

# Mindful Nation Wales Event

12:00 – 13:30, Tuesday 17 November 2015

Committee Room 21, Ty Hywel, Welsh Assembly/Senedd

Hosting AMs: Darren Millar & Ann Jones

## Speakers

### **Darren Millar AM**

Shadow Minister of Health, Welsh Assembly

### **Chris Ruane**

*Launching the Mindful Nation UK Report*

Founder and Hon. President of the Mindfulness All Party Parliamentary Group

### **Vishvapani Blomfield**

Mindfulness Initiative (mindfulness teacher and broadcaster)

### **Rebecca Remigio**

*Mindfulness in the Criminal Justice System*

Head of Public Protection, Wales Probation Service

### **Mary Williams**

Mindfulness course participant Rachel Lilley

### **Rachel Lilley**

*Mindfulness and Welsh Workplace Policy*

University of Aberystwyth

### **Rebecca Crane**

*Mindfulness and Welsh Healthcare Policy*

Director of the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice, Bangor University

### **Elizabeth Williams**

*Mindfulness and Welsh Education Policy*

Mindfulness in Schools teacher and former Head Of Children And Young People's Strategy, Welsh Government

### **Vaughan Gething AM**

Deputy Minister for Health, Welsh Government

### **Ken Skates AM**

Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism, Welsh Government

Speakers will begin at 12.30 and continue to 1.30. You are welcome to join us after the event in the foyer of the Wales Millennium Centre

# The Mindful Nation Wales Event

Wales has pioneered the therapeutic use of mindfulness, especially through the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice (CMRP) at Bangor University. Mindfulness is already taught in many schools and some Health Boards and Trusts offer Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy, but provision is unplanned and patchy. This event explores the potential for Wales to become a global leader in the use of mindfulness and the potential role of the Welsh Government.

## Mindfulness and its Benefits

Mindfulness means directing awareness to our experience with openness, curiosity and care. It helps us to become more aware of thoughts and feelings so we can manage them more skilfully, developing the capacity for attention regulation, meta-cognition and concentration. Even brief periods of mindfulness practice can enhance cognitive skills such as reaction times, comprehension scores, working memory functioning and decision-making. In this way, mindfulness training supports wellbeing, self-regulation and behaviour change because it enables people to find balanced mental space that allows them to make better choices.

Mindfulness training includes simple practices, such as meditation on the breath, that teach participants to settle their attention. This allows them to be aware of their experience with open minded curiosity and acceptance, rather than worrying about what has happened or might happen. It is a wholly secular practice that is taught through well-established curricula.

Scientific interest in mindfulness training is booming, with 500+ peer-reviewed scientific journal papers published each year. A meta-analysis of 209 studies concluded that mindfulness-based interventions showed "large and clinically significant effects in treating anxiety and depression, and the gains were maintained at follow-up."

## The Mindfulness APPG & the Mindful Nation UK Report

This event will see the launch in Wales of the Mindful Nation UK report, produced by the Mindfulness All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), which grew out of courses in mindfulness for Westminster parliamentarians. The APPG formed in June 2014 and reported in October 2015, following a detailed inquiry. The Mindful Nation UK report makes recommendations on how mindfulness can help meet UK government objectives in education, healthcare, criminal justice and the workplace. It is available online at <http://www.themindfulnessinitiative.org.uk>

The Mindfulness Initiative is an independent organisation advocating public support for the use of mindfulness. It supported the research, writing and production of the Mindful Nation UK report.

## Briefing Papers

This briefing pack includes papers on health, education and the workplace that supplement the Mindful Nation UK report by applying its findings to Wales and making Wales-specific recommendations. To see the general research base for mindfulness, please refer to the report.

Edited by Vishvapani Blomfield (Mindfulness Initiative)

## Contact

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## Mindfulness in Health in Wales

As mental health problems become increasingly prevalent in Wales, investing in early intervention is a health imperative and should be an economic and social priority as well. Around one in three families includes someone who is with mental ill-health, and in any given week 10% of UK adult population experience symptoms of depression. Almost half of all absenteeism and incapacity claims are due to mental ill-health.

One authoritative analysis reports that, adding the economic and human effects to the burden on the health and social care system, mental health problems cost Wales an estimated £7.2 billion per year.<sup>1</sup> Mindfulness Based Interventions (MBIs) can contribute significantly to addressing these issues.

### **Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) for recurrent depression**

Half of those who have one episode of depression will have a second, and 80% of those will have three or more. Since 2004, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), has recommended Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) for people with recurrent depression.

A meta-analysis of six randomised controlled trials for people who had experienced three or more episodes of depression but were currently well found that MBCT reduced the risk of relapse by 43% in comparison to control groups. Prescriptions for anti-depressants have increased by 500% in 20 years, and MBCT provides effects comparable with staying on a maintenance dose of anti-depressants.

According to The Kings Fund, providing MBCT in line with the NICE guidelines could save £15 for every £1 spent, with further savings in related health care costs such as antidepressant prescriptions. However, a 2010 Mental Health Foundation survey found that:

- 69% of GPs rarely or never refer their patients with recurrent depression for MBCT<sup>2</sup>
- 75% of GPs have prescribed anti-depressant medication to patients with recurrent depression believing that an alternative might be more appropriate.<sup>3</sup>

**For these reasons, we strongly recommend that MBCT be made available in every Welsh Health Board and Trust.**

MBCT is currently recommended as a prevention intervention for recurrent depression, rather than as a treatment for current depression. Implementation thus requires a culture shift to an NHS that prioritises prevention in order to reduce further and more costly interventions down the line.

### **Mindfulness Based Interventions in the NHS**

There is emerging evidence for the effectiveness of MBIs in many mental health problems including anxiety, psychosis and stress. In addition, MBIs can play a unique role in addressing Wales' health challenges by contributing to prevention, early intervention and the promotion of good mental health.

A recent Welsh Government review of psychological therapies in Wales found substantial variation in the availability and quality of services across the country. Our recommendations for mindfulness are in line with the goal outlined in the recently formulated Wales Psychological Therapies Plan for Adult Mental Health, which aims to develop a 'psychologically minded service' for people experiencing mental distress.

### **Mindfulness Based Interventions and physical healthcare**

Depression is two to three times more common in people with a long-term physical health problem than in the general population. Co-morbid mental health problems are particularly common among people with multiple long-term conditions.<sup>4</sup>

A recent review of 114 studies found consistent improvements in mental health and wellbeing, notably reduced stress, anxiety and depression, in the context of poor physical health following mindfulness training. The strongest evidence is for the psychological impact on people living with cancer, but

evidence is also available for the benefits of MBIs for lower back pain, fibromyalgia, arthritis, HIV and irritable bowel syndrome. The Mindful Nation UK report details potential benefits in a wide range of other physical health conditions.

There are excellent examples of MBI courses in NHS physical health services in Wales that offer models for the service as a whole. For example, three MBCT for cancer (MBCT-Ca) courses are run each year in the oncology department at the Alaw Day Unit, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. Courses are offered to people with all types and stages of cancer and people with varying prognoses, including those with advanced and terminal disease.

## Mindfulness for NHS Staff

Public sector workforces are particularly affected by the mental ill-health that is found in many other workforces. The NHS has higher sickness absence rates than any other large public sector organisation, with 3.4% of worker hours lost to sickness in 2013.

Offering mindfulness to NHS staff benefits their own wellbeing, improving mental health and reducing the number of staff sick days as well as improving their understanding of mindfulness based interventions and the quality of the care they offer.

## Recommendations

### MBCT Implementation

1. Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) is fully implemented as a depression prevention approach across the NHS in Wales in accordance with NICE guidelines, with one MBCT lead in each Health Board.
2. Funding should be made available to train 40 new MBCT teachers in Wales each year between now and 2020.

### Wider use of Mindfulness

3. Government should develop the provision of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) for NHS staff and people with long-term conditions, in line with the evidence and standards of good practice.
4. A co-ordinated strategy for the implementation of Mindfulness Based Interventions across Wales is developed. We propose the creation of a Wales Mindfulness in Healthcare Working Group with representation from government, Health Boards and Trusts, Bangor University's mindfulness centre and the third sector.



<sup>1</sup> All Wales Mental Health Promotion Network, Promoting Mental health and Preventing Mental Illness: The Economic Case for Investment in Wales: 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Mental Health Foundation, Mindfulness Report: 2010.

<sup>3</sup> McCrone P, Dhanasiri S, Patel A, Knapp M, Lawton-Smith S., Paying the Price: The Cost of Mental Healthcare in England to 2026, Kings Fund: 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Moussavi et al 2007 cited in Naylor C, Parsonage M, McDaid D, Knapp M, Fossey M, Galea A. Long-Term Conditions and Mental Health: The Cost of Co-Morbidities, The King's Fund UK: 2012.

# Mindfulness in Education in Wales

## The Policy Challenge

Many Welsh schools are already using mindfulness practices, and staff, students and Head-teachers testify to the effect on their schools. Wales has led the way in the development of mindfulness in schools, especially through Bangor University's Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice (CMRP).

However, in Wales this remains an unplanned, grassroots movement and uptake is patchy. Research evidence presented in the Mindful Nation UK report suggests that mindfulness has a bearing on key challenges within Welsh education policy:

- Academic attainment and improving results
- Children's mental health
- Wales' commitment to developing and sustaining wellbeing in schools
- Levels of stress and morale among teaching staff.

Perhaps the most pressing challenge is the mental health crisis among young people. In 2014 Public Health England concluded that 30% of English adolescents report sub-clinical mental health problems. We can be sure that this is reflected in Wales and new approaches to mental health are urgently needed. Good preliminary evidence shows that implementing mindfulness training in education can make a systemic and sustained difference to the mental health, wellbeing and cognitive performance of children, young people and their teachers.

Evidence-based, high-quality mindfulness training in education in Wales can make a significant, cost-effective contribution to academic attainment, mental health and wellbeing in our schools. Therefore, we propose targeted, cost-effective support for mindfulness training and research to make mindfulness training much more widely available and to evaluate its impact. A modest amount of funding will enable this to happen far more speedily and effectively.

## How can it help?

### Mindful pupils and students

The evidence is still developing, but we can say that structured mindfulness programmes for pupils and students enhance executive control, with a disproportionate benefit for those with the lowest self-control and emotional stability. They improve concentration and cognitive performance, which brings better results and builds resilience. There is good evidence that the coping strategies for stress and anxiety that participants learn increase wellbeing and emotional competence as well as improving relationships and difficult behaviour.

### Mindful staff

Enabling teachers to engage in mindfulness programmes is shown to enhance wellbeing and reduce staff absence. Emerging evidence from the Bangor University CMRP with primary and secondary teachers in North Wales has shown decreases in perceived stress and improvements in general health and wellbeing. More broadly, schools report that mindfulness enhances the environment in schools and classrooms.

## Practical ways to develop mindfulness in education

### 1. Training for staff

Building on current initiatives by establishing a programme of initial mindfulness training for staff in schools and colleges across Wales, engaging partners in the public and third sectors, including the four Welsh Education Consortia.

## **2. Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience**

Identifying schools, including those Pioneer Schools that are committed to taking forward the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience, to develop a whole school approach to integrating mindfulness into the curriculum. For example:

- Enabling access to a rolling programme of mindfulness training for teachers
- Supporting and funding teachers who complete a relevant adult course and establish their own mindfulness practice to train in teaching mindfulness programmes to pupils
- Enabling pupils to follow age-appropriate, structured mindfulness programmes including Paws b or .b (for secondary and primary pupils, respectively) as part of a spiral curriculum approach
- Offering parents, governors and the community ways to engage in mindfulness programmes.

## **3. Support for Local Initiatives**

Supporting individual schools and groups of schools or colleges who want to introduce mindfulness programmes to staff, pupils/students and perhaps school communities by:

- Encouraging good practice networks, building on the Schools Challenge model
- Assisting individual schools to join training programmes which may be part of the more structured approaches such as Pioneer Schools developments
- Funding for schools that are committed to developing a mindfulness curriculum and ethos.

## **4. Sharing Good Practice**

Facilitating the sharing of good practice amongst participants by:

- Disseminating the work done by Pioneer Schools and others that are developing the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience
- Using the existing research base on mindfulness in education that has been developed by the Bangor University CMRP to inform future development
- Utilising the Schools Challenge and Pioneer Schools Network models of school improvement to share good practice locally and nationally
- Working with Public Health Wales through the Welsh Network of Healthy Schools Schemes to include mindfulness in training and accreditation and to evaluate its wider impact
- Establishing a network of key organisations involved in implementing mindfulness in schools to share, secure and maintain quality training and provision.

## **Funding**

Funding is needed for high-quality staff training that enables staff to participate in local mindfulness courses in conjunction with partner organisations. Staff who establish a personal mindfulness practice then need to be trained to teach relevant programmes in their schools and supported to maintain their mindfulness practice. Funding should also include the development of an in-depth evidence base to build on existing research by CMRP and ensure the effectiveness of implementation.

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Initial Teacher Training and In-Service Training for School Staff**

- Incorporate basic mindfulness training in Initial Teacher Training for all new teachers
- Introduce an on-going programme of mindfulness training for staff at local level in each Education Advisory Service Consortium area, leading to training eligible staff to deliver structured mindfulness courses to pupils.

### **2. Public Health**

- Support the implementation of and training for mindfulness in schools through the Healthy Schools Wales programme, including Healthy Schools Accreditation Awards.

### **3. Mindfulness for Whole School Communities**

- Introduce mindfulness programmes in volunteer primary and secondary schools and colleges throughout Wales, including where possible for staff, pupils, parents and governors

# Mindfulness in the Workplace in Wales

## What Mindfulness offers Workplaces

Evidence for workplace mindfulness is building, but preliminary findings include:

**Cognitive Benefits** Recipients of mindfulness training report lower levels of stress during multi-tasking tests and can concentrate for longer. Even brief periods of mindfulness practice can produce improved reaction times, comprehension scores, working memory functioning and decision-making.

**Stress and Wellbeing** Employees practising mindfulness have less emotional exhaustion, better work-life balance and better job performance ratings. They are more likely to show concern towards co-workers and express opinions honestly. Similar benefits follow when leaders practice mindfulness.

**Sickness and Absenteeism** Mindfulness training enhances resilience, bringing a reduction in absenteeism. When 600 Transport for London employees attended a workplace mindfulness course, the number of days off for stress, anxiety and depression fell by 71% over the following three years, while absences for all conditions dropped by 50%.

**Emotional Skills** Studies of teachers show improved emotional skills. Participants were more able to manage their thoughts and behaviour and were more skilled in coping, sustaining motivation, planning and problem solving. They also displayed more empathy, forgiveness and patience, and less anger.

## Welsh Innovation

The complexity and demands of modern workplaces are bringing more stress and greater challenges for decision makers. In response, many leading public and private sector organisations are using mindfulness, and Wales has been a leader in this emerging field.

- In partnership with Aberystwyth University, the Welsh Government Natural Resources Division are using mindfulness, alongside coaching and co-design as a method of developing and delivering effective policy. The same team is exploring the role that mindfulness can play in implementing the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, which will require innovation and creativity.
- Academi Wales promotes mindfulness in coaching and the public sector to highlight its benefits for wellbeing and resilience.
- University of Wales, Trinity Saint David Work delivers workplace mindfulness courses for small businesses and employers such as Tata Steel.
- Bangor University CMRP offers events for businesses and others (including AMs), and looking at ways to research the effectiveness of workplace mindfulness.
- The Business Connect Online Support Service is exploring ways to offer leadership for the sector.

## Recommendations

1. Government departments should encourage mindfulness programmes for staff in the public sector to support the goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the Wales We Want in education, health and Welsh Government and local government.
3. Business Wales and Farming Connect should work with businesses and employers to promote the use of mindfulness through signposting, good practice and case studies.
4. To close the research gap, we urge Academi Wales and the major Welsh Universities to collaborate on high-quality research on the role of mindfulness in the workplace.

## Mindfulness in Other Policy Areas

### **Criminal Justice**

While this area is not devolved, there are many overlaps between the needs of the offender population and devolved services. For example, the new Wrexham prison offers an opportunity to create an environment of which mindfulness is a part. The National Offender Management Service in Wales is actively exploring this. In addition the National Probation Service in Wales is pioneering a potential pilot for mindfulness with offenders and staff.

### **Employability**

Mindfulness can help people return to work. A combination of mindfulness training and coaching has helped participants develop greater self-respect and confidence and deal with the practical and psychological barriers to getting back to work.

In a mindfulness programme in Co. Durham for 300 people who had been unemployed for 1-5 years, 47% had moved into work or full-time education within six months, and 53% wanted to continue with mindfulness practice. Rhyl City Strategy is developing a programme along similar lines.

### **Social Work and Social Care**

These sectors are not addressed in the Westminster parliamentary report. However, we believe that mindfulness has much to offer staff and service users in keeping with the benefits that have been seen in health and criminal justice. Wales has an opportunity to take a lead here.

### **Acknowledgements**

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