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June



Mental Health Awareness Week

Monday 8th May – 14th May this year was Mental Health Awareness Week. All over the UK there have been special events and talks with the main aim to get people talking about mental health issues. This Awareness week is now in its 18th year and the theme for this year is surviving or thriving. The Chief Executive of the Mental Health Foundation (MHF) Jenny Edwards CBE stated that too few people are thriving with good mental health in the UK and that we should be encouraging people to seek support if they need it. She explains that ultimately we need to prevent people from developing mental health problems in the first place. Scotland’s anti stigma programme, See Me in this special week urges everyone to speak about their mental health. They say only 1 in 3 people who need help for their mental health receive it and this needs to change in the future. A recent survey this year by the MHF has highlighted the scale of mental health problems in the UK. Statistics show 4 in 10 people live with depression and over one quarter of the population have experienced panic attacks. Particular groups of people show some worrying results; 85% of the unemployed experience mental health issues and 3 out of 4 low income families suffer compared to 6 in 10 in the highest income bracket.

Additional statistics show women employed full time are twice as likely to have a problem with their mental health as men who are in work. 70% of young people from 18 – 34yr olds are more likely to have problems. Over 55s appear to perform best although this may be because they are more likely to look after their mental health better than younger people. Of the 2,290 people surveyed only 13% reported a high level of good mental health.

The evidence from the MHF indicates that our country is in crisis and that more and more people are experiencing poor mental health. The MHF concludes that most of us will experience a mental health problem at some point in our life. It is vital that people ask for help and can access easily the professional support that they desperately need to be able to recover and get on with their lives. People with long term mental health issues are more likely to have a reduced lifespan, which can be up to 20years. MHF has suggested the introduction of mental health screening in with existing health screening programmes, and an annual report on the nation's mental health. They have also called for more research with a focus on prevention. For all these measures funding is desperately needed.

There are many possible reasons why poor mental health is so common. Indeed life for most can be particularly stressful trying to juggle everything on a daily basis. As well as mental and emotional reasons, there may be social, political, familial, religious and medical reasons. Other factors that may affect our mental health is our diet, smoking, drinking, drugs and lack of exercise. So what can we do as a nation to improve things for everyone? Of course all of us can live a healthier life but also we need to be much more aware of the signs that a person in your life may have a problem. Engaging in a dialogue with someone and encouraging them to get professional help is an important first step in getting the right support. Improving access is so important as at the moment there is often a long wait for treatments such as counselling which may help them. There is a still a large stigma associated with mental health which can stop people coming forward for help. This is particularly true for young people who often do not understand that you can be treated and recover successfully from a mental illness and lead a productive life. They therefore often remain silent. It is so important that teachers have appropriate training in mental health to be able to recognise when a student is struggling and that students learn themselves about mental health. This empowerment will hopefully change our society for the better. This needs to be addressed through all of us making the effort in increasing our own knowledge and awareness of mental illness. By being able to understand your own problems it does help you seek the right support and help you live with your condition. For many people living with a mental illness also means having to cope with a whole range of physical symptoms such as exhaustion, tremors, racing heart rate and physical pain. These can also be very hard to deal with. Many of the medications for mental health problems have unpleasant side effects. As a family member or friend therefore offering practical support to someone can really help if they are finding their routine difficult due to their symptoms. To help reduce isolation which can happen if someone becomes unwell keep in touch send a text or invite them out for coffee.

Employers this mental health week should address mental health of its employees in the workplace and how they can help keep staff well and at work. We should all act to end discrimination in the workplace. Of course new policies are needed but it is important that employers show that they care. Examples given this week included employers in the UK offering counselling, Yoga and mindfulness sessions to its



staff. 12.7% of sickness days are due to having a mental health problem. This is indeed an issue that urgently needs addressed.

Scout leader Callum Holt stated that 65% of 38,000 scouts in Scotland experienced bullying with anxiety, self-harm and eating disorders being common. Callum points out that One quarter of scouts do not know how to seek help or indeed where to go. Scouts need to learn the tools of how to cope with bullying and other issues. The use of social media and technology is extremely relevant here and can put young people at further risk of bullying.

Breathing Space has highlighted this week its ongoing Kindness campaign. They are asking people to carry out random acts of kindness which they say will improve the mental health of family, friends and colleagues. They run a Scottish mental health support helpline. The service is open evenings and weekends: Tel 0800 83 85 87
ITV has reported this week about the poor mental health of female prisoners in this country. Such women are 5 times more likely to have mental health problem than women in the general population. In prison women are offered counselling but upon discharge there is no longer any support. For many they spend their lives in and out of prison. The report highlights the work of the WISH charity which offers help to women in the criminal justice system who are having mental health problems. In the evening standard as part of mental health week tells the story of Francesca Timbers a Psychology graduate who has designed tattoos that can be used for young people to express their feelings which aims to reduce self-harm. They display positive images and also act to increase awareness of mental health to others. Francesca was inspired to create these tattoos after a long period of depression and anxiety.

There is a new free mental health podcast called “mentally yours”. You have the opportunity to discuss your experience of mental health in an informal manner. Visit www.apple.com/gb/podcast/mentally-yours/

There are many mindfulness apps available enabling you to boost your health and wellbeing at any time during the day. One highly successful app is “Smiling mind” developed by an Australian company. This is a free app which is now used by 1.5 million users of all ages. If you are finding things difficult you can try one of the meditation exercises on offer. It may just help you. To download visit www.smilingmind.com.au. There is also a book on mindful running called “Run for your life” by William Pullen. It introduces DBT, a new, holistic approach to mindfulness and CBT using thought exercises whilst running. We all know how great it feels when we run; it lifts our mood as endorphins flood our bodies. This book teaches us to focus this new energy to allow us to experience our emotions.

One of the main aims of mental health week is getting people to talk about their own experiences and that by sharing their own stories the mental health of the nation may improve for future generations. Upon reading many articles in mental health week it is clear that so much is being done to highlight mental health issues and reduce stigma which is extremely positive. This will already be helping those suffering and their family and friends. We just need more funding to continue raising awareness and our understanding of mental health. We, essentially need to support each other and ensure that people who desperately need help receive it.

Psychotherapies in Scotland



Psychotherapy can help to improve both mental health and emotional problems. Mental health conditions may include schizophrenia, PTSD or OCD or depression. In people living with a long term physical condition such as asthma or diabetes or an eating disorder psychotherapy often

helps with associated stress and anxiety as well as improving your physical health. Statistics show that psychological problems are common with around a quarter of people of working age having a mental health problem. In addition, around a third of patients in a GP surgery are there due to problems with their mental health. There are different psychotherapies for different mental health problems. At the moment in Scotland for the quarter ending 31Dec 2016, 77.5% started psychotherapy treatment within the 18 week target - a reduction from the previous quarter which was 79.6%. Only two NHS boards met the standard of 90% of patients being treated within 18 weeks. In the Lothian's there is a long waiting list for treatment which can be up to a year and the different types of psychotherapy offered at the moment is limited. This needs to be addressed as these therapies can be extremely effective for patients. For some people waiting a long time for treatment can be dangerous for their health and they should therefore discuss this with their GP.

The document called the matrix is a guide that lets therapists plan psychotherapies for patients in Scotland. It offers people "matched care" in which you step through different levels of care according to need. To access therapy you can visit your GP who can then refer you to a psychiatric consultant. Mostly treatment is offered by the NHS but other professional teams may also offer the service, including your local Community Mental Health Team, primary care service, psychotherapy departments and telephone based CBT services. Psychological therapies may also be offered by voluntary agencies or charities. Your therapist will be on a professional register proving they have the necessary training to deliver a particular therapy. Indeed they may be qualified for one or more therapies. Often the therapist is a nurse or psychologist and will be on a professional register for their main occupation such as The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) or Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). It may be possible to refer yourself for therapy. There is usually a small team of fully qualified therapists and some still in training. In recent years the number of trained therapists has been increasing in Scotland. There is a new professional group called Clinical Associates in Applied Psychology. These graduates have an Honours degree in psychology and a professional degree at Masters level allowing them to deliver psychological therapies. There is also a staff training programme called "Emotion matters" which trains staff to provide emotional support to people with an ongoing physical illness.

In Scotland you may have access to a range of treatments such as Behavioural Activation, Bibliotherapy, Motivational Interviewing (MI), Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT) and Psycho-education.

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) which is a type of psychotherapy (or talking therapy) which is routinely available in West Lothian concentrates on how you think and behave and aims to change how you feel about the things in your life and ultimately cope better and improve your mental health. Often a client will have a specific problem that they want help with for others the problem is more generalised. Your therapy will be offered at a specific location such as your NHS clinic, Hospital, school or university. It is important to consider the options available on how the service is delivered. You can attend a face-to-face appointment but it could also be telephone based. You may wish to have your family or friends present at your treatment sessions.

Alternative options include computer – aided CBT, such as "Beating the blues" for mild/moderate depression and "Fear fighter" for panic/phobia. They have been proven to be very effective and are



well worth considering as they can be accessed quickly. Online resources are often free on the NHS.

Your first session is extremely important as it is an assessment meeting where you can establish what you want help with and discover if treatment may help you. You will engage in shared decision making with your therapist and create a plan for treatment. An initial first step is to learn yourself about your condition. This Psycho-education which is delivered as a course can be used alone as a therapy itself or in deciding what therapy may best help you. A decision will be made as to the number of treatment sessions offered to you. Within the NHS unfortunately a fixed number of sessions are usually offered which may not suit certain clients. A typical course of CBT has between 6 and 20 sessions. You also need to understand that psychotherapy can be physically and mentally tiring when you are asked to recall upsetting events in your life. Usually these feelings pass but for some it may not be a suitable treatment for you so it is important to be realistic. You may be also receiving medication to manage your condition. Essentially you do not therefore need to choose. Often both treatment approaches prove necessary and successful for patients.

Questionnaires may be used before treatment starts as part of your assessment and you may be asked to complete one at a later stage to monitor your progress. You will be informed of what your treatment involves and the benefits and risks of treatment before you make your decision to proceed. Your therapist may suggest other treatment approaches. During your course of treatment you may be asked to complete certain exercises or keep a diary between meetings. You should consider this before you decide on treatment. You will be able to expect a therapy that is of a high standard and is both safe and effective as supervision is always carried out by a qualified professional therapist. If you have any concerns before or indeed during your therapy talk to your therapist. They may be able to offer you an alternative therapy or another therapist if you request this. The key to a successful outcome from treatment is a trusting relationship with your therapist.

There is the option of going for private treatment. This may have several advantages. You will be seen much sooner and there should be a greater choice of therapies that may help you. You may need a particular therapy for a longer period of time than what is available from the NHS. It is important that you check a professional register such as British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive psychotherapists (BABCP) or British Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) when you are seeking private treatment to ensure they are qualified to deliver the therapy. You should also check the cost of the treatment. Usually a 50 min session is from £40 - £100.

You can receive peer support online whilst you are undergoing your therapy. Mind runs the online support community Elefriends. If you are struggling you can contact an organisation such as the Samaritans. Today there are also many self-help books on the market which your GP may suggest. Other options you may choose to consider are arts therapies, ecotherapy and other alternative therapies. Check to see what is available in your own area. Everyone is different and alternatives to psychotherapy may also prove helpful for some.

Learning

Adult basic Education- West Lothian

This year the very popular adult learning courses are continuing. Initially you can contact the Adult learning team and discuss with them what type of learning you



would like to do and if any of the short courses may be suitable. These groups are not only practical and useful but are often a first step towards gaining a recognised qualification and perhaps increasing your chances of employment in the future. You will have the chance to learn new skills and grow in confidence whilst really enjoying yourself. ABE offers a reading, writing and numbers course. Groups are often available both during the day and evenings and at a range of venues across West Lothian.



Short courses include cash confident, more for less and Cooking by Numbers. For these courses you will be placed on a waiting list until the next course with free spaces becomes available.

ABE also works with partners to deliver other courses; i.e. they work with Sure Start, schools and social policy to deliver Storylab in Armadale and Playlab in Addiewell. They also work with Cyrenians to offer an Art and Design Course "Inked". This course uses skills in basic literacy to research and create artwork.



General Interest The Reps Meeting May 2017

The Reps' welcomed guest speaker, John Mclean, Head of Day Services in West Lothian to provide an update on Day Services in West Lothian and the redesign of services that is currently taking place.

Several topics were discussed. Initially the group spoke about Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). It is known that there is a large demand for CBT at the moment and more trained therapists are desperately needed. Evidence suggests that CBT is effective but service users agree that a holistic perspective is required when dealing with people with mental health problems.

Other resources required to address housing, finances, social networks, and daily routine such as groups, employment and volunteering which can all impact on a person's mental health and are often just as important as therapeutic interventions.

There was discussion around current theories on the causes of Schizophrenia, including genetic research that has identified 5 genes involved in developing the condition. Environmental factors and stress may also play a part. In the future gene therapy may be possible as a treatment for this very serious condition.

John explained the continued need for day Services in West Lothian. There are fewer Mental Health beds available now than in past times. The Acute Care & Support Team (ACAST) is used as an alternative to hospital but this intensive support is only available for 2-3 weeks. ACAST team can only become involved with patient through A &E. Service users described how the service provided by ACAST may not always work for people with severe and enduring conditions and that admission to an acute ward may indeed be the best option. Service users mentioned

that a proper waiting area is urgently required at the clozapine clinic; OPD6 in St John's hospital.

It was expressed that MHAP is very happy to assist with collective feedback to help with the redesign process. The group members agreed that services should be available for people with less severe illnesses as well as those with long term conditions and are happy to volunteer their time to collect feedback of services.

John spoke about other projects including Craigsfarm in Craigshill which has been rebuilt having received lottery funding and offers many community groups and activities. There is now a shed club which provides local people with the opportunity to learn to look after chickens which is extremely positive. John praises the Advice shop for its involvement in dealing with benefits issues in people with mental health problems.

Artlink is also another local project which provides additional activities for people in West Lothian. There is also a new Hub in Bathgate, at 19-21 Bridge Street which currently offers a number of groups including music, creative writing, exercise and gardening.

The Brock garden centre at Strathbrock has received £250,000 from the Big Lottery and £30,000 from the Robertson's trust. It aims to increase its capacity and appoint a new manager in the near future.

Equally fit – Change Network

The equally fit – change network is a project developed and run by Support in Mind Scotland and Bipolar Scotland. The project itself aims to tackle inequalities that exist between physical and mental health care for people living with a mental illness. It is currently seeking new members who will be able to get involved in campaigns and make a difference in helping achieve the aims of the project. Ultimately a Charter has been developed with the aim of introducing new government policies.

For more information contact Lesley Fyfe at Bipolar Scotland, on 0141 560 2050 or Email: lesleyf@bipolarscotland.org.uk

Support

West Lothian Networking and Peer Support Group

This support group is available for people who are disabled and for those who have long term conditions who live in the west Lothian area. You will be able to meet others and share experiences. You will also be able to access other services which may help you as well as practical support. You will also have the opportunity to develop your skills and grow in confidence. There will be guest speakers from a range of organisations on a variety of subjects of interest.



The group runs from 10.30-12.30 and includes lunch. It takes place at Almondbank Centre, Shiel Walk, Craigshill, Livingston. If you live in West Lothian transport can be arranged.

If you are interested and would like to find out more, including the date of the next meeting, contact Emma at LCiL on 0131 475 2554 or

Email: emma.wynack@lothiancil.org.

Useful contacts

Advice shop

Telephone: 01506 283000
Website: www.westlothian.gov.uk

Artlink

Telephone: 0131 229 3555
Website: www.artlinkedinburgh.co.uk
Email: info@artlinkedinburgh.co.uk

Bipolar Scotland

Telephone: 0141 560 2050
www.bipolarscotland.org.uk
Email: info@bipolarscotland.org.uk

Breathing Space

Telephone: 0800 83 85 87
Website: www.breathingspace.scot

Craigsfarm Livingston

Telephone: 01506 777 690
Website: www.craigsfarm.org.uk
Email: info@craigsfarm.org.uk

Health Improvement team

Telephone: 01506 775 626
Website: www.cabwestlothian.chcp.uk
Email: hit@westlothian.gov.uk

Mental Health Foundation

Telephone: 0141 572 0125(Glasgow)
Website: www.mentalhealth.org.uk

Mind

Telephone: 0300 123 33 93
Website: www.mind.org.uk
Email: info@mind.org.uk

Samaritans

Telephone: 116 123 (free 24hrs)
Website: www.samaritans.org

The Brock Garden Centre, Broxburn

Telephone: 01506 771 888
Website: www.brocksett.org

If you have any ideas you think would be of interest for future newsletters or if you just need to ask any questions please phone or e mail advocacy. The help will be very much appreciated! Thanks.

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admin@mhap.org.uk

Mental Health Advocacy Project (West Lothian) is a Scottish incorporated Charitable Organisation Charity No. SC01 1560

This newsletter was produced by Claire. I am a service user with a severe and enduring mental health problem. I currently am a volunteer with the Advocacy project in Broxburn and produce this newsletter for them. I am also a member of the reps group and service users forum that advocacy runs. I am also a member of their Management Committee.