aimed at breaking down the stigma associated with mental health and encouraging people to talk about their experiences. These include Time to Change and Heads Together.

How could the WI work on this issue if it was passed?

A full campaign would be developed by the NFWI if the resolution is passed, taking into account developments since then. But to help inform your discussions, here are some ways the WI could consider working on this issue.

At local and regional levels, members could take action within their Institutes by creating opportunities to talk about mental health and the barriers that

exist to accessing local support services. Members could also call on their local authority to prioritise the provision of adequate mental health services.

Nationally, alongside other organisations, the NFWI could put pressure on the government to ensure that all people with mental health problems have access to the support they need, regardless of where they live.

Arguments for the resolution

- Many mental health problems are hidden, especially with women around child birth. A WI campaign could help to extend the reach of mental health awareness and encourage more people to seek help.
- Action to tackle the stigma associated with mental health can be taken by anyone. It can be as simple as listening to a friend without judging.



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Arguments against the resolution

- There has been a continued focus on mental health amongst policymakers and the health sector, with a number of recent announcements aimed at further improving access to treatment.
- There are already a number of national campaigns focused on this subject – is there more the WI could add?

How to cast your vote

WIs should consider how you wish your delegate to vote at the Annual Meeting in Cardiff on 6th June. All WIs get one vote for the resolution – for or against. WIs can also choose to give discretion to your delegate to decide how to vote after hearing the presentations and debate at the Annual Meeting

Further information

Mind: <https://www.mind.org.uk/> E: supporterservices@mind.org.uk T: 020 8519 2122

Mental Health Foundation: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/> T: 020 7803 1100

Rethink Mental Illness: <https://www.rethink.org> T: 0121 522 7007

Note - these groups are working on this issue, but may not be able to provide speakers for meetings.

If you would like to find a local speaker you could try contacting:

- Local mental health charities, try your local authority website which may include a list of charities and support groups.
- Your local health services, they may be able to provide a speaker on mental health.

Video

This film from charity Mind features young people talking about their experiences with mental illness: thewi.org.uk/s/v4

Public Affairs Department Contacts

If you have any questions about the resolutions or the resolutions process then please get in touch with the NFWI Public Affairs department.

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