

VOICES OF GWENT: NAVIGATING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES



INTRODUCTION



The people and community voices of Gwent, alongside a “whole person, whole system” approach, highlighted Mental Health Services to be of a significant concern in Gwent and across Wales. Children and Young People’s access to mental health support drove the need for improvement which was highlighted in the joint report by the health, care and education inspectorates in Wales.

Llais want to ensure every voice is heard and valued, so made Mental Health a priority of focus in Gwent for 2024–25.

We carried out a mix of formal and informal engagement to capture voices of staff working within the field, people and communities:

- Mental Health Survey
- On-site engagement at inpatient mental health wards
- Transformation of the Community Mental Health Duty Desk
- with Health and Social Care
- Insights from our Complaints Advocacy Service
- Co-production with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board of the vision statement for mental health and learning disabilities strategy
- Llais early conversations and involvement with the Local Recovery College



COMPLAINTS ADVOCACY & ENQUIRIES

If people need to raise a concern about an NHS or Social Care Service, we have a dedicated complaints advocacy service who provide people with the free, independent, and confidential support people are entitled to.

We supported 49 people to raise a concern or an enquiry in relation to Mental Health Services. Concerns and enquiries were in relation to clinical practice, particularly treatment and diagnosis and issues with communication.

ADVOCACY IMPACT STORY...

Mr A* felt unsupported by secondary mental health services. After a pre-assessment in October 2022, promised follow-ups never happened. Despite numerous calls, he only reached reception and had to call 111 for support. In February 2023, he discovered he had been discharged in January without being informed. Attempts to access the service continued, but appointments were repeatedly cancelled, leading to inconsistent care.

In November 2023, Mr A was referred to the home treatment team, but support ended in December despite his ongoing crisis. He had to rely on GP-prescribed medication and faced more cancelled appointments, impacting his care. Mr A submitted a complaint in July 2024, which confirmed inadequate and inconsistent care. The Investigating Officer ensured he saw a psychologist and is awaiting treatment, with two medication reviews by a new consultant psychiatrist.

"Llais' involvement helped me find my voice and move from a dark place towards the light. I felt listened to and supported".

MENTAL HEALTH SURVEY



There was a mix of experiences among people and communities. Many people expressed frustration with the accessibility and efficiency of services, particularly emergency mental health services, which often require navigating through GPs for referrals.

Long waiting times and inconsistent communication were common concerns, with some people highlighting the lack of direct contact options and the need for a more streamlined triage system. Additionally, there were concerns about the quality of care, such as inexperienced carers and the need for more specialised support, especially for conditions like autism.

Some people told us about their experiences, particularly with specific services like 111 Option 2 and counselling sessions. These services were praised for their helpfulness and the positive impact they had on peoples mental health.

However, the overall sentiment suggests a need for significant improvements in accessibility, communication, and the quality of care provided by mental health services to better meet the needs of the community.

INPATIENT ENGAGEMENT



In February 2025, Llais conducted on-site engagements at several inpatient mental health wards in Gwent.

To gather insights, we visited the following sites:

- 1) St Cadoc's Hospital, Adferiad Ward**
- 2) Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan, Carn-Y-Cefn Ward**
- 3) Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr, Ty Cyfannol Ward**
- 4) Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr, Annwylfan Ward**

Overall, most people across the four wards were happy with their inpatient experience.

Staff mentioned issues with social care transfers and engagement with young people in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS).

"It is the patients that helped my therapy.
We're not in the same boat, rather in the
same storm"

VOICES OF THE VALLEYS

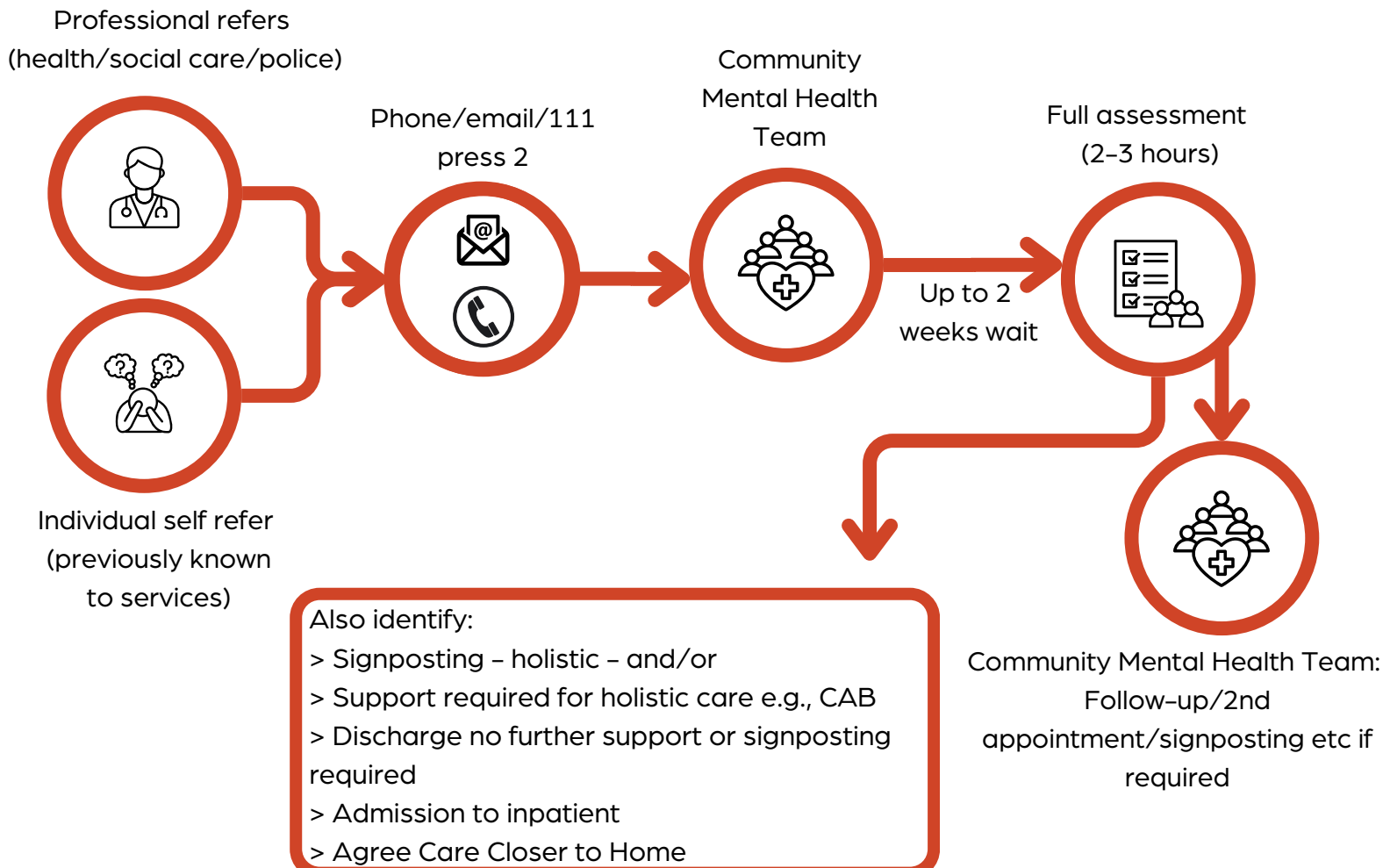
A COLLABORATION IN CARE

Together, with the Community Mental Health Team Duty Desk (CMHT) in Blaenau Gwent and ABUHB Mental Health and Learning Disabilities (MHL) Q-nnovation Hive, we recognised challenges locally that highlighted the need for improved integration, clearer pathways, a standardised initial assessment process and utilisation of an electronic booking system that enhances efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery.

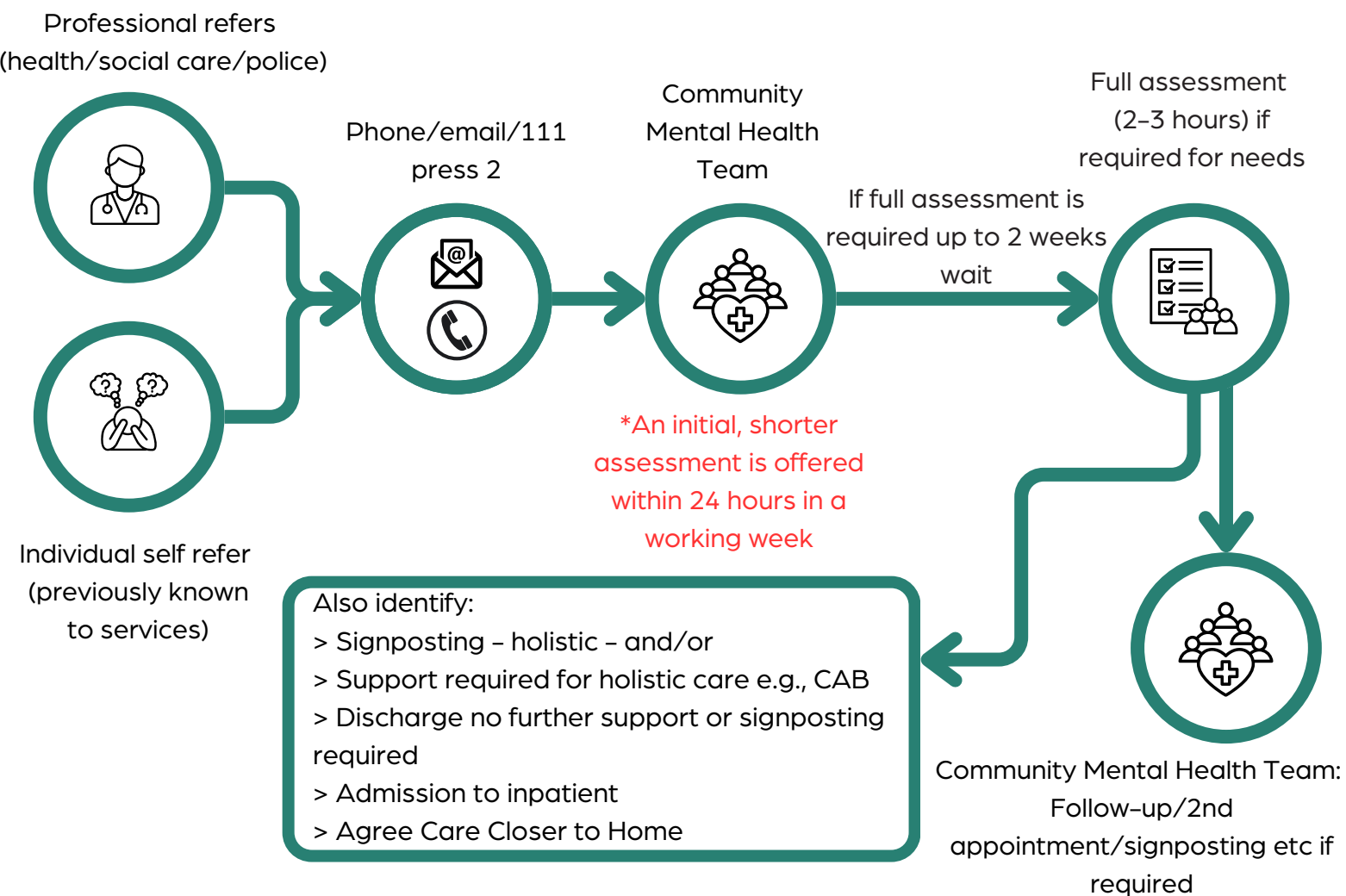
Differences in the pathway:

Initial "in person" contact and initial assessment now takes place within 24 hours of referral receipt. Holistic Signposting is also offered at this time. Prior to the changes, initial personal contact and signposting could take up to 2 weeks.

PATHWAY BEFORE CHANGES WERE MADE:



THE PATHWAY AFTER THE CHANGES WERE MADE:



Llais wanted to hear from those who accessed the services, before and after the changes were made to understand the impact of service change for people and staff.

People's feedback:

- Easier to contact and get support when I need it
- Felt listened to and included in decisions made about my care

Healthcare Professionals Feedback:

- GP referrals being more meaningful
- Better understanding of the different roles between different disciplines, resulting in more positive working relationship and morale
- Better resources to signpost to in the community
- Feel more confident in decision making with peer support

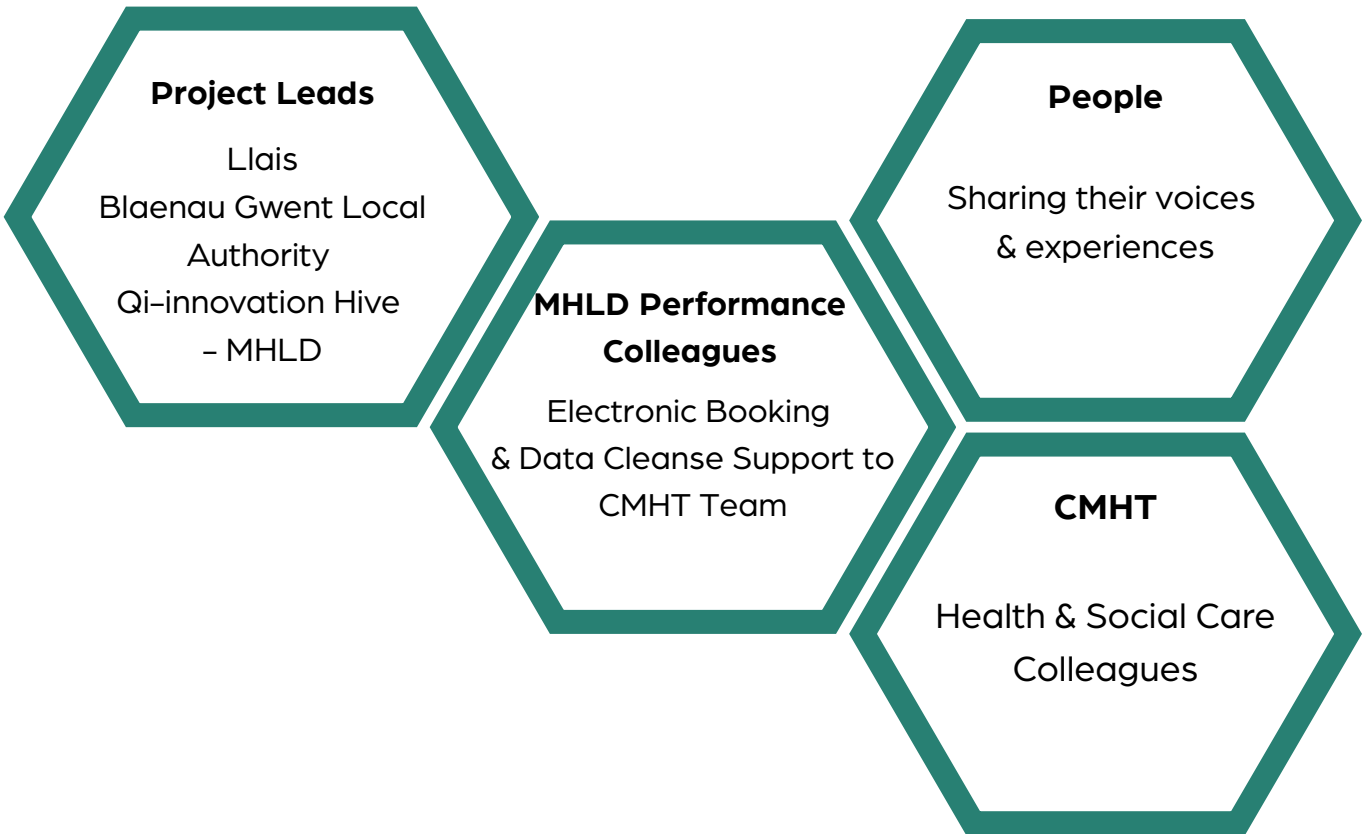
Overall, people who use the service and staff have experienced positive changes due to the updates to the CMHT Duty Desk. While there are areas for improvement, the feedback indicates that the changes have generally led to better service delivery and more efficient processes.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Initial Assessment	• 100% of referrals receive initial assessments are done within 24 hours • Average waiting time reduced for full assessment from minimum of 5 days to less than 1 day • 95% of urgent cases addressed in action within 24 hours.
Electronic Booking System – Transfer to electronic booking is in progress via training and implementation. Initial scoping identifies the impact post implementation will be	• Electronic sight of patient status in system • Reduction in manual booking errors • Accuracy in interfacing direct with patient records
Integrated Multidisciplinary Teams (MDT): Relationships and Activity	• 95% attendance rate at weekly MDT meetings • 80% of cases resolved within the first MDT meeting • 85% of team members report improved collaboration
Referral Process and Improvements	• 100% of patients are offered an initial assessment within 24 hours of receipt in a working week (Monday–Friday)

Enhanced Professional Satisfaction (survey issued during project)	• 85% of healthcare professionals report increased job satisfaction • 40% reduction in reported cases of compassion fatigue • 80% of professionals feel empowered in decision-making
Improved Communication and Trust	• Better communication and consistency in pathways • Llais' independent feedback role
PREMS (Patient Recorded Experience Measures)	• The project collected specific PREMs to support the Project Changes • Consistent Service PREMS will be offered to all Patient from April 2025

A collaboration in care





THANK YOU

Through feedback from staff across Health & Social Care, people, and communities, this report shines a light on the importance of accessible, efficient, and high-quality mental health care.

Positive changes have been noted, particularly in communication and service delivery, yet ongoing efforts are essential to address persistent challenges.

Llais Gwent remains committed to representing the voices of people, communities, and advocating for better mental health services.

Thank you to everyone who contributed their experiences and feedback, helping us to drive meaningful change in mental health services.

ACCESSIBLE FORMATS

This report is also available in Welsh.

If you would like this publication in an alternative format and/or language, please contact us.

You can download it from our website or ask for a copy by contacting our office.

Feedback

We'd love to hear what you think about this publication, and any suggestions about how we could improve it, so we can use this to make our future work better.

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