



For better
mental health

Mind Manifesto 2005

Mental health, good or bad, is part of everyday life for everyone. It fluctuates over time. It is not simply a medical issue, but a social, economic and cultural issue too. Mind wants the next Government to recognise this and to deliver mental health policies that benefit us all.

The next Government must:

1. Make mental health a top health priority.
2. Combat the social exclusion and stigma faced by people with mental health problems.
3. Ensure people with mental health problems receive the help they need at the earliest opportunity.
4. Ensure full and easy access to crisis care and produce new mental health legislation that respects the dignity and human rights of individuals.
5. Protect consumers through more stringent regulation of prescription drugs.

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1. Make mental health a top health priority.

Between 2002 and 2004, mental health spending has increased at less than half the rate of increase for the NHS as a whole.¹ Funding needs to be increased in real terms by 8.8 per cent a year from 2002/03 to 2010/11 in order to reach world class standards.² Present trends are nowhere near this.

Poor mental health is economically and socially costly, as well as damaging to the individuals affected. As a matter of urgency, the mental health needs of the most vulnerable, including single parents, homeless people, people in prison, Black and minority ethnic groups, refugees, travellers and rural communities, must be met.

The next Government must:

- state clearly its commitment to mental health as a top priority and back this commitment with funding to match
- introduce and develop a centrally coordinated, well funded, community based mental health promotion strategy relevant to all.

2. Combat the social exclusion and stigma faced by people with mental health problems.

Only twenty per cent of people with mental health problems are in work.³ Benefit levels for the small number of people who never regain sufficient health to work are far too low to allow them to play their full role in society. Support for people with experience of mental distress who are well enough to return to work needs to be developed further.

Stigma is one of the main causes of social exclusion for people with mental health problems.⁴ The Disability Discrimination Act gives only partial protection to those who are discriminated against due to mental ill health. The Government's programme to tackle stigma and discrimination on mental health grounds in England is welcome but inadequate. Funding is a quarter of the amount being spent in a similar way in Scotland on a population one 20th of the size. In Wales, no money has been put in at all.

The next Government must:

- develop a benefits system that helps people back into sustainable employment and provides an adequate income when employment is not an option
- amend the Disability Discrimination Act to fully protect people with mental health problems and ensure employers and service providers comply
- ensure those not able to work due to mental ill health have sufficient income to develop and maintain social networks and involvement in the community.
- develop comprehensive and properly funded anti-stigma campaigns in England and Wales.

¹ *Money for Mental Health, a review of public spending on mental health care*, London: The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2003.

² Wanless, D., 2001/2002, *Securing our Future Health: Taking a Long-Term View*, Interim Report, 2001, and Final Report, 2002, London: HM Treasury. (Please note: The scope of the Wanless review was England only).

³ Great Britain Spring 2004 Labour Force Survey, not seasonally adjusted.

⁴ Eighty-three per cent of responses to the Social Exclusion Unit's consultation on mental health said that stigma was the main cause of social exclusion of people with mental ill health.

3. Ensure people with mental health problems receive the help they need at the earliest opportunity.

Primary care is the major provider of all mental health care.⁵ One in four people report being denied access to the help they seek from mental health services when their problems are first developing. For one in four people, it takes over 18 months to get that help.⁶ This inevitably results in people eventually reaching a crisis and being treated compulsorily under the Mental Health Act.

The next Government must:

- ensure that everyone who visits a GP with a mental health issue has the opportunity to discuss it fully and receives proper advice and support
- ensure all who require an assessment of their needs receive it promptly
- ensure all who require support or treatment are offered a choice that includes non drug options, and that provision is delivered promptly
- train and employ sufficient psychological therapists to ensure no one waits longer than one month for a talking treatment.

4. Ensure full and easy access to crisis care and produce new mental health legislation that respects the dignity and human rights of individuals.

When a person reaches crisis point, they need immediate access to services. But much of England and Wales is still without the 24 hour services promised by the Government.⁷ Denied help when they seek it, people often end up being forced to take treatment against their will under the Mental Health Act.

The current Government's proposals for new mental health legislation are draconian and stigmatising. They will increase the use of compulsion and will lead to infringement of people's human rights.

The next Government must:

- ensure access to 24 hour crisis services across England and Wales
- introduce mental health legislation that puts the health needs of vulnerable people first.

⁵ Estimates are that 90 per cent of mental health problems are dealt with in primary care, 70 per cent of GP consultations have a mental health component and 30 to 50 per cent of all people with severe mental illness are only in contact with their GP.

⁶ *Right from the start, the second Rethink report on reaching people early*, London: Rethink, 2003.

⁷ National Service Framework for Mental Health, Department of Health, September 1999, and the National Service Framework for Mental Health Wales, April 2002

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5. Protect consumers through more stringent regulation of prescription drugs.

Revelations relating to the safety of Seroxat and other psychiatric drugs in 2004 highlighted serious shortcomings in the regulation of medicines in the UK. Recent Government measures to make pharmaceutical regulation more open and transparent do not go far enough.

The next Government must put in place a drug regulation system:

- that puts consumer safety above all other priorities
- whose membership and operation is transparent and accountable
- that has sufficient legal powers to ensure access to all drug trial information and adequate funding to verify the accuracy of this information
- that bases decisions not only on company drug trials, but also on the experience of patients who take the drugs.



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Mind

15-19 Broadway
London
E15 4BQ
T: 020 8519 2122
F: 020 8522 1725
w: www.mind.org.uk

Registered charity number 219830.
Registered in England number 424348.

MindinfoLine

0845 7660 163
Open Monday to Friday 9.15am to 5.15pm
Email: info@mind.org.uk
Deaf or speech impaired enquirers can contact us on the same number
(if you are using BT Textdirect add the prefix 18001).
Or write to:
Mind
PO Box 277
Manchester M60 3XN