

Our work in Wales:

My Generation

Improving the mental resilience and wellbeing
of people over 50 years old in Wales



 agecymru

Funded by the Welsh Government under
its Sustainable Social Services Third
Sector (2016-19).



Ariennir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
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Welsh Government

 mind cymru
for better mental health
o blaid gwell iechyd meddwl



My Generation is an eight week programme for older people, proven to build resilience and reduce isolation and loneliness.

An independent evaluation showed that:

- 79% of participants experienced an increase in their wellbeing.
- 63% improved their coping skills and felt more empowered to solve problems.
- 74% increased their social connections.
- 91% of participants rated the course as “Excellent” or “Very Good”.

See pages 5-7 for more information

My Generation has helped me so much, I now feel that I am not on my own as others have experiences similar to me.

I feel more confident and able to achieve things I had put on hold.

Contents

- Introduction.....2
- What is My Generation?.....3
- How is the course designed?.....4
- The impact of My Generation.....5
- Participant experiences.....7
- Towards more resilient communities: Key learnings from the programme.....9
- Next steps 10

Introduction

Older people can be more likely to experience loneliness and isolation. My Generation is an evidence-based intervention to help people over 50 improve their mental wellbeing, social capital and self efficacy.

Tackling loneliness and social isolation, especially in older people, is a national priority for the Welsh Government. Wales has a higher proportion of older people than any other part of the UK, with more than 1 in 5 people over the age of 65 years old¹.

Older people can be more likely to experience loneliness and isolation which can lead to mental health problems such as anxiety and depression, and can also have a negative effect on physical health.

A geographically dispersed population and cuts in local services such as buses and day care centres can mean that older people in Wales may find it more difficult to play an active part in their local communities, putting them at greater risk of feeling lonely or isolated.

In 2016, we received funding in partnership with Age Cymru from the Welsh Government’s Sustainable Social Services Grant to develop and pilot a model to improve the wellbeing and social connections of older people in Wales, supporting delivery of ‘The Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013-2023.’ The eight

week ‘My Generation’ programme provides participants with a range of tools and techniques to help improve their wellbeing, as well as providing them with the opportunity to meet new people, learn new skills and become an active member of their local community.

Our independent evaluation conducted by Ecorys, showed that the programme helped over 350 older people to improve their wellbeing in the pilot phase, increase their social connections and improve their ability to solve problems. The evaluation showed that the programme successfully reached older people with a range of demographics across both urban and rural areas of Wales, including those at risk of social isolation and financial exclusion.

This document explores the scope and impact of the My Generation project and summarises the key learning and next steps from our evaluation of the pilot phase.

We conclude with three actions we have taken and three actions we are asking other organisations to take.

¹ Official data on Wales from Stats Wales (www.statswales.gov.uk). 2016.

What is My Generation?

In 2016, Mind Cymru in partnership with Age Cymru received funding from the Welsh Government's Sustainable Social Services Grant to develop and pilot an intervention to support older people in Wales.

The project aimed:

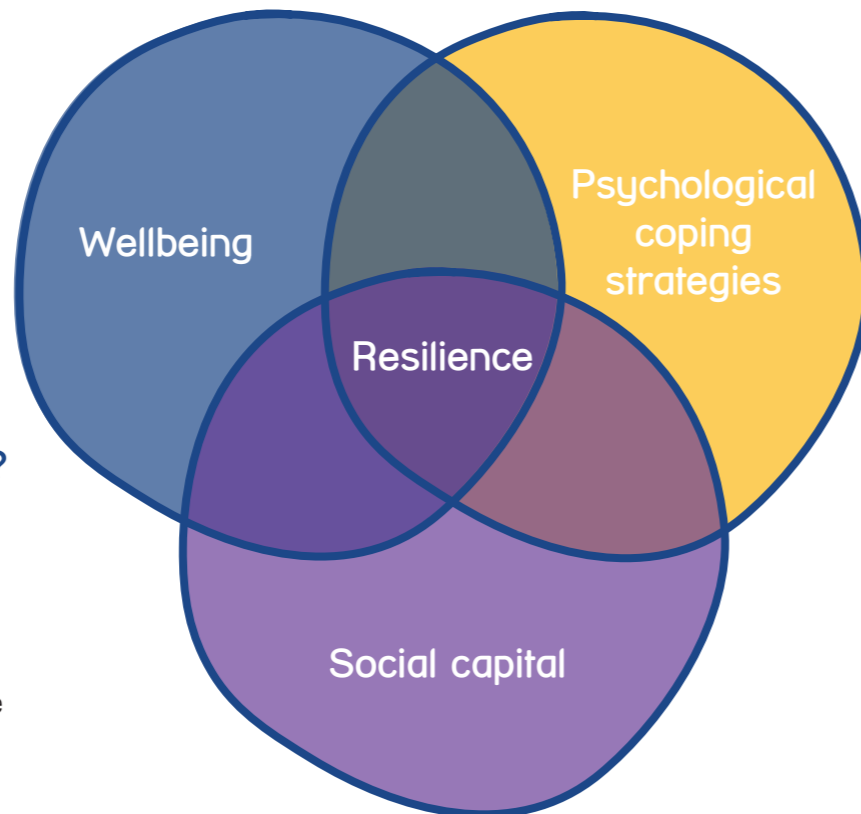
1. To improve the wellbeing and resilience of older people¹ in Wales through greater access to social connection, wellbeing activities and psychological coping strategies.
2. To create an evidence-based intervention that can be delivered in diverse communities across Wales and the UK.
3. To support the delivery of 'The Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013-2023.

¹ The project has adopted the Welsh Government's definition of older people as those who are 50 years or older.

Mind's resilience model

Resilience is the capacity to adapt in the face of challenging circumstances, whilst maintaining a stable mental wellbeing.

Based on this definition, Mind has developed a resilience model focusing on three key elements: wellbeing, social capital and psychological coping strategies – as shown in this diagram.



What is psychoeducation?

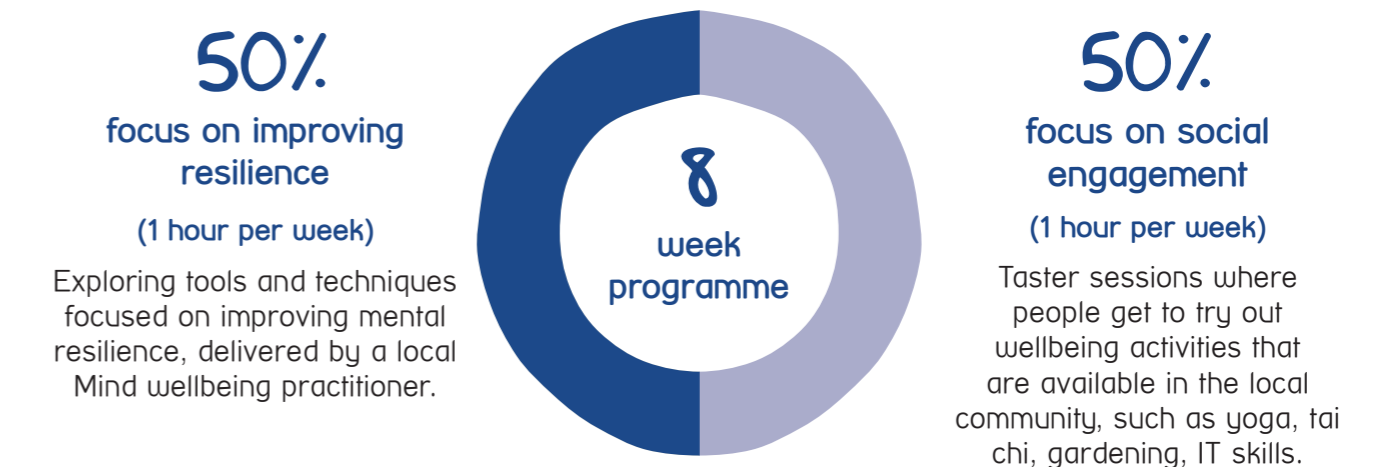
Psychoeducation is an evidence-based therapeutic intervention that provides information and support, to help participants become more self-aware, make better choices and improve their ability to manage both their mental and physical health.

Psychoeducational courses delivered in the community can help people improve their wellbeing with self-care and build social networks.

How is the course designed?

Working with Age Cymru, Age Connect Morgannwg and our local Minds, we co-produced and developed an innovative new programme and piloted it in four different communities across Wales.

My Generation is an eight week course delivered for two hours per week. The first hour consists of a psychoeducation module which explores a different topic each week. Participants are encouraged to explore tools and techniques to stay well and help them build a network of support. Participants are empowered to improve their wellbeing, together. The second hour invites participants to try out wellbeing activities that are available in the local community, such as seated yoga, tai chi or gardening.



Mind's resilience training elements

Each session below is one hour a week, delivered by the local Mind wellbeing practitioner.

Week 1
Exploring helpful and unhelpful thinking
How to identify forms of helpful and unhelpful thinking.

Week 2
Exploring stress
How to recognise your warning signs and manage your stress.

Week 3
Exploring feelings (part one)
Why do we have feelings and how can we process our feelings effectively?

Week 4
Exploring feelings (part two)
What happens when we don't process our feelings? What do we need from others?

Week 5
Exploring loss, grief and renewal
Exploring different types of loss and looking at the process of grief over a period of time.

Week 6
Exploring relaxation and mindfulness
Learning about mindfulness and practising relaxation techniques.

Week 7
Exploring problem solving
Tools and techniques to solve problems in life.

Week 8
Exploring connections
Exploring connections with others and the community.

The impact of My Generation

Mind commissioned an independent evaluation partner, Ecorys, to help us understand the impact of the programme on participants. The evaluation also highlighted key learning to help adapt and improve the intervention, so it can most effectively reach older people.

The main findings from the Ecorys evaluation are highlighted here.



Reaching diverse communities across Wales

Our independent evaluation showed that the programme successfully reached a diverse group of older people across both urban and rural areas of Wales, including those at risk of social isolation and financial exclusion.

350

participants attended 38 courses across four different areas as part of the pilot programme.



34%

were at risk of financial exclusion.

62%

lived alone and 65% were divorced or widowed.

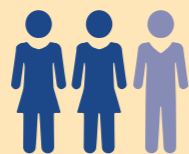
65

years old

was the average age of participants.

42%

of participants had experienced discrimination, harassment or abuse in the last 12 months.



2/3

of participants were female.

42%

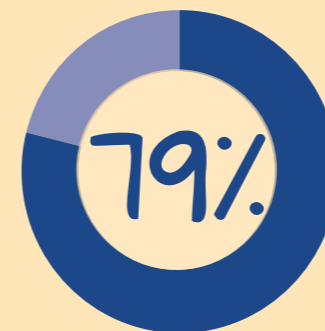
had personal experience of mental health problems.

A positive impact on participants' wellbeing

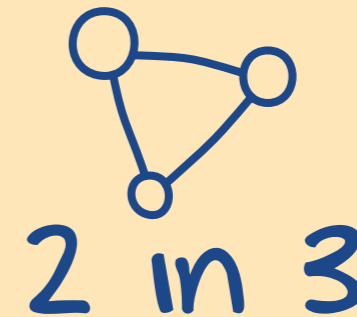
We measured a range of outcomes before the course began (baseline), on completion of the course, and a follow-up measure after three months.

Our independent evaluation showed that the programme had a positive impact on participants' wellbeing and improved their social networks.

Importantly, these improvements were sustained over a three month period following the course.

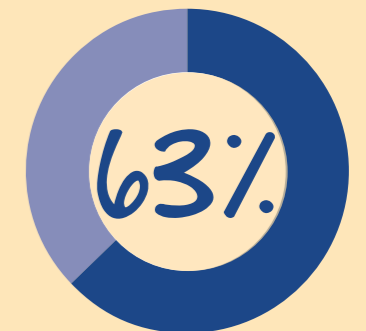


of My Generation participants experienced improved wellbeing*. 78% continued to experience improved wellbeing at three month follow up.



2 in 3

participants who completed the My Generation course increased their social networks*. This increased to 74% at three month follow up.



of My Generation participants showed improved ability to solve problems and achieve their goals*. This figure rose to 68% at three month follow up.

44%

showed an improvement on the UCLA 3-Item Loneliness Scale at three month follow up.

* Based on independent evaluation of key sites in Merthyr and the Valleys Mind, Mind Pembrokeshire, Newport Mind and Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent Mind, September 2016 - March 2017. Evaluative tools included Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale for mental wellbeing, Lubben Social Network Scale for social capital and networks, and General Self-Efficacy Scale for problem solving ability.

Participant experiences

As well as the positive impact on wellbeing, participants also reported having a very positive perception of the programme.

91% of participants rated the course as “Excellent” or “Very Good”. Participants welcomed the combination of psychoeducation modules and wellbeing activities, which were enjoyable and helped to strengthen bonds within the group. Participants also highlighted the value of the peer support and many have kept in touch on an informal social basis after the end of the programme.

‘David’, Newport

“I attended the ‘My Generation’ course at Newport Mind in 2017 and at the time I was not in a good place and straight away being with other people with similar problems from the start, I felt better.

The format was good with time for us all to talk about ourselves and the effect we were having on our family and friends – talking about problems, feelings, loss and stress.

After my eight weeks at ‘My Generation’ I found that I was more relaxed and had made some good friends.

I am now also able to openly talk about my feelings when out with friends socially.

I have continued to go to Newport Mind, joining the ‘Men’s group’ and the ‘Music Appreciation’ group.

One or two friends have now also opened up to me regarding their own feelings and I have recommended that one of them may well benefit from contacting Newport Mind, as I did.”

‘Wendy’, Rhydfelin

“I really enjoyed the 8 week course and feel it had a positive effect on my emotional health. Each week I would leave after the session feeling more positive and happier than I had felt before coming to the session that day.

It was good to have the space to talk as a group: sharing stories and experiences, listening to others, learning and supporting one another. People shared emotionally challenging stories with the group that would not usually be discussed in a regular social setting.

I think everyone would benefit from attending My Generation, even younger people. The project introduces you to new activities, you learn new things, make new friends and have the opportunity to talk.”

The project as a whole has helped me increase my confidence and has inspired me to look into setting up my own social group.

I’ve learnt how to relax and feel less anxious

It got me out of the house

It helped me to accept the loss of my son

91%

of participants rated the course as “Excellent” or “Very Good”

I still meet up with the people I met on the course

I feel much better, more relaxed and able to think things over

It has made me realise what I can do rather than focusing on what I can’t

It’s great for meeting people and having company

Towards more resilient communities: Key learning from the programme

We've developed a versatile community-based model that is helping older people in Wales to live well, together.

Through this project, we've made a significant and much-needed contribution towards an early-intervention, tackling issues such as loneliness and isolation in Wales.

Improving wellbeing and reducing isolation

Our aim is to help people live well, whatever that means for them. Those who completed the course were positive about the effect it had on them as individuals, giving examples of how their new skills and friends

had improved their lives. The evaluation showed that the majority of participants improved their wellbeing and self-belief.

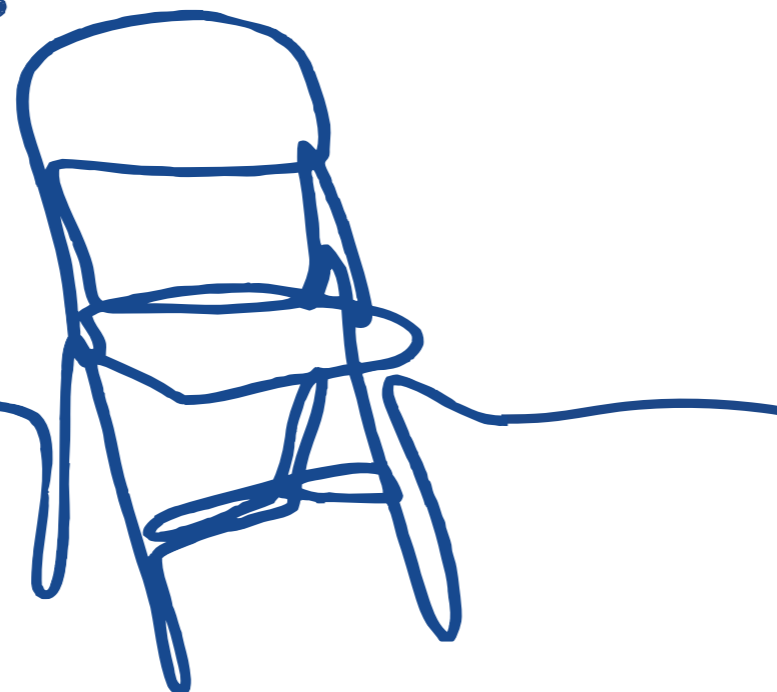
Building lasting support networks

The My Generation model provides an accessible platform for the development of peer support groups. Participants bonded through the shared experience of taking part in the course and many were keen to establish or join local groups that support people in their communities.

I found that after many years of holding everything in, it was a great release.

At the end of the sessions, I realised that I do count. I am worth it and it has taken me to a point where I can manage certain situations and have stopped carrying it around with me.

- 'Jean' from Newport



Huw Irranca-Davies AM meets My Generation participants in 2018

Next steps

In 2018, My Generation was rolled out to more local Minds and delivered in every health board area in Wales, reaching a further 315 older people.

Our independent evaluation showed that 82% of participants showed an increase in relation to wellbeing from baseline to exit surveys in 2018, compared to 78% during 2017 pilot phase.

68% displayed a positive change in their social capital, compared to 74% in the pilot phase.

73% showed an improvement to their self efficacy, compared to 67% in the pilot phase.

The scale up of My Generation has continued to improve older people's resilience and reduce isolation and loneliness. In 2019, Mind will be rolling the programme out to more local Minds and supporting local Minds to help them sustain My Generation and reach more at risk older people across Wales.

3 actions Mind have taken

1. Used the learning from the evaluation pilot phase to scale up delivery of the programme, allowing greater numbers of older people across Wales to access the course.
2. Encouraged local Minds to build relationships with a diverse range of community organisations in order to ensure the course is accessible to a wide range of older people from a variety of backgrounds.
3. Shared our learning and promoted the benefits of My Generation to stakeholders, building partnerships to ensure the future sustainability of the programme.

3 actions we ask other organisations to take

1. Keep mental health on the agenda. Commit to taking action to reduce some of the barriers that prevent older people from talking about their mental health and provide funding for the My Generation programme in your local area.
2. Consider and prioritise the needs of older people when developing and implementing services in the local community and ensure there are opportunities for isolated older people to come together and participate in social activities.
3. Consider the implications that improving the wellbeing and social connection of older people can have, with regards to wider health and social care and invest in early interventions for those at risk.

About us

We're Mind Cymru, your go-to mental health partner.
We bring focused mental health expertise to our
partnerships and services.

Through our network of 20 local Minds in Wales, we help people enjoy better mental health and support people with mental health problems to live well in their communities and at work. Together we are Mind in Wales.

We are able to draw on the best of our learning, information, expertise and evidence-based practice across both Wales and England to strengthen our support and projects in Wales.

Work with us

If you'd like to partner with Mind Cymru, or find out more about any of our projects in Wales, please contact us:

 ProjectsCymru@Mind.org.uk

 029 2039 5123

 Mind.org.uk/projectsCymru



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Ariennir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
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Welsh Government

Mind Cymru
3rd floor, Quebec House
Castlebridge
5-9 Cowbridge Road East
Cardiff
CF11 9AB

Mind.org.uk/Wales
Follow us on twitter: @MindCymru
Call us on 029 2039 5123

Mind's registered charity number is 219830

