WEST LOTHIAN SERVICE USERS NEWSLETTER

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Hi! My name is Claire.

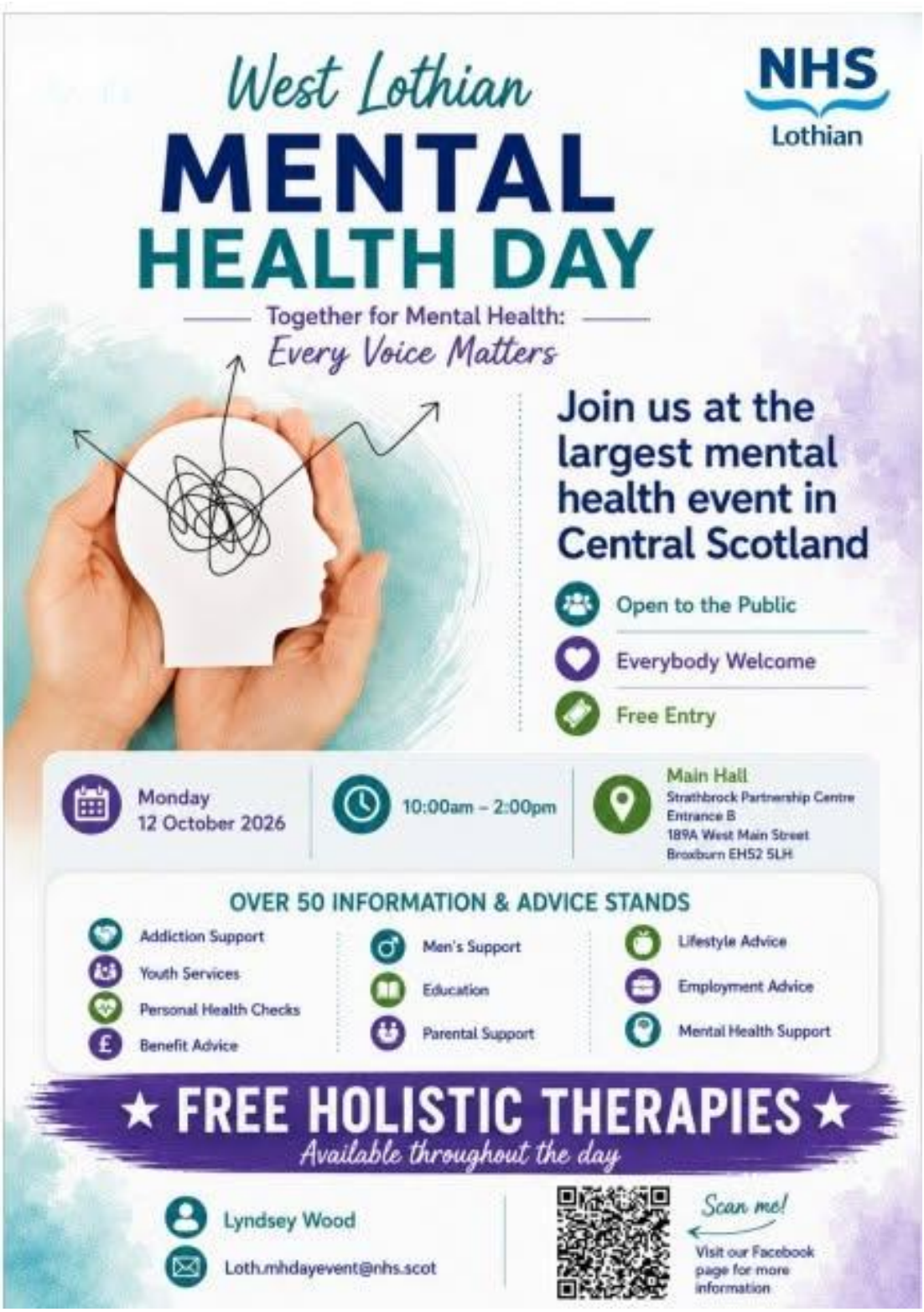
Welcome to my Newsletter!

I am a service user with a severe and enduring mental health problem, and I produce Newsletters to help share information about issues people may experience and support available in the West Lothian community.

I am a volunteer for the Mental Health Advocacy Project (MHAP) and a member of their Management Committee. I enjoy researching news and services. If you have any ideas, you think may be of interest for future Newsletters, or if you have details about a local service, please contact MHAP on 01506 857230 or email admin@mhap.org.uk

Health

West Lothian Mental health day



METPSY

metabolic biomarkers of clinical outcomes in severe mental illness

We are carrying out a research study to better understand whether changes in metabolism are connected to future changes in clinical outcomes in people with severe mental health conditions.

Who can take part?

Young adults (aged 16-25) living in Scotland who

have a diagnosis of major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia

or

have no diagnosis of these mental health conditions

What's involved?

Over 12 months total:

- 3x in-person visits of 2 hours each in Little France, Edinburgh
  - questionnaires and blood samples
- 2x periods of remote assessment lasting 2 weeks each
  - answering mental health questions through an app
  - wearing a wristband that measures your activity
  - wearing a glucose monitoring patch
- Placing a radar sleep quality monitor in your room for 12 months

You will be reimbursed for your time and travel expenses.

Want to know more?

For more information or to express interest in taking part, please contact us at **METPSY@ED.AC.UK**

METPSY v1.0 dated 07 NOV 2024
IRAS ID: 348873

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

NHS Lothian

HUB FOR METABOLIC PSYCHIATRY

Blood borne viruses(BBVs)



Hepatitis B & Hepatitis C

BBVs can spread from person to person via blood or bodily fluids. Hepatitis C and Hepatitis B are liver infections. Often these viruses have no symptoms. In the case of Hepatitis B symptoms may appear usually 2 or 3 months after exposure to the virus. Symptoms include tiredness, fever, dark urine and jaundice. The infection can be prevented with emergency treatment within a few days of exposure so if you think you have been exposed you can contact your GP. Infections can be either acute, where you have had the infection for a few weeks or months. or chronic, if the infection lasts for more than 6 months. It can cause scarring of the liver(cirrhosis). Treatments for an acute infection may not be needed right away and for a chronic infection anti-viral medicines are given to keep the virus under control and to reduce damage to the liver. Treatments are extremely effective and result in a full recovery. Often lifelong treatment is needed. Regular checks are necessary to identify any further liver problems. A Hep B vaccine is available for all babies born in the UK and for those at high risk.

Symptoms of Hep C if experienced usually presents as a flu-like illness and can remain silent for years with people experiencing tiredness and poor concentration. It is curable with anti-viral medication but if left untreated a chronic infection can seriously damage the liver over time(cirrhosis) and increase the risk of liver cancer. So, early diagnosis, treatment and prevention improves long-term outcomes for people.

All BBV tests have a window period in which the infection isn't detectable. If a patient is thought to be in this window period, a retest will be required after the appropriate time. Repeat testing at 6-12 months is recommended.

HIV

The Human immunodeficiency virus(HIV) targets the immune system and if untreated can reduce your ability to fight off infections and disease. Initially, 2 to 6 weeks after infection most people have a short flu-like illness lasting for 2 weeks. This is called Primary HIV infection and may include fever, sore throat, body rash and muscle pain. Many years may pass before any further symptoms occur so many people don't know they are infected. Damage to the Immune system can include weight loss and chronic

diarrhoea and recurrent infections. Treatment involves using antiretroviral medication to stop the virus multiplying in the body. This results in an extremely low level of virus which can no longer be detected, and this also means that the infection cannot be passed on to others. People who are diagnosed and treated will have a normal lifespan. If you are sexually active you should consider having at least one test. It is often the case that Hep B & Hep C are more common if you have HIV.

What to do if you think you may have a BBV.

If you think you have been exposed to a BBV wash any wound with soap and water immediately. Seek urgent medical help from a GP, A & E department or sexual health clinic within 24 to 48 hrs to see if emergency medicine (PEP) is required. For HIV this works best when started within hours of exposure.

Support available in West Lothian

You can visit your local GP surgery to request a blood borne virus screen. They also offer Hep B vaccines and direct referrals to specialist care.

Local sexual health clinics: NHS Lothian runs integrated sexual health services and local peripheral clinics including services connected through Howden health centre in Livingston. You can check availability and book via the Lothian sexual health Booking page.

Routine testing at A & E

From September, routine testing will be introduced For BBVs at St. John's A & E department. People can however opt out of this service.

Support available

The NHS Lothian community and specialist teams offer specialised support and alternative testing methods like dried blood spot tests if needed.

- Waverly care offers peer support, practical help and emotional counselling for individuals with a HIV or Hep C diagnosis. You can contact them via Waverly care or call their support line at 0131 558 1425.
- The Terrance Higgins Trust. Supports communities across Scotland with HIV and sexual health services.
- Hep C Trust. Mission to eliminate Hep C from the UK by 2030. Staffed by people with personal experience of Hep C. Confidential helpline 020 7089 6221.
- The NHS Lothian harm reduction team provides injecting equipment provision(IEP), harm reduction advice and blood borne virus screening.

Free NHS self-sampling kits are available in West Lothian through Lothian sexual health for HIV(as well as syphilis and routine STIs). These postal kits do not include screening for Hep B or Hep C. You must visit a clinic, your GP or via the COT team. You can order online on the Lothian sexual health postal kit page. This service is for those aged 16 or over and show no physical symptoms. Results are usually via text to your mobile or via an automated line within 7 to 14 days.

Hep B & C testing. You can book an in-person confidential “No- Talk testing” slot or regular appointment by calling the Chalmers centre hub at 0131 536 1070.

How are BBVs spread?

BBVs are spread when infected blood or specific body fluids enter another person’s body. Common routes of transmission includes sharing drug-injecting equipment, unprotected sexual contact, accidental needle-stick injuries, unsterile tattooing or piercing and from mother to child during birth. Blood-to-blood contact. Sharing items like razors, toothbrushes, or open wounds touching infected blood.

Living with BBVs

Living with BBVs like HIV, Hep B & Hep C include taking daily medicines to keep the virus low or gone, practicing basic hygiene and getting regular checks. Treatments allow people to live long, healthy lives.

Pregnant women are offered testing as part of their antenatal screening. This allows women to make decisions about pregnancy and safe delivery of their babies. Treatment can greatly reduce the risk of HIV & Hep B being passed on to the baby.

It is important to eat healthily and stay active and to have regular blood tests for your liver and immune system.

New health care app information



The new West Lothian healthcare app MyCarescot will be monitored by the West Lothian HSCP. It allows people to access key health information securely. This includes medications, allergies, vaccination records and local health and wellbeing services. This new app builds on the national rollout of the MyCare.scot web service and monitoring will improve this effectiveness. It will continue to be developed through to 2030 allowing users to check appointments, provide information about themselves and receive digital letters through MyCare.scot. The app will be integrated with Scotland’s social care and social work system.

Benefits

Job start Payment



Social Security Scotland is now providing a job start payment for young people that are out of work and receiving certain benefits for at least 6 months. It is worth more than £330 and is to help with the costs of work clothes, travel, tools and childcare. This money does not have to be paid back. Care leavers aged from 16-25 yrs can also apply if they are out of work, receive a qualifying benefit and have a confirmed job offer. This payment has helped 170 young people across West Lothian to a value of £53,756.

Tax-free childcare scheme



Families who work may qualify for tax-free childcare allowing them to save around £100 each month. For every £8 deposited into an account there is a £2 top-off from the government. This is up to a maximum of £2,000 a year per child or £4,000 for a disabled child. This support may be used to pay for nurseries, childminders, holiday clubs, breakfast clubs and after-school clubs. Payments are accepted by around 75,000 providers. This scheme can be used for children up to 11 years old, or up to 16 years if the child is disabled. Usually, parents qualify if they earn at least the national minimum or living wage for around 16 hours a week and each parent must earn no more than £100,000. You are not eligible if you receive Universal Credit or use childcare vouchers. Government funded childcare can also be used along with the scheme. Parents can

choose to spend their money or save it, and any extra funds can be withdrawn at any time. Families can get £500 in top-ups every 3 months or £1,000 for a disabled child. If you would like to apply, visit www.Gov.UK and search for "Tax-free childcare".

Financial support for parents of teenagers starting apprenticeships



For parents who receive Universal Credit, there is now financial support for teenagers who decide to start an apprenticeship. This new bursary will be up to £4,500 per year per household. Indeed, up till now teenagers choose against apprenticeships as their parents may lose out on benefits. This means that a parent who has a child with a disability could lose up to £339.92 a week. It is important to fully fund apprenticeship training, and this new bursary is paid for by the growth and skills levy, paid for by employers whose annual bill is greater than £3 million. For smaller enterprises financial support will also be available up to £8,000 to companies who hire young apprentices. This new bursary will provide help for young people gain skills and experience required to have successful careers.

Locating lost Pensions



It is the case that millions of pounds have been left unclaimed by pensioners in recent years. Nearly £3.3 million in pensions have been lost, with around £9,470 in each pot. In total, inactive, unclaimed or missing workplace pensions are worth around £31.1 billion. For older savers aged between 55 and 75 years the average pension amount lost is £13,620. A lot of people lose track of their retirement savings if they change jobs or move house and do not update their contact details. You can use the Governments pension tracing tools to find any lost pension pots (this is a free service).It is also useful to retrace your career steps, check old papers, look for gaps in your pension history and update your contact details. By locating any accounts savers can keep track of their money and it will help when planning your retirement.

Universal Credit(UC) – Proposals to change DWP holiday limit rules



A new change has been ***proposed*** for those claiming UC who want to go abroad. Currently you can go abroad for up to a month. You must tell your work coach. You will still get the benefit while you are away. There is now a petition for increasing the period to 40 days. Many people on UC have family living abroad. They may have elderly parents, have a relative that is seriously ill, may need to attend a funeral, or offer support in a crisis. These are often unexpected situations. It is important that people are not penalised for supporting their families and still get financial support for their rent, food, and basic living costs.

Current rules for having extended time abroad when you are on UC. You may need medical treatment and for time taken to recover. In addition, your partner or child may be having treatment or going through recovery. You may be a civil servant or member of the armed forces. There is currently a petition you can sign on the Parliament website. If it reaches 10,000 the government must then respond. If it reaches 100,000 the issue will be considered for debate in Parliament. For fuller information you can check the government website.

The warm home discount scheme



This year more than 250,000 more households will qualify for the scheme, which gives a £150 rebate to energy customers. The Government is also removing VAT from electricity bills from October this year through to March 2027 which is a saving of £45 off the yearly Ofgem price cap.

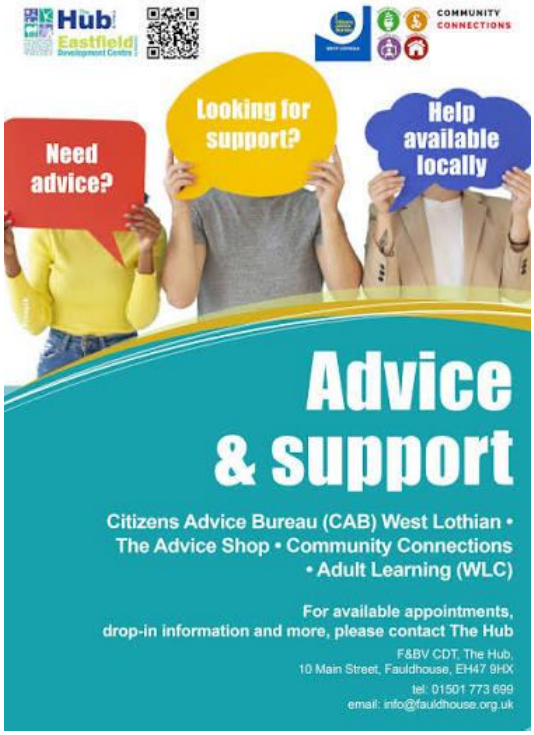
Who will get the automatic energy bill rebate. Includes.

- Households that have a resident named on the energy bill who receives Pension Credit.
- Households where a resident named on the energy bill gets UC, Income-related ESA or support for mortgage interest as long as the household also includes very young children.
- Someone with a disability or someone with a health-related work limitation, or someone who is eligible for disability benefits.

Households who receive qualifying benefits must receive these benefits on a specific day. The scheme opens in October, but you must check if you qualify as soon as possible. It is important that people check if they qualify for the rebate and to tell those around them to check if they are named on their energy bill. You may not be named if you have moved home recently. The new Government rules for Scotland means that millions of households will get the discount for the rest of the decade.

Support Services/Groups

Citizen's Advice Bureau West Lothian gambling support service



Citizen's Advice Bureau West Lothian(CAB) is now part of the new gambling support service. It provides support to anyone experiencing gambling harms. This includes those who gamble and other people. There is often stigma and judgement associated with gambling. The helpline offers a safe space to talk. Call freephone 0800 328 1131 mon-fri 10 until 3.The CAB refers people to support services.

How to establish if gambling is becoming a problem. This includes unexplained spending, going without essentials, sudden change in behaviour or mood and poor sleep.

CAB also has experience of working with people with unusual gambling issues for example cryptocurrency investments.

Reasons of why people gamble vary. It may be to cope with stress and often people realise themselves that they have a problem and get in touch. Help offered includes

budgeting, accessing benefits, referrals to emotional support and establishing coping strategies.

More information is available at www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/debt-and-money/gambling-problems/set-help-with-gambling-problems/

Cyrenians Rainbow Reset



Youthspace Linlithgow

Youthspace is a charity that supports young people in Linlithgow and the surrounding area. The charity has received a donation of £7,899 from NFU Mutual's Edinburgh and Lothian's agency. Youthspace provides a variety of services including informal drop-ins, school engagement, holiday programmes, volunteering opportunities and mental health support. Over the past year the charity has delivered more than 1,700 sessions, helping more than a thousand young people. This new donation will help with the running of regular drop-ins and pay for the charity's health and wellbeing hub-where free counselling is offered. Demand for services continues to grow, particularly around mental health support. For more information visit www.nfumutual.co.uk/.../edinburgh-and-the-lothians/

Craigsfarm wellbeing and resilience programme



Rainbow Rascals

Rainbow Rascals offers support for children's mental health, emotional wellbeing, confidence and development . Services includes Art therapy , ASN music groups, Play therapy(new), Simply calm and wheelchair and frames sessions. In the future more services and opportunities are starting.



Lanthorn Craft Group-Dedridge



Bathgate stroke peer support group



Local News

Dignity Boxes charity

The Dignity boxes charity is in urgent need of donations. They supply free toiletries to those in need in West Lothian. They would like people to donate a bottle of shampoo/shower gel or toothpaste/deodorant. You can donate at any of the following locations.

Morrisons Livingston
Nationwide Livingston
50+ Network Bathgate
Craigsfarm community hub
CAB Craigshill
Mobility hub Livingston
Morrisons Bathgate
Strathbrock Partnership
Sainsburys Livingston
Morrisons Carmondean
Soul sister Bathgate
Livingston Civic centre
Murieston FC
St. Theresa's Eastcalder

New mental health website



A new website was launched in August in memory of Konnar Black, a West Lothian man. It has been developed to help people and their loved ones know what to do in a mental health crisis and beyond. It also includes resources that are available across Scotland. The Krisis website was created so that no one should be left to navigate not only mental health services, but police custody, the justice system and housing support. Fuller information is available on the krisis website. www.krisis.org.uk

Events

West Lothian Recovery week





Butterfly release charity Anam Cara Fasgadh The butterfly release charity Anam Cara Fasgadh offers bereavement support for families who have experienced the death of a baby, child, or young person. Memorial events provide a space for reflection, connection and honouring loved ones through a symbolic butterfly release. Anam Cara Fasgadh have been holding their event in Oban and Inverness for several years. This year on the 4th August the event was held in West Lothian crematorium. It brings together parents, grandparents, siblings, family members and

friends. Butterflies are bred specifically in the heart of the new forest by butterflies for occasions. The West Lothian event will now be held every year.

Volunteering opportunities in West Lothian



Voluntary Sector Gateway(VSG) is hosting an event showcasing volunteering opportunities in West Lothian. It is taking place at VSG's venue the gateway in Bathgate on Wednesday September 16th from 12.30pm-2pm. You may want to meet new people, gain experience or learn new skills. At the event there will be a range of local organisations present so you can ask questions and find out what's available near you. Everyone is welcome no experience is required and you don't have to decide anything on the day. You can register on the VSG website. Visit www.voluntarysectorgateway.org

Supporting unpaid carers in the workplace



There is a free event taking place at VSG in Bathgate. Join VSG West Lothian, Carers Scotland and Carers of West Lothian where the event will explore how employers can better recognise and support unpaid carers in the workplace. It is taking place on Monday 21st September from 3pm-5pm. There will be the opportunity to hear about experiences of carers at work, the support on offer and how support can be improved. At the session, the Carer positive award will be introduced which will recognise employers that provide support to their employees who also have unpaid carer duties. There will be the opportunity to ask questions. Tea, coffee and networking will be available and the event is free. Booking is required. Visit www.eventbrite.co.uk



Useful contacts

Advice shop	01506 283000 ww.westlothian.gov.uk
Breathing Space	0800 83 85 87 www.breathingspace.scot
Carers of West Lothian	01506 448000 www.carers-westlothian.com
Citizens Advice Bureau	01506 432 977 www.cabwestlothian.org.uk
Craigsfarm community development project	01506 894 639 www.craigsfarm.org.uk
West Lothian Council	01506 280000 www.westlothian.gov.uk
Cyrenians gambling support	07983 137 239 www.cyrenians.scot/chances
Dignity boxes charity	www.dignityboxes.co.uk
Home energy Scotland	0808 808 2282 www.homeenergyScotland.org
Krisis mental health website	www.krisis.org.uk
Lanthorn craft group	01506 284 941 www.westlothian.gov.uk
METPSY Research study	01382 383 235 www.research.ed.ac.uk
Rainbow rascals	01506 534 563 www.rainbowrascals.uk
Samaritans	116 123 www.samaritans.org
Stroke peer support group Bathgate	07537 816 092 www.chss.org.uk/group/bathgate-stroke-support-group
Westspace West Lothian	www.westspace.org.uk
Voluntary Sector Gateway	01506 650 111 www.voluntarysectorgateway.org