

PRESS RELEASE

AMs, MPs and Experts Call On Welsh Parties to Support Mindfulness Teaching in Health and Education

Mindful Nation Wales Event at the Welsh Assembly

12:00 – 13:30, Tuesday 17 November, Committee Room 21, Ty Hywel (Invite only, please RSVP)

AMs from across the parties will join mindfulness experts in calling for more active engagement with mindfulness

Wales is facing a mental health crisis, with a consensus that more needs to be done to support those experiencing mental health problems or at risk of developing them. *Mindful Nation UK*, a new report by Westminster MPs, presents evidence that mindfulness training - learning techniques including meditation that help people respond to better to difficulties - can play a vital role in healthcare education and the workplace.

Mindfulness is already taught in many schools and Health Boards, and Wales is a global leader in the therapeutic use of mindfulness, especially through the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice at Bangor University. However, provision is unplanned and patchy.

Speakers include Ministers Vaughan Gettings (Dpt. Health for Minister) and Ken Skates as well as Darren Millar, Shadow Minister for Health.

Darren Millar (Conservative) comments,

"We should all be concerned about rising mental health problems. I'm impressed by the evidence for mindfulness training, having I've experienced the benefits for myself. We need to look seriously at how we can realise its potential."

Chris Ruane, MP for Vale of Clwyd until the last election, co-chaired the parliamentary group, and he will launch its *Mindful Nation UK* report. Other speakers will present evidence for the benefits of mindfulness training and recommend how Wales it can develop in Wales.

Recommendations to the Welsh political parties in advance of the election include:

- Offering Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) across the Welsh Health Service in accordance with NICE guidelines so it reaches a significant portion of people with three or more incidents of depression
- Providing mindfulness courses through the NHS for people with a wider range of physical and psychological health problems
- Incorporating mindfulness training in Initial Teacher Training for all new teachers
- Supporting mindfulness teaching in schools
- Ensuring good practice in mindfulness teaching in workplaces.

Anne Jones AM (Labour): "In my constituency, the Vale of Clwyd, mindfulness is helping primary-age children develop resilience and attention and learn to master their emotions. Mindfulness can deliver the skills that pupils, parents and employers want. I'm grateful to Bangor University for developing the Paws B Primary mindfulness curriculum. It's great to see Wales leading the way."

CONTACT

Vishvapani Blomfield (The Mindfulness Initiative, Wales): vishvapani@gmail.com; 07910 82908

Llyr. Gruffydd (Plaid) "Mindfulness addresses real needs for people across Wales, especially in health and education. We need to look seriously at its potential contribution."

BRIEFING NOTES

The Mindful Nation UK Report

Following a 12-month inquiry by the Mindfulness APPG, the report makes recommendations on how mindfulness can help meet government objectives in education, healthcare, criminal justice and the workplace. It concludes that, while mindfulness is not a panacea, it offers significant benefits.

The Mental Health Crisis

- The direct and indirect costs of mental health problems in Wales are estimated at 7.2 billion pounds per year.
- Around one in three families includes someone who is mentally ill.
- 10% of UK adult population experience symptoms of depression in any given week.
- Almost half of all absenteeism and incapacity claims are due to mental illness.
- Prescriptions of anti-depressants have increased by 500% in 20 years.

Mindfulness and its Benefits

Mindfulness means directing awareness to our experience with openness, curiosity and care, helping practitioners to become more aware of their thoughts and feelings so they can manage them more skilfully. Even brief periods of mindfulness practice can enhance cognitive skills such as reaction times, comprehension scores, working memory functioning and decision-making.

Scientific interest in mindfulness training is booming, with 500+ peer-reviewed scientific journal papers published each year. Mindfulness training has been shown to reduce risk of relapse of recurrent depression by one third, with those at greatest risk getting the most benefit. A meta-analysis of 209 studies concluded that mindfulness-based interventions showed "large and clinically significant effects in treating anxiety and depression."

The Mindful Nation UK report online

http://www.themindfulnessinitiative.org.uk/images/reports/Mindfulness-APPG-Report_Mindful-Nation-UK_Oct2015.pdf

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Quotes

Jenny Edwards CBE, Chief Executive of the Mental Health Foundation:

“The Mindful Nation UK report comes at a pivotal time for mindfulness and for action on mental health. The evidence tells us that, properly taught, the practice of mindfulness helps many people maintain good mental health and to sustain recovery after illness. At the same time the pressure on mental health crisis services has never been more intense. Three quarters of people with mental health problems don't receive treatment. We need to give serious consideration to the role mindfulness can play in helping to reduce the chances of experiencing mental health problems and to ensure that it becomes available to the communities who have the greatest risks.”

Jess Morden, MP for Newport West and Co-Chair of the Mindfulness APPG:

“I became interested in the possibilities for mindfulness in policy after experiencing a training course in parliament. The quality and range of evidence for the benefits of mindfulness is very impressive, and we believe it has the potential to help many people to better health and wellbeing.”

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