



Write Mind

Blue Monday edition

Tackling inequality for people with a severe mental illness

People with a severe mental illness (SMI) are being urged to take up free physical health checks.

SMI commonly refers to diagnoses of schizophrenia, bipolar and organic psychosis. The physical health checks at GP surgeries are available to all those aged 14+ diagnosed with a SMI and include weight and blood pressure checks, alcohol and smoking assessments and blood tests.

People with a SMI are at risk of dying 15-20 years earlier because of physical health problems such as diabetes, cancer, liver problems and heart disease. This can be due to lifestyle, medication or lack of awareness.

In Bradford, there are around 7,800 people diagnosed with a SMI - around 1% of the population.

Under the Healthy Minds partnership, Mind in Bradford is

now offering grants to voluntary organisations to help tackle the physical health concerns which can lead to lower life expectancy.

Funds are available to promote healthy eating, exercise, stopping smoking and reducing alcohol consumption.

We also offer free SMI training to VCS organisations.

SMI Programme Manager Masira Hans said: "Our work to support people living with a SMI is really important as it hopes to reduce a huge health inequality gap."

"We're taking a collaborative approach and would love to hear from organisations about projects which could support people and tackle inequalities."

To book a SMI physical health check, please contact your local GP.

To apply for funding, go to bit.ly/SMIFundingOpportunity.

To book on to training, go to bit.ly/SMITrainingTickets.

This edition marks Blue Monday, often said to be the most depressing day of the year. But we have some tips to get you through! Look inside for more details.

300 Christmas hampers...



...put smiles on faces this Christmas!

We delivered over 300 hampers and cream teas to our clients and befriended. Gifts for adults included books on mindfulness, diaries, mugs and chocolates as well as colouring pens, plants and tea.

Children received scented pencils, fidget toys and hot chocolate. "It put a big smile on my face," said one client.



The first of January brings plenty of well-wishing as you wish loved ones and people around you a “Happy New Year”. It’s uplifting, joyous and gives a sense of community spirit as we all begin anew. But for many people, there can be a flip side as New Year’s Day also brings New Year’s resolutions. They can be seen as a bit of fun and we all know that by February (if you’re lucky!) all our resolutions are often broken and forgotten about. However, whether you’re diagnosed with an Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) or not, making resolutions can see people getting caught up with really wanting that sense of change and new beginnings. And when it doesn’t go to plan, for whatever reason, then this can and does create major meltdowns.

Perhaps it’s a healthy diet and you’re aiming to lose weight? Dry January so you’re withholding alcohol consumption for a whole month? Or maybe your resolutions are aimed at furthering your education or making new friends?

Most of our resolutions are often similar because we all want to do the best we can: to see change within ourselves and our surroundings are desires, and wishes, we all frequently aim for. But when they don’t come to fruition, it adds to the negative feelings which, if you’ve already felt them before the big New Year’s build-up, are going to be felt even more.

The spiral downwards continues; feeling like a failure, feeling despondent and lost. And then comes that thought: “Well, what’s the point then?”

One of the reasons for this may be due to placing high expectations upon ourselves. One of the very big reasons as to how and why people find themselves seeking support from Mind in Bradford is due to high expectations, and I’m one of them! I’d mentally beat myself up because I’ve allowed myself to eat a chocolate bar rather than sticking to a strict, regimented diet. And because I had broken this unrealistic resolution, I’d be sat feeling that I’m not good enough.

Or perhaps, I’d made a New Year’s resolution to stop biting my nails only to find two days later, out of a subconscious reaction, I’m biting my nails

because I’m anxious about something.

When I have attended the many groups and 1:1 sessions that Mind in Bradford has to offer, such as peer support groups, assertiveness groups and WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan), I’ve listened to mental health workers talk about two reasons as to how and why people come to Mind in Bradford; high expectations and comparisons.

It’s taken me a long time to grasp this and I am still learning. I am one of many who do have over-the-top expectations, comparing myself: “Why can’t I be like that or look like that?”.

Through the help and support with Mind in Bradford, I’ve learnt that sometimes, it is about changing the wording. So, rather than seeing it as one great big goal that’s often unrealistic, it would be more realistic to break it down into bite-sized chunks; if you want to aim to stop biting your nails then try aiming to find out why you’re biting your nails first.

Is it anxiety, boredom, hunger, feeling overwhelmed? Maybe it is time you found someone trustworthy who you can open up to, whether that is a family member or a good friend? If you feel you can’t for whatever reason, then try Mind in Bradford and see what sessions they have that could help you offload - because as well as the various talking groups, there are also groups such as creative writing, tribal drumming and mindfulness and meditation.

Even if you are struggling to find an answer, I’ve found these types of groups are excellent at helping you to find that little bit of peace and solace that your overthinking mind may not be granting you at this time.

If you find attending groups a little overbearing or indeed intimidating, then give Guide-Line a call on freephone 08801 844 844. Good luck! Ian x

A poem by Paul Foulds

The last nomadic hitchhiker
 Stood by the side of the road
 Thumb out, a sign saying freedom
 Cars passing by he is invisible, a ghost
 On the road to everywhere and nowhere
 Getting away from the toxic polluted city
 The virus, the drugs
 His wild crazy eyes
 Watching the strange clouds pass by
 Maybe he is running from himself
 Time is not on his side
 The road of life goes on for ever
 A passenger
 In the fast lane of the mind
 A uncertain future unfolds
 As we live we die strange somehow.



The link between money and mental health



One reason why the third Monday in January is dubbed 'Blue Monday' is due to the financial pressures many people experience at this time of year.

Christmas is a costly season, often with a long gap between December and January paydays due to bank holidays.

We spoke to Helen Webb, National External Partnerships Manager at Christians Against Poverty (CAP), to find out more about the money and mental health struggles many of us are currently facing.

"We see an increase in calls right from the new year, as soon as we get past Christmas – that's when it hits people. Credit card statements are looming and people are feeling really impacted and sad," said Helen.

People can experience huge financial pressures at this time, and the impact of this on our mental health can be significant.

"If you're in debt, you're worried about so much," she added. "You're worried about what's coming in the post, you're worried about who's going to knock at the front door, you're worried about who's calling you on the phone, so all of those things are impacting you. And in a way these worries can also affect your levels of isolation and loneliness."

"This year, we know that 28% of our clients have considered or attempted suicide before coming to see us because of their debt. Debt massively has an impact on people's mental health."

Poor mental health can make earning and managing money harder and worrying about money can make your mental health worse.

It can start to feel like a vicious cycle. But it's important to remember you never need to struggle alone, and there are people who can help you.

"The sooner you ring for help, the sooner that stress of being in debt will be eased," said Helen.

"Get help with your debts as early as you can. At CAP, we have the most friendly, lovely, non-judgmental people who are here and ready to help you."

CAP offers free debt help to anyone of any age, any religion, or background. Call their free number on 0800 328 006 or visit www.capuk.org to check services in your area.

Did you know?

The concept of Blue Monday was originally devised for a press release by a travel company that asked a psychologist to calculate the most depressing day of the year. Its accuracy is debated but is meant to take into account weather, debt, time since Christmas and new year's resolutions, low motivation and the need to take action. It usually lands on the third Monday of January.

Beat the winter blues

Tips from the Mind in Bradford team

"One of my clients wraps herself up and lays on her sun lounger in the garden looking at the sky. I think that's lovely - she really makes the most of the daylight she gets during the winter." *Tracey, Wellbeing Practitioner*

"I like to get walking round my local area, even if it's the end of the day and dark. I go looking for Christmas lights that folks have put on their houses - fresh air, some exercise and a bit of sparkle. What could be better?" *Sara, Finance Manager*

"I wrap up warm, take a daily walk with my very daft dog, Lily the cockapoo, and then go home and eat some home-made leek and potato soup - very basic but helps me." *Anita, Recovery Worker*

"I take vitamin D and make sure I still go out walking (in a high vis jacket, lol!)." *Alan, Wellbeing Practitioner*

"To beat the winter blues, I just try and take a daily 30 min walk. Fresh air is key for good mental health." *Shanaz, Relief Worker*



Who's who?

Ruth Mulryne

What's your job title?

Chair of Trustees.

What have you done previously?

I have worked in the charity sector for over 25 years including chief executive and senior roles in a range of national and local charities. I currently undertake consultancy work in the sector, including coaching and mentoring. I love that charities have a unique voice in society and the ability to listen to, support, campaign for and transform people's lives.

Why did you want to work at Mind in Bradford?

Trustees are volunteers and this role gives me the opportunity to offer my skills and experience to support the brilliant work of Mind in Bradford. I have seen the impact

when people struggle with their mental health, on their lives and those around them, through my work and challenges friends have faced. I know flexible, safe, tailored services, delivered with care and kindness, can make a huge difference. Covid is still with us, times are ever-changing and the year ahead is challenging. Mind in Bradford is never more needed than now.

What do you enjoy most about your role?

When staff share the difference they and the work of our wonderful volunteers make to the people we support. The passion, commitment and expertise shine through.

It reminds me when trustees pore over strategy, finances, debate new partnership and service opportunities etc., the decisions must all lead back to making the best possible difference to the mental health and wellbeing of the greatest

number of people.

What do you like to do outside work?

As a family, we do lots of different sports, outdoor adventures and love our travels. With travelling abroad more restricted in recent times we have enjoyed hiking, biking, kayaking and other adventures in beautiful Scotland and the Lake District. I enjoy nights out with friends, reading, movies, red wine and real coffee! I volunteer with two other charities.



A warm, winter thank you!



The Regal Foods team with Lydia, our Fundraising and Development Officer.

You've raised an amazing funding from the National £12,500 for the Mind in Bradford Winter Appeal!

Winter is a difficult time, with many people feeling lonely, isolated and financially stretched.

This year, many will also be experiencing bereavement, loss or unemployment.

That's why we asked local people and businesses to support those struggling with their mental health.

Donations to our appeal were doubled thanks to match-

Local businesses, including Regal Foods, Multibrands and Ebor Financial Planning, supported the appeal by sponsoring baubles on the Mind in Bradford virtual Christmas tree.

There is also an ongoing Move for Mind fundraising challenge, where participants set themselves a 30-day exercise and fundraising goal.

Go to mindinbradford.org.uk/move-for-mind to take part.

This newsletter is produced by clients and volunteers and does not necessarily represent the views of Mind in Bradford. To submit, e-mail copy to communications@mindinbradford.org.uk. To talk to us about your mental health, call Guide-Line free on 08801 884 884 12pm-12am or chat online at www.mindinbradford.org.uk 3pm-8pm. For urgent help, call First Response on 0800 952 1181. You may be referred to our safe space The Sanctuary, open 6pm-1am.

Free online training

Mind in Bradford is offering free mental health training for people who work with children and young people. The online sessions are organised by Know Your Mind and will be held on February 16 and March 8.

Book at bit.ly/CYPMentalHealthTraining.