



# The future of mental health in Wales: New Horizons, Tend VR-MBI & Arts Factory

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# Who we are

**New Horizons:** third sector organisation offering services to adults experiencing mental health issues across Cwm Taf Morgannwg, including CTM Recovery College

**Tend VR:** organisation focused on improving mental health, increasing the accessibility of services, reducing waiting lists, reducing costs and enabling scalable solutions to global mental health problems

**Arts Factory, Rhondda:** independent development trust & community anchor organisation since 1990. A safe, supportive environment for people to contribute, learn, & thrive. Our mission is: *“No more throwaway people”*  
We create life-changing opportunities for people, written-off by our society, and help to build stronger & more inclusive communities

# Background to our study

- **New Horizons:** identified gaps in access to mental health services for men and young people
- **Tend VR:** took an evidence-based mental health intervention, Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and:
  - Distilled its key elements into a mindfulness-based intervention offered in an immersive virtual reality environment (VR-MBI)
  - Aimed to provide a potential solution for people in Wales who normally struggle to access mental health services – including people with mild learning disabilities.
- **The partnership:** if this pilot project in Wales demonstrated similar feasibility, acceptability and efficacy as shown in previous VR-MBI studies, then:
  - We'd potentially have a scalable, accessible & affordable solution to tackling access issues....
  - ...which lead to long NHS Wales waitlists for mental health support and often, poor outcomes for service users.

## Aim

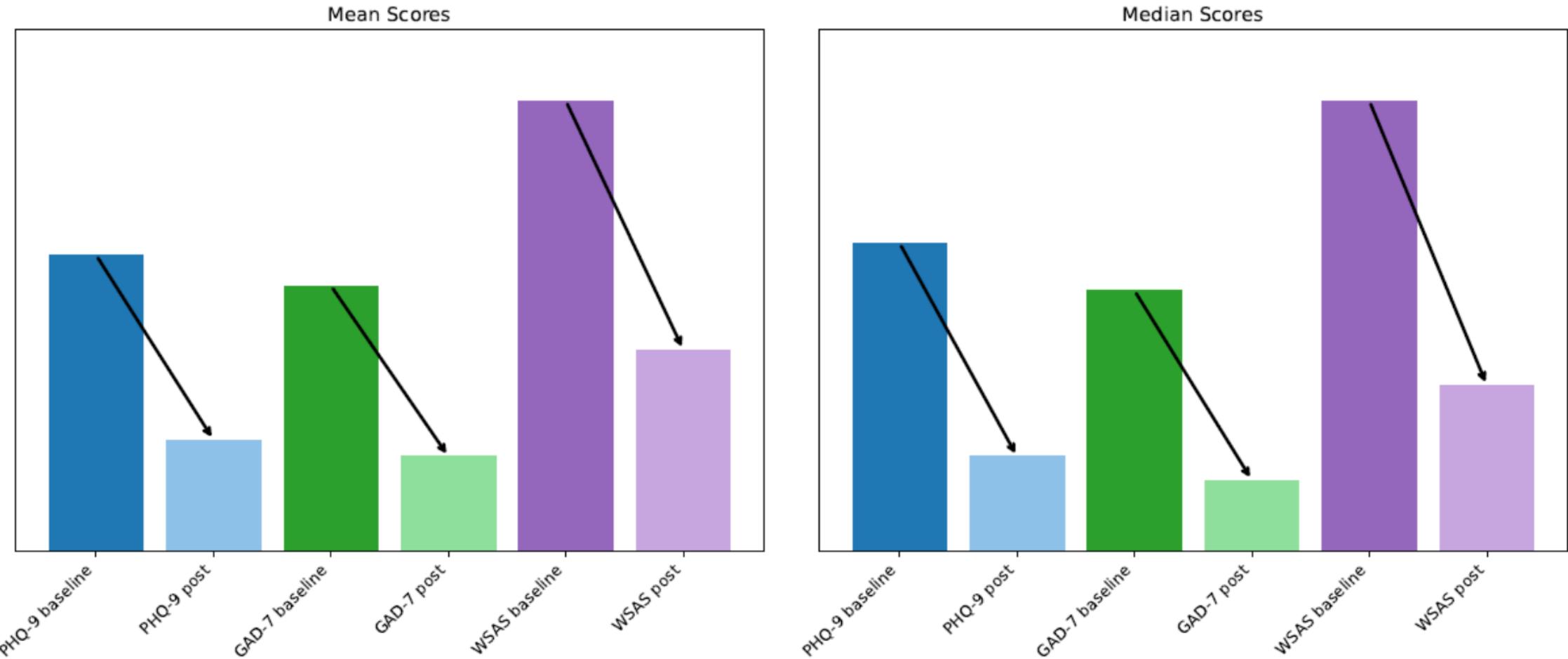
Explore feasibility, acceptability, accessibility & impact of Tend VR-MBI programme when delivered to people who struggle to access traditional mental health services at a place of their choosing.

## Objectives

- Develop a new support service for men and young adults living in Cwm Taf Morgannwg to help address their mental health needs
- Explore the feasibility of Tend VR-MBI as a potential solution to waiting lists and accessibility in mental health services in Wales
- Evaluate signs of clinical efficacy of the VR-MBI
- Evaluate engagement, sustainability, retention & experiences of participants.



# Impact



# What our participants said:

- *I've been in therapy since like age 11. I'd say that's been like the most successful one [Tend-VR] so far in terms of making changes.*
- *Looking at the future now, I've got life-changing skills that I can't lose in terms of just managing, you know, everything that goes on in my head and stuff...I've got the tools to deal with it now & I'm going to get through it.*
- *I've noticed how much I clench my jaw. How much I rub my hands and squeeze them because I just feel really tense... I do feel a lot like my head just feels lighter, a lot clearer because I'm not tensed up as much. Taking that back was fantastic!*
- *Grounding yourself, feeling everything, stopping autopilot because its is something I've basically kind of lived with...my whole life, just like going forward, not living, so to speak. And being able to break that....that's huge!*
- *[The VR course] took me out of the anxiety... since I've done it, I've been more helpful, and got other things off my chest...It took me out of the real world to relax me and, I found that I was really calm.*
- *I'm more productive, more helpful, less anxious, less argumentative and more happy than I was when I was secluded. I didn't want to know anybody. Now I want to interact with as many people as I can!*

# ITV Wales report

<https://youtu.be/CjVRKovjQs4?si=pltUVFSkbPHugowV>



# What's next?

- Extend the pilot, gathering further data over next few months - seek funding for a larger feasibility study with people with learning difficulties - to make a positive impact on the lives of people with learning difficulties, an underserved community for mental health support.
- Secure sustainable funding to enable '*adopt and spread*' for this project.
- Develop Welsh language versions of the Tend VR-MBI
- Roll out Tend VR-MBI across CTM and across Wales, offering as at-home or on-site intervention to ensure that health inequalities from rurality, disability or mental health barriers are significantly reduced and waiting lists are no longer an issue in Wales.
- Develop versions for other underserved communities and for children and young people.

# Contact details

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