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Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
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RE: Short Debate on 'Promoting Holistic Health Care in the Community', 6 May 2009

I am writing to you in response to your question in the Short Debate on 'Promoting Holistic Health Care in the Community' on 6 May 2009.

In this debate, I stated that I would give a more specific answer to the following question you raised:

"You have described a number of innovative projects that are going on in Wales, but do you accept that there is a correlation between poverty and high levels of mental ill health? If you do accept that, what is being done to target people in poorer areas?"

The Minister for Health and Social Services and I are determined to tackle the links between poverty and mental ill-health. As with other risk factors, there is a clear socio-economic gradient in people's overall mental health and well-being. The data from the latest *Welsh Health Survey* suggests that the most deprived parts of Wales have significantly poorer mental health outcomes than the least deprived parts. Furthermore, mental health impacts on physical health; the World Health Organisation (WHO) regard mental health as important as physical health in the achievement of a long, happy and active life. Positive mental well-being increases a person's chances of having a good job, is protective against injury and aids recovery from illness.

The Adult Mental Health Strategy for Wales highlights in its vision statement that crucial to improving mental health is addressing the social and economic determinants of poor health. Standard 1 of the Adult Mental Health National Service Framework sets out the targeted Key Actions on addressing the links between social exclusion and mental health. Furthermore, care planning for every individual in contact with secondary mental health services should encompass a holistic, person-centred approach, with Community Mental Health Teams taking into account the help that patients may need in relation to social aspects such as accommodation, finance and education. Furthermore, the Local Mental

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Health Grant Scheme provided over £3.783 million in 2009-10 to local mental health projects and voluntary organisations across Wales.

More specifically, targeted initiatives include:

- The Communities First (CF) Programme prioritises the need to improve the health and well-being of people living in Wales' most disadvantaged communities. The revised CF Vision Framework highlights activities to promote good health and healthy lifestyles and service providers are expected to work with the local CF Partnerships to achieve these aims.
- A practical example is the Bowydd and Rhiw CF Partnership in Blaenau Ffestiniog, which piloted a community psychotherapy service after identifying a gap in provision. The Partnership worked closely with local health visitors, social services and Women's Aid to develop the pilot which provided a confidential service to local people and many reported substantial improvements in their wellbeing. The pilot was a success and has continued as part of mainstream services.
- The 'Hearts and Minds' Inequalities in Health Fund project in Wrexham received just over £400k between April 2002 and March 2008 and took the form of an 'umbrella' approach supporting a range of local initiatives. It increased access to services for the client group through over 7,500 local activity sessions.
- In Abergele, during 2008 additional supported living facilities were opened, which will provide independent living for four individuals with mental health needs. Suitable individuals have already been identified, and two young people with mental health needs have already moved into the accommodation.
- As a result of a partnership with Mind, Conwy and Denbighshire LHB's have provided additional investment in 2008 to undertake an action research project in rural Conwy and Denbighshire, which will adopt a community development approach to building services in the rural communities.

These made-in-Wales initiatives aim to break the cycle of poverty and poor mental health, and play a pivotal role in a social model of mental health and well-being. I believe that key to modern mental health care and treatment is a focus on *prevention* and *recovery*, which centres upon the needs and expectations of individuals being met. Health and social care interventions therefore should take into account social and environmental factors which effect individual's health and well-being.

As you are also aware, the Welsh Assembly Government has set out a very ambitious One Wales programme, where we seek to transform Wales into a healthy, self-confident nation, and a society that is fair to all. Particularly in times of economic uncertainty, there must be renewed efforts to protect and improve people's mental health and well-being, which has been shown to be closely linked with both individual and social issues, such as debt and unemployment. We are also working towards achieving a world-class health service available to everyone, irrespective of who they are and where they live, and available at the time when needed.

Furthermore, the changes announced by Minister for Health and Social Services to reorganise the NHS in Wales will mean that the new health bodies will have to ensure that the quality of mental health services significantly improves. Targeting those in deprived

communities will require much better working with Local Government and particularly Social Services and the Third Sector.

Following the reorganisation of NHS Wales, mental health will have a strengthened role in the new Local Health Board organisations. The Minister has ensured that each Board has a Director of Primary, Community and Mental Health services. This senior Board member will support each of the Vice Chairs to ensure high quality mental health services are delivered and are available to the whole of their local population on an equitable basis. The new Directors must also ensure there is a particular emphasis on new models of care outside of hospitals that move care and intervention close to people's home, and shift the focus much more towards prevention and early intervention, particularly in deprived communities.

Thank you for raising this important issue.

Yours sincerely

Gwenda Thomas AC/AM