# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **World Mental Health Day** |
| **DATE**  | **10 October 2019** |
| **BY** | **Vaughan Gething AM, Minister for Health and Social Services** |

Today is World Mental Health Day – an opportunity to raise awareness, reflect on progress and to consider our next steps to improve mental health and well-being in Wales. Improving mental health and well-being continues to be a priority for me, and across Government as one of the Welsh Government’s cross-cutting priorities in our National Strategy, *Prosperity for All.*

The theme for this year’s Mental Health Day is suicide prevention. We know that the causes of suicide are complex, but we also know that many suicides can be prevented if the risk factors are addressed at an early stage. Unfortunately, many of us will have been affected by suicide, but by increasing our awareness of the risk factors and what we can do to help, we can all have a role to play in prevention.

Earlier this year I announced an additional £500k to support the implementation of actions to prevent suicide. This investment builds on our work to implement *Talk to me 2 –* our suicide and self-harm strategy. This is underpinned by our broader strategy and investment to improve mental health services. This year alone Welsh Government has increased funding by £35million, some of which has been targeted to support key priority areas including perinatal community mental health services, out of hour and crisis services, and children’s mental health services. We continue to spend more on mental health services than on any other part of the NHS with the mental health ring-fence now being £679million.

This ongoing commitment to improving mental health services has resulted in real benefits for patients and their families, for instance the establishment of CAMHS and adults community crisis intervention teams, the new community perinatal mental health services providing support across all areas of Wales, our focus on community support which has reduced hospital admissions and our investment which has significantly reduced waiting times for children and young people to access specialist support. It is important to acknowledge the work that has gone into achieving these milestones by those who work within the health service in Wales.

In order to ensure that further improvements are shaped by those who know the service best, the Welsh Government has recently conducted a public consultation on the third *Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan*. This plan will cover the period from 2019 to 2022 and will set the actions that we, and our partners, will take over the next three years to improve mental health and take us to the end of the 10 year *Together for Mental Health Strategy*. The strategy sent a clear message that delivering improvements in mental health and well-being will only be achieved by concerted effort and commitment across Welsh Government Departments and across a range of partners and key stakeholders. Indeed, most levers to improve mental health and well-being sit outside of health and the draft delivery plan places a greater emphasis on these protective factors – for instance employment, education and housing.

The draft plan was developed with stakeholder and service user engagement and has been shaped to respond to Assembly Committee inquires and related reports. It sets out six priority areas and with four underpinning work streams.

The public consultation included consultation events across Wales, workshops and an online questionnaire. We received over 240 written responses and over 150 people attended three formal consultation events in Cardiff, Llandudno and Carmarthen. This response rate reflects the interest that stakeholders have in making sure that we get mental health provision right and I would like to thank everyone that took the time to engage with the consultation. This engagement will inform our approach and work is now underway to strengthen the plan in response to the feedback. Whilst the detail of the feedback will be included in a separate consultation report, I want to draw out some of the key themes that have been apparent throughout the consultation process.

Importantly, there was support for the priority areas and the emphasis on supporting children and young people. The focus on prevention was also supported but responses were clear that the plan needs to better reflect wider work on what helps us to keep us well – for instance having a strong sense of community, a healthy lifestyle and access to green spaces. People also felt that the balance between prevention and improving mental health services could be further developed and my officials are considering changes to reflect this.

Responses to the consultation also showed that stakeholders want the data that is collected around mental health services to reflect outcomes for individuals as well as performance measures. The development of a mental health and learning disability core dataset is being undertaken alongside preparation of the delivery plan and will explore how patient outcomes, including service user experience, can be used to support service development and improvement going forward.

Whilst our cross-Government working was welcomed, particularly our work with Education on the *Whole School Approach Programme*, we want to ensure the breadth of work across Welsh Government Departments to improve and protect mental health and wellbeing is reflected in the final, published plan.

I will provide a further update when the delivery plan is published.