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Depression

Depression is an extremely common condition and people of any age can be affected. It may come out of the blue or develop over a period of time. Something that has happened in your life such as a bereavement or a major event such as losing your job or a physical condition can trigger depression. Having anger or a traumatic experience in childhood may also be a cause. You can look on depression as a defence mechanism by your body to deal with stress. Functioning day to day can become extremely difficult; once easy tasks like getting up and going out can seem almost impossible to achieve. Depression can be mild where it does not really affect your daily life to severe – when your daily functioning is affected, such as eating and sleeping. You may need to go into hospital for treatment. There are a wide variety of symptoms associated with depression. Some of the most common are; being overtired, reduced concentration, loneliness, low mood, difficulties at work/college/school, suicidal thoughts, self-harm, and additional physical symptoms such as nausea and headaches. With depression intense emotions are experienced and often a sufferer will also have anxiety where they may feel agitated and restless. Depression however can still be a difficult condition to recognise and everyone's experience of depression is unique. Family and friends of the sufferer may also find things difficult. Depression may in itself be a side effect of a variety of different medications, be caused by a poor diet and being unfit, as a result of using alcohol and street drugs and may run in your family.



There are some specific forms of depression and these include Bipolar disorder (manic depression), Seasonal Affective disorder (SAD) and Post-natal depression. With Bipolar disorder a person may have severe mood swings from being extremely elated to being very low and experiencing despair lethargy and suicidal feelings. Sufferers may also do odd or illogical things. Many new mums will experience the “baby blues” shortly after birth. This may involve experiencing anxiety and a lack of confidence which can be a very worrying time.

Post-natal depression is more intense and lasts longer. The new mum may be unable to cope and have sleep problems, panic attacks or and intense fear of dying. They may also have a negative feeling towards their child. It begins usually around two to three weeks after birth. Around 1 in 10 mums are affected. SAD is associated with the beginning of winter and can last until spring when daylight increases. Mild cases are often called the “winter blues”. Sufferers feel anxious, stressed and depressed. It may also affect mood and patterns of sleep and eating.

There are a variety of treatments available for depression. It is vital that you visit your GP as early as possible. Unfortunately many people choose not to seek any help for their condition. Talking therapies such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and counselling work really well. Within the NHS there is a waiting list. If your depression is mild your GP may recommend to wait and see what happens after a couple of weeks. Your GP may refer you to a local gym as exercise can help mild depression. A self-help group where you can share your experiences often helps also as do self-help books and online CBT. If you have mild to moderate depression your GP may recommend a talking therapy. If your symptoms are more severe a combination of antidepressant medication and a talking therapy may be used. It is known that using both treatment approaches works better than one. The type and severity of depression will affect which type of medication is prescribed. There are several categories of medication available. Your GP will recommend a time scale for how long you should keep taking your medication for, on average this is from 6-9 months. Some may need to take it for much longer periods depending on their condition. The majority of medications can have side effects and your GP will monitor your response and how well it is controlling your symptoms. Everyone’s response is different and finding the right drug may take a fair bit of time. Prescribed medication can have side effects and you should speak to your doctor if this happens to you. Your GP may refer you to a psychiatrist who may then offer a different medication and other talking therapies. For details of different medications for depression visit www.nhs.uk

There are many ways in which you can help yourself live with a depressive illness. Keep in contact with those close to you; do some form of exercise-it will lift your mood; confront your fears and keep doing things and have a good daily routine with regular sleep patterns; engage in hobbies and activities; avoid drinking too much alcohol as it can make you more depressed. Pay attention to your diet and eat healthily to avoid weight gain. (Your appetite may be affected by medication). Take good care of your personal appearance. Do your own research on the internet on your condition to access useful information. You may consider an alternative therapy such as acupuncture or massage or homeopathy. Share your experiences of depression. You can register to access an online community for people affected by depression, for example “Friends in need.co.uk” which is run by Mind. You will be able to find if there are self-help groups available in your own area both from your

GP and online. Consider volunteering in your community to help others like yourself or take part in Art or music therapy.

Wellness and Recovery Action Plan



The original concept of a Wellness Recovery Action plan (WRAP) was developed in the USA by Mary Ellen Copeland and has many benefits. It allows you to recognise any symptoms which may indicate that you are becoming unwell and allow you to manage them successfully and even stop them entirely. It will therefore improve your mental wellbeing.

It is entirely personal to you and therefore will not work for someone else. You can review your plan as often as you wish. You should complete this plan when you are feeling well, take your time and ask for help if you need it; this could be your support worker or indeed the community outreach team in Bathgate. Staff at Bathgate house have created their own WRAP booklet this year which you can request. This discussion is applicable to the content of this particular booklet.

To begin with you should create your own “*toolbox*” identifying what type of person you are. This process can be extremely helpful in itself. For example you may describe yourself as content, capable, energetic, and talkative. Next you will create your *daily staying well plan* which will outline exactly what activities are important in keeping you well and in control of your symptoms each day. Such healthy activities may include exercise, taking medication, socialising, cleanliness and eating healthily. It is also helpful to understand the things that contribute to you becoming unwell, such as excess smoking, becoming overtired, having a poor diet or stopping your medication. As part of the process you will learn what the early warning signs are for you and will give you the ability to recognise when you may be going into a crisis. These for example may be increased symptoms of anxiety, hearing voices, persistent low mood, suicidal thoughts, unable to maintain your daily routine. When this happens you need to take action and speak to someone. You may go to your GP, call a helpline, such as Breathing Space or the Samaritans or speak to your family. If nothing works you should call NHS 24 (111).

The next stage in your action plan is to set out how you will manage in a crisis; your *crisis plan*. This can include making an *advance statement* which will describe what you want to happen if you are unwell and cannot communicate your wishes concerning your care and treatment. This can also involve nominating a *named person* which is usually family or close friend who will speak on your behalf. The statement will include any treatments that you may not want to receive (you may have had a bad experience in the past) and who you wish to be involved in your care. In the crisis plan you should include a list of things that will let those around you know that you may be very unwell and need someone to take over your care. This may include being very agitated, drowsy, confused, reduced awareness, withdrawn or not caring for yourself properly. You will also nominate people to take over caring for any children or pets or paying any bills or helping you to keep any appointments you may have.

It is important that you know any medications you may be taking and to update this part of the plan regularly. There is also a section where you record your health history of any past and current health problems and what helps or doesn't help you in managing your illness. The booklet then gives tips to help you to relax and bring your anxiety under control. The final part of creating your own WRAP is to complete your *Post crisis/Recovery plan*. It helps you to understand why you relapsed and to think about ways you can prevent this happening in the future. The first part is to know when you are in the recovery phase and to recognise positive behaviour for

example able to return to your daily activities, taking your medication regularly, looking after yourself. It also will cover what you must avoid whilst in the recovery phase. This is entirely personal to you. This part of the action plan covers being prepared for returning home if you have spent time in hospital, for example things that you need to organise such as food, medication, heating and what you need to do each day to remain well. Finally the importance of problem solving skills in helping you stay well and understanding that stress is part of life for all of us.

Learning

Lothian Education And Recovery Network (LEARN)



The upcoming courses described here are all free to people living in the Lothians. All educators have experience of mental health issues.

“Understanding Eating Disorders” will explore causes, treatments and the physical and psychological effects of the different eating disorders. People with lived experience share their stories. The challenges of helping someone with an eating disorder will be addressed. The course will include film clips and interactive activities.

This course will take place on the 9th November, 1pm-5pm in West Lothian. (Venue still to be decided).

“Realising Recovery” You will have the opportunity to develop an understanding of the recovery process and discover the relationships between mental health, identity, treatments and services. This is a 2 day course which will take place at Argyle House on Wednesday 18th and Thursday 19th January 2017. Upon completion you will receive a LEARN certificate.

“Understanding Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD): Much More than a Label.” Sufferers will describe their experiences and how they cope day to day. The discussion will highlight areas for change and skills development and how best to help someone with BPD. This 2 day interactive course will take place on Wednesday 25th and Thursday 26th January 2017 at Argyle House.

A number of additional courses are also being offered although dates and venues are still to be finalised. These are; **“Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP)”**, **“Independent Advocacy Works for us”** and **“Your Mental Health and Ways of Living Well”** See the website for more information on these courses.

www.capsadvocacy.org/lothian-wide-project/learn If you would like to find out dates and venues or to book a place on a course tel 0791 002 1537 or Email: learn@capsadvocacy.org.

Advice

Warm home discount scheme



West Lothian’s council’s anti-poverty strategy works to support the most vulnerable in local communities by addressing a range of issues. The council is making free computer and internet access more widely available for residents in council buildings across the region thus recognising the importance of computer access for everyone. The West Lothian Advice shop is playing a vital role and offers people advice on a range of related topics such as benefits, debt management, and energy advice, the latter of which is particularly relevant with winter just round the corner. They will assist with applying for a warm home discount. This is a one off payment each year from the government of £140 which is awarded to people who are on a low income or who are in receipt of certain benefits. People receiving Guarantee Pension Credit automatically qualify. It is for people who are

struggling to pay their energy bills. Most electricity suppliers are part of the scheme. A face to face service is available in Bathgate and the advice shop have increased their presence in the community and online. Sessions are now available at Macmillan Palliative care centre and in Ward 17. There are also general information sessions in St Johns four times a week. Outreach sessions are also now provided at several organisations which includes Alzheimer's Scotland, Carers of west Lothian and Cyrenians. Contact the Advice shop on 01506 283000 and select option 4. You can visit the website to find out how the advice shop can help with other issues; www.westlothian.gov.uk

The Citizens Advice Bureau also offers a range of services which includes energy advice and also assists with making an application for the warm home discount. To book an appointment you can call 01506 444814 or request a referral from your housing association. Email enquiries@cabwestlothian.org.uk or visit the website www.cabwestlothian.org.uk.



Health & Wellbeing

Put Your West Foot Forward Walks (PYWFF)



A number of PYWFF walks have been organised by the Health Improvement team for this autumn. These walks will take place at various locations throughout West Lothian and are free. All walks are led by trained volunteers. On the Westspace website you can find details of all the walks taking place each week throughout November and December. Visit www.westspace.org.uk

New Ballroom and Latin Dance class

The Excite Ageing Well project is offering a new Ballroom and Latin Dance Class for the over 50's which will take place in St. Mary's Hall Bathgate. It is suitable for beginners and costs £3.50 per person. Dances learned will include Quickstep, Tango and Viennese Waltz and various Latin Dances, including Jive, Rumba and Pasa Doble. There is no need to have a partner and appropriate clothing and footwear should be worn and you can just turn up. Instructors are UKA qualified. If you would like more information and details of times contact Avril on 01506 237950/ 07768090008 or Email; aclerkson@wesstlothianleisure.com



Local News

Support in Mind Scotland petition



Support in mind Scotland invites people to sign their petition for providing better support for mental health carers. It is recognised that there are around 150,000 people in Scotland who care for people with mental health issues. This campaign for better support and to give carers a voice began in June during Carers week and will end with a national event towards the end of the year followed by discussions with the Scottish Government and other stakeholders. The ultimate aim is to reflect the particular needs of carers in policies of the Scottish government, NHS boards and local authorities. This will ensure carers of people with mental health issues are recognised and their rights and advocacy are tailored to their needs. To sign the petition see the website; www.supportinmind.org.uk

New living Well Hub

A new holistic community outreach service has opened at Whitburn Community centre within the Living well community café. It has been produced in partnership with a number of organisations; West Lothian Advice shop, NHS Lothian, Social Work Addictions team, West Lothian Drug and Alcohol service and Children 1st. A range of services are being offered aiming to promote the health and wellbeing of people in the local community. Services include benefits advice, drop ins for young parents, sexual health advice, support to stop smoking and 1:1 support from the addictions team. It is hoped that other facilities at the community centre will be used more such as the gym and soft play. This new service will take place on the first Thursday of the month from 10-2pm.

OT Information Roadshow



Occupational Therapy aims to allow people who have a physical, mental or learning disability to live as independent a life as possible and allow them to achieve health and wellbeing. They offer support and advice on a wide variety of areas. These may include how to improve your personal care by providing equipment, adaptations to your home to improve accessibility, how to manage your illness and allowing access to other services, for example for work and education or leisure facilities. This roadshow will involve a series of 1 hour presentations from a variety of professionals in Occupational Therapy which includes Community OT, Paediatric OT, Mental health OT and Physical OT. You will have the chance to speak one to one with a professional with any specific issues you may have. This event will take place in Howden Park Centre, Livingston on Tuesday 8th November, from 10-3pm. Entry is free.

General Interest

Carers of West Lothian



Carers of West Lothian was started in 1990 by a small group of people and now offers a whole range of services for adult and young carers and their families within the West Lothian area. It is a voluntary organisation which aims to increase the quality of life for carers and to raise awareness of what it is like being a carer and the challenges they face. It offers information; allowing people to increase their knowledge of illness or disability, individual and group support, and advice, for example how to best fit their caring role into their life. Carers provide unpaid care and support to family or friends/neighbours. The person they care for may have an illness or disability or have addiction problems. A carer will have their own particular support that they provide for example moving/handling, assistance with personal hygiene, cooking/shopping, support with medication and emotional support. This support allows the person being cared for to remain independent and remain at home. Help may be offered, for example to carers to manage their finances, access benefits or to obtain a power of attorney. Training courses are also offered which increase confidence and helps manage stress. Counselling services (referral needed) and peer support is also available. This year funding has been secured from the Big Lottery Fund (£372,437) for a three year project. The projects aims are to increase staff resources to meet a growing demand for services, and to offer support to around 3000 carers within West Lothian. Carers of West Lothian offers small "Time Out grants" which allow a carer to have a break either alone or with the person

they are caring for. It allows them to participate in activities and outings helping to reduce stress and increase wellbeing.

There are around 100,000 young carers (under 18) in Scotland. Due to their caring role which can be extremely difficult they may find it that they are not concentrating at school, falling behind and experiencing bullying. Carers of West Lothian has dedicated support workers which can really make a difference to the lives of young carers. One to one support is provided as are the opportunity to participate in group activities; young carers can meet other carers and have a break from their caring role whilst doing a fun activity. Support workers can help carers increase their knowledge of any illness or disability that the person they care for may have and can signpost the young carer to further help. The organisation produces a variety of publications. When you register as a carer you will receive a carer's information book. There is also a quarterly newsletter.

Body-In-Mind (EFT)



Body-In-Mind specialises in holistic therapies, which includes use of the Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT). It is used to improve overall health and wellbeing by using a tapping technique which uses the meridian system focusing on acupuncture points. It has greatly increased in popularity and is now widely used by a variety of Professionals, including Psychologists, CPNs and other therapists. It is recognised to improve mental health and boost confidence and self-esteem. You can learn this technique; a variety of websites offer advice on learning EFT. i.e.

www.eft.universe.com. There are also publications such as the book "The Tapping Technique" by Nick Ortner. Pamela Wallace, EFT Practitioner at Body-And-Mind has 20yrs experience. They are based in Fauldhouse. You can call for more information or to book an appointment on 01501 770 195/07730784 977. You can also visit the website at: www.yellowtom.co.uk. Note: There is a charge for this therapy.

Support

The Step Out group



Around 1 in 10 people are affected by conditions where anxiety, phobias and panic is experienced. Anyone can be affected. There are many symptoms of a full blown panic attack and they often happen suddenly, out of the blue. They can be extremely distressing but are not serious in any way. Examples include racing heartbeat, trembling, dizziness, feeling sick and a fear of dying.

A self-help group called the Step Out group is available within West Lothian. Those attending have the opportunity to share experiences and support each other to express their emotions allowing recovery to take place. For more information you can contact MHAP on 01506 857230 or Email admin@mhap.org.uk.

This group is currently running at Whitburn Community centre from 1pm-2.30pm every Wednesday and at the Ability Centre, Carmondean on a Thursday from 12-1.30pm.

LGBT Space



This is a new group offering support and information to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual people and people accessing mental health services in the local Edinburgh community. You are welcome to just pop in for a chat and have tea and coffee. You can bring along someone for support if you wish. You will meet people like yourself in a safe environment and find out about support available and upcoming events organised by LGBT health and

wellbeing. This new group is based at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital on the third Friday of the month from 1-3pm. For further information contact alison@lgbthealth.org.uk or tel 0131 652 3283 or Maxwell (NHS Mental Health Community Chaplain). You can also visit their website; www.lgbthealth.org.uk

Entertainment

Art Exhibition



There is currently an Art exhibition on show at St. Johns Hospital Livingston. It features a collection of drawings and photos from John Gordon and other local birdwatchers. This has been made possible by Artlink (an organisation which was set up in 1984) which allows people who are disadvantaged or have a disability to be a part of the Arts in Edinburgh and the Lothians. This year Artlink have organised several bird watching trips in West Lothian and further afield. It will culminate in 2017 with a series of events and presentations around bird watching which will take place in Almondell Country Park. For more information you can contact Artlink; telephone 0131 229 3555 or Email: patrick@artlinkedinburgh.co.uk

Useful Contacts

Advice Shop

Telephone: 01506 283000
Website: www.westlothian.gov.uk/advice-shop

Citizens Advice Bureau

Telephone: 01506 432 977
Website: www.cabwestlothian.org.uk
Email: enquiries@cabwestlothian.casonline.org.uk

Caps Independent Advocacy

Telephone: 0131 273 5116
Website: www.capsadvocacy.org
Email: contact@capsadvocacy.org

Carers of West Lothian

Telephone: 01506 448 000
Website: www.carers-westlothian.com
Email: office@carers-westlothian.com

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

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

Health improvement Team

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

LGBT Health & Wellbeing

Telephone: 0131 523 1100
Website: www.lgbthealth.org.uk
Email: admin@lgbthealth.org.uk

Mind

Telephone: 0300 123 3393
Website: www.mind.org.uk
Email: info@mind.org.uk

Support in Mind Scotland

Telephone: 0131 662 4359
Website: www.supportinmindscotland.org.uk
Email: info@supportinmindscotland.org.uk

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.

