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Young People and mental health

There is so much publicity at the moment on the mental health of young people in our society. The number of young people accessing help for mental health problems is increasing. They are under a lot of pressure to achieve good grades at school as well as coping with the pressures of social media and comparing themselves to others in a negative way which can lead to mental health problems. Research has demonstrated that mental illness often develops before a child reaches 15yrs old in around half of cases and 75% by the age of 18years. Often young people do not want to speak up about their problems for fear of how other people will react. It is so important that they do as early intervention at a young age can really improve outcomes. This is where schools can play a vital role. Staff need to have relevant training in mental health and focus more student wellbeing and not just academic achievement. This has been reported in a recent survey by Young minds. Parents have the same view and would like to be informed about what is happening in schools to support their children. Having a mental health problem can affect many aspects of someone's life such as how well the child does at school, employment, relationships and physical health. Indeed growing into adulthood itself can be a very stressful time so preventative measures in place within schools are required, particularly for vulnerable individuals such as those with poor parental mental health, those experiencing abuse or discrimination.

A recent BBC News report found that support within schools needs to be improved and at the moment young people are at risk. There is a shortage of educational psychologists in Scottish schools just now and training courses have had to cope with removal of funding and there is also no national strategy for school-based counselling services either. The Herald reported in December last year that the number of educational psychologists working in Scotland's schools has dropped by 10% in three years. Other findings report a reduction in the number of nurses within schools with ongoing recruitment difficulties. These issues all affect the child's ability to stay mentally well and achieve good grades. Children do not understand that having a mental health diagnosis is not a life sentence; you can still lead a productive life so it is so important that they speak to someone about how they are feeling. A child may need extra support if they are coping with the death of a family member, have been neglected by their family, or are refugees and are seeking asylum in this country. Every child is different. Teachers are aware of the pressures that children are under and the importance of having adequate services in place to support them. This means that young people will gain the skills required in life and to develop resilience to survive in today's world. A range of professionals are often needed to support a young person who may be in crisis. Many charities have called for support both in schools and the community to be improved.

Often a young person will go to their GP when they are feeling unwell but research has shown that young people are not really comfortable to go to their GP with a mental health issue. Such primary care could be improved, such as special Young people's clinics and access to online resources. In the Highlands there is a new trial to improve diagnosis for young people and signpost them to the correct support for them. This new trial involves Parents, teachers and child (if over 11yrs) taking part in psychiatric interviews online. These result in a detailed psychiatric history of the patient which is then assessed by a psychiatrist. It aims to provide a more accurate diagnosis and therefore establishing which services are appropriate. As a result the mental health of the child improves. Researchers are now recruiting 200 people for the trial. There is also a similar trial being carried out in Finland.

Recently, CAMHS has been under criticism in the news. Only a fifth of children referred have been seen within the 18 week target period with long associated waiting lists. Figures show that from Jan – Sep last year 30,639 children were seen CAMHS, with 6,745 seen after the 18weeks. 708 people had to wait more than 53weeks. Each local authority has a budget for the mental health services within our schools. Maureen Watt Mental Health minister describes it as a "postcode Lottery". There has been some improvement recently but there is still a long way to improve outcomes for young people. The current situation is simply unacceptable and the system is under enormous pressure.

Children and young people need to be diagnosed early before a crisis. Both parents and teachers need to be able to recognise if a child is having difficulty and make sure they get the correct treatment and support to recover and carry on with their lives. It is clear that mental health services need to improve and additional funding is desperately required to achieve this. Only then can we give children and young people the help and future that they deserve.

Young people and social media

Nowadays social media is part of everyone's life. New technology has ultimately changed the way we live. It can be used 24hrs a day to access information and connect with others. Children these days have grown up with social media. An Ofcom report states that more than 50% of children as young as 3 or 4 now use

tablets and 1 in 7 have their own device. Use of the internet has doubled in the past decade in children from 8-11yrs & 12-15yrs. Indeed they experience a childhood that is very different from a few decades ago. A recent BBC survey found that three quarters of 10-12yrs have social media accounts. Children now spend several hours more online than they do watching television. We therefore need to ask the question is this a good thing? Being able to use social media of course is important in gaining employment and in daily life; nearly all of 16-24yr olds use online social networks to keep in touch. You then need to consider if this is better than speaking to someone face to face. Many young people have access to social media in their bedrooms at any time and their technology is often on all the time. There is therefore the real possibility that it may result in sleep problems thus affecting their concentration at school. There was last year an estimated 2.34 billion people sharing images online. It indeed this the "selfie age". Facebook now has 1.8 billion active users.

The more time that a young person spends online the more open they are to online abuse. NSPCC has reported in the last five years an 88% increase in cyber bullying and is now the most common form of bullying that the charity deals with. Young people can be extremely sensitive and often compare themselves with images of famous people. They often do not understand that what they are seeing is not the norm for most people. Unfortunately this can affect a young person's self-esteem and confidence. In the long term their mental health may deteriorate. One recent study by Economists studied the effects of spending 1hr a day on social networks, such as Facebook and Instagram. It showed that young people were less happy with their lives, they reported a reduction in happiness of 14%. It is so important that a healthier body image is presented in fashion, media and advertising. This was the aim of the recent Be Real campaign. Visit the website www.berealcampaign.co.uk for more information.

Online bullying is not against the law but harassment and threatening behaviour is an offence. It is so easy to bully someone online which is why it is so common at the moment. Children must develop Digital resilience and stay safe online. This is where parents and schools can play an integral role in giving children and young people the tools that they need to use social media safely and appropriately. So, how does this abuse happen? Often it happens via social networking sites, such as Facebook, twitter, Instagram or Yu Tube. Other sites include online gaming sites such as minecraft and call of duty. Someone may abuse personal information, for example by pretending to be someone else in chat rooms. Unfortunately there is the issue of a young person being groomed online when someone threatens to share a private or naked photo online. Sexting refers to a sexual text, image or video being sent to someone else. What is particularly worrying is that this material is then available to be shared with many others. Online bullying could be something simple like spreading a rumour on twitter or liking someone's mean comment. People being bullied can become isolated and develop depression or even suicidal thoughts if it continues for an extended period of time. Several studies have reported this. NSPCC reports of hospital admissions for self-harm as a result of use of social media. Some young people lose their lives. 74 Dundee schoolchildren in the past three years have reported cyberbullying.

Parents should discuss with their children their internet use and know what they are accessing online. They should encourage its use for homework, research and keeping in contact with family and friends rather than other activities such as contacting with people they do not know. It is wise if parents set up parental controls for internet use and set boundaries. Children need to know the risks and

develop confidence to use the internet safely and treat others with respect. If a young person is being bullied it is vital that they tell someone they trust about any incidents and keep the evidence. There are several ways childline can support a young person. They provide information and advice. There are message boards enabling people to share experiences and you can also chat with a counsellor online or Email them. The website is www.childline.org.uk. There is a free helpline number; 0800 1111. You can access the Art Box on Childlines webpage where you can paint draw and write which helps reduce stress.

Social media is part of our culture and benefits all of us. In particular Social media has positive effects for people with mental health problems. They can access much needed support for mental health conditions which is often central to a person's overall wellbeing and recovery. Issues include suicide prevention and how to deal with depression. Online you can talk more freely about your experiences and this contributes to reducing stigma associated with mental illness. Young people have the opportunity to research and explore new ideas concerning their mental health and they can use social media as a platform for recording and sharing this new information. The importance of children having access to technology is highlighted in Glasgow where every child from Primary 6 upwards will get a free tablet from next year.

It is not yet known the true long term effects of spending long periods online in the younger generation. It is therefore important for parents to restrict use of the internet. What is certain is that social media is here to stay and how to use it safely and appropriately must be the main issues for the younger generation.

Health & Wellbeing

A Wellness Recovery Action plan course (WRAP) is taking place this year in St. John's Hospital, Howden, Livingston. This four week course is being offered by LEARN and aims to help people take control and manage their wellbeing. It is based on 5 Key concepts; hope, personal responsibility, support, self advocacy and education. It will take place on Fridays on the following dates; 2nd/9th/16th June from 09.30am – 16.30pm & the 14th July; 13.30pm – 16.30pm.

To book your place contact Julie or Anne at learn@capsadvocacy.org or tel. 0791 002 1537.

Local news

West Lothian Council Elections Thursday 4th May 2017

You are entitled to vote at this election if you are aged over 16 on the 4th May 2017, and are **registered to vote**. If you haven't received your POLL CARD by post, you can see if you're registered by phoning the **Electoral Office** on **0131 344 2500**; or check The Electoral Register at CIS Offices, Libraries and West Lothian Civic Centre. You could ask a trusted person to help with this if you feel unsure.

West Lothian is divided into **9 WARDS**, each of which will elect **3 or 4 COUNCILLORS** from the **6 to 9 CANDIDATES** standing in each Ward:

[https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/15115/Notice-of-Poll-LG-2017/pdf/NOTICE OF POLL LG 2017.pdf](https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/15115/Notice-of-Poll-LG-2017/pdf/NOTICE_OF_POLL_LG_2017.pdf)

Your **Polling Station** & other general information on how to cast your vote is on the front & back of your **Poll Card**. It is **easier & quicker** to vote if you **take it** with you: however, if you lose or forget it you can still vote.

Your **Ballot Paper** lists all candidates in **Alphabetical Order** according to **surname**, showing their **Party** or if they are **Independent**.

The Single Transferable Vote System is used, **so you rank candidates in order of preference**: you should put a **'1'** in the box next to your **first choice**; then a **'2'** next to your second preference, a **'3'** next to your third and so on. You just carry on until you have either marked them all, or you no longer wish to express a preference: it is totally up to you.

Some people think that by numbering **all** candidates you maximise the influence you have over the process: in this respect, you may find the following sequence of suggestions interesting:

- Vote for your favourite candidate as Number 1
- If you have a preferred party & it has fielded more than one candidate, vote them top as 1, 2 etc.
- Follow with your next preferred candidate or party as 3, 4, etc.
- Go on like this until you run out of candidates or parties you like/approve of
- Then, decide who you **least** like/approve of and put all other candidates **above** them, following the numerical order
- Finally, put the candidate or party you most dislike/disapprove of last

If you wish to know more about the mechanism by which votes are transferred to Candidates under the Single Transferrable Vote System, this may help:

http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_68268.html

General Interest

Interview Rebecca Nickleson Young Adults team

The Young Adults Mental health team is based at the Mental health resource centre at Strathbrock Partnership centre in Broxburn. There are three Psychiatric nurses on the team. It is a new team which has been running for the past two years. It provides a professional service for young people from 18-26 years who have a severe enduring mental health problem, i.e. not depression. The service is holistic and is tailored to the individual and their own requirements. Often young people are referred from their transition from Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). CAMHS service is for 11 - 18 yrs. Referrals are also accepted from social work, GP, hospital or self-referral. An assessment is then carried out by the team to decide what help can be offered. This may be clinical, where the client's condition is monitored and their treatment reviewed. The team understand that transfer from CAMHS to the Young adults team can be difficult. Meetings are arranged with the client at an agreed location which could be at home, within the community or hospital. There are usually weekly sessions which continue for as long as required. The team signposts to groups at a new premises in Bathgate. This community hub provides clients with the opportunity to participate in a range of activities; this includes an educational group run by West Lothian College on a Thursday. Beth Cameron from the college carries out assessments and guides their client into education and ensures it is appropriate to their needs and interests where be at an

access course or HNC qualification or University. Everyone is different. Of course other groups are therapeutic in nature such as that run by Artlink and the cinema club. In the summer there is a gardening group at the Brock garden centre in Strathbrock partnership centre Broxburn. This is facilitated by Bernie and Russell who run the group. At Livingston Football stadium there is a football club. Most of their members do not have a mental health problem and is open to everyone. They have a variety of backgrounds and may have been referred by a different route, i.e. by social work or the criminal justice system. A young person will not be placed in any groups where it is obvious that they would not fit in such as if there were a large age gap. Some client's may be parents and require support regarding parenting. Following the breakdown of a relationship a person may become homeless and need assistance securing accommodation. Ongoing support may also be arranged such as much needed tenancy support. An application will need to be completed to access this support. Often young people referred do not know how to budget their money. They still live with their parents and think that they have lots of money so they overspend on often unnecessary items. They do not look to the future. They need to realise that they can earn more in the long term working but benefits often stay the same. Also in the future you may not receive benefits if the criteria changes over time. The adult team can liaise with other agencies as required such as the Advice shop in Bathgate for benefits or budgeting issues; the voluntary sector gateway for voluntary work experience; access services relating to gaining employment.

Body image and how it is portrayed in the media was highlighted as being a significant issue for young people and can affect their mental health. Often young people do not gain the social skills that they need for today's society. Access to social media now begins at a very young age of around 4 years. Having access in schools to trained psychiatrists is more important than ever and also that teaching staff receive appropriate training so they can recognise any problems at an early stage before a crisis ensues. Of course mental illness itself often begin at a very young age. Children should be encouraged to be open about their mental health and speak to someone if they are in trouble. They need to believe that you can recover and be a productive member of society; you can work, learn have partners and lead a good quality of life.

West Lothian Service Users' Forum

Highlights of the meeting held on 21st of April 2017

Kathy stated that the Scottish Government needs volunteers to participate in the design of a new benefits system by joining experience panels. There may be other options such as having the government visit us via the Forum or individually with MHAP support or over the telephone. Kathy let us know that the annual Peoples conference a one day event that will be taking place on Wednesday the 3rd May. It is for people who have lived experience of mental health issues and who live in West Lothian. It will be taking place at "A Sense of Someplace" in Walpole Hall, St. Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh. (Near Haymarket). This year's topic is "Swings and Roundabouts" -How can Health & Social care services help support my journey through the welfare system? Lunch is provided. You can book yourself in via telephone on 0131 273 5116 or Email CAPS Advocacy; ele@capsadvocacy.org Kathy can book you in herself, just let her know.

On the 25th May is “A sense of belonging” - Year 6th Taking stock conference which will be taking place at Edinburgh Napier University’s Craiglockhart campus. Kathy states that Kenny and Jane will be running the Information Stall and Poster Display this year and anyone can attend this event. For both events you will need to be able to travel into the city independently.

Kathy explained to the guest Kathleen Liddell about the Medical student training which advocacy offers to medical students. This training has been highly successful and advocacy plans to continue this training in the future. There have been nine volunteers which have all enjoyed taking part and describing their journey effectively through services in West Lothian. The plans are to expand this training into other service areas such as educating NHS staff including nurses and council staff.

Guest speaker Kathleen Liddell is a social work manager in the Adults Mental Health team. She is based in Arrochar House in Livingston. She has been in the post since August last year and this is the first time she has visited the forum. Kathleen is keen to hear our experiences about social work and how her team could best support us in the future. In addition she would like our views on using social media, such as using smartphones and associated Apps. It was expressed by the forum members that there are a range of options available for service users so we are comfortable in how we access information and services.

There are four components to the mental health team; mental health, Autism, physical disability and learning disabilities. Concerning learning disabilities this is a huge area and can deal with the most complex of cases. They also work with people who have overdosed or self-harmed. Some cases will be emergencies and may involve adult protection issues. They also carry out SDS assessments. At the moment there are five social workers in the Adult mental health team and four MHOs. There is one community care assistant and one community coordinator. In the past the forum has been actively involved in reviewing information and services. The forum has a strong relationship with Lynn Law from the Poverty Alliance. Lynn gathered our views as a group and from many of us individually. One service user describes her difficulties in applying for SDS support to obtain funds for a short break which she desperately needed. For a period of 2 years she had received no awards for a break. The advocacy project supported the service user during this time and organised an appeal which was eventually successful and she was extremely happy with the result. Other service users had similar experiences in claiming SDS in West Lothian. Kathleen has reported good outcomes for SDS within her team and her clients are very satisfied. Everyone agreed that having a short break is necessary for a person’s overall wellbeing and staying well in the long term.

Kathy discusses that the MHA is still under development. They hope to develop additional opportunities by having a hub of activities at current venues in Bathgate. They may therefore in the future offer counselling or confidence building groups, mindfulness and WRAP as well as groups that are not focused on mental health such as the Garden centre, Artlink and cookery. Kathleen hopes to signpost her clients to these services.

Support

New Online Carer group.

A new online Facebook group is being set up by VOCAL and Marie Curie called “Carers@work”. It is for people who work and also care for someone. In particular the group is aimed at unpaid carers in Edinburgh & Lothians who are in full time or

part time work or are self-employed. The group will go live in MAY. Carers can register and receive updates by accessing links to the VOCAL Facebook page and using the online signup form at www.westspace.org.uk.

Advice shop volunteers

The Advice shop is looking for volunteers to support local people affected by cancer. Macmillan Cancer support is currently working with local communities to provide drop in services within local communities. As a volunteer you will need to give up 2 or 3 hours of your time per week. Your role will be offering information and advice and helping the client access specialist services, for example welfare rights advice and counselling. You will need to be over 18 years and have good communication skills and a friendly and helpful manner. Full training and support is provided and travel expenses will be reimbursed. For more information tel. 01506 283 053.

Useful contacts

Advice Shop

Telephone: 01506 283000

Website: www.westlothian.gov.uk/advice-shop

CAPS Independent Advocacy

Telephone: 0131 273 5116

Website: www.capsadvocacy.org

Email: contact@capsadvocacy.org

Childline

Telephone: 0800 1111

Website: www.childline.org.uk

Mental health Foundation

Telephone: 0141 572 0125

Website: www.mentalhealth.org.uk

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.

Mental Health Advocacy Project West Lothian SCIO. Mental health Resource centre, Strathbrock Partnership Centre, 189a West Main Street, Broxburn, West Lothian, EH52 5LH Tel :(01506) 857230 F: (01506 852954) Email:

admin@mhap.org.uk

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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.

