



Ein cyf/Our ref: MA-P/VG/2252/19

Nick Ramsay AM
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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20 June 2019

Dear Nick,

I write following your exchange with the Minister for Finance & Trefnydd in the Senedd on 11 June regarding men's mental health. You raised an important issue and rightly pointed to the particular challenges men can face in relation to discussing their mental health and wellbeing.

Mental health and wellbeing is a clear priority for this Government. The level of priority attached to this agenda is illustrated by it being one of the six priority themes in Prosperity for All: the national strategy. Its importance is also reflected in A Healthier Wales: our plan for Health and Social Care. This sets out a long-term future vision of a whole system approach to health and social care, which is focussed on health and well-being, and on preventing illness. In addition, Together for Mental Health, our 10 year strategic approach, sets out how we will help improve the lives of those with mental health problems, and, where possible, prevent such problems developing in the first place.

Whilst our ambition is to promote and support the mental health and wellbeing of everyone, we recognise that certain groups have particular needs, including men. A number of initiatives therefore include targeted action aimed at promoting good mental health and wellbeing specifically among men.

By way of examples, men in mid-life have been identified as a priority group within Talk to Me 2, our suicide and self-harm prevention strategy, recognising the risks associated with this group. The strategy seeks to identify risk and protective factors for suicide and self harm, and to engage individuals and organisations across all sectors in activities to reduce harm and to support those who are affected by suicide or self harm. We also work with the National Advisory Group and regional suicide prevention forums to ensure action plans are implemented. Following the publication of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee's report *Everybody's Business: A Report on Suicide Prevention in Wales* in December 2018, I also announced funding of £500,000 per year to support the national and regional approaches to tackle suicide and self-harm prevention. This will include the development of co-ordinator posts at both a National and Regional level.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

In the Senedd you also alluded to the perceived stigma attached to discussing mental health issues, which traditionally can apply to men. We are providing over £650,000 of funding over three years for the third phase of Time to Change Wales, a campaign aimed at ending the stigma and discrimination faced by people with experience of mental health problems in Wales. The central aim of the campaign is to challenge and change negative attitudes and behaviours towards mental health problems. The current phase of the campaign is targeting men particularly, and in February 2019 the new **#TalkingIsALifeline** campaign was launched. #TalkingIsALifeline aims to encourage men to talk about their mental health without the fear of being judged; it emphasises that talking about mental health might be one of the bravest things a man can do.

In relation to other specific activities, we also fund programmes supporting middle aged men such as *Men's Sheds* through the Section 64 Third Sector Mental Health Grant, which funds specific mental health projects on an all-Wales basis. These are projects which help supplement and enhance the services already being provided by NHS Wales and local authorities.

I hope that the above information will be helpful and illustrates that mental health and the well-being of the people of Wales is of utmost importance to myself and the Welsh Government, and we recognise the need to continue to reduce mental health stigma amongst men.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vaughan Gething". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vaughan Gething AC/AM

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services