

1 Nov 2022

Write Mind

Befriending Week edition

This edition marks Befriending Week and focuses on the impact that befriending can have. Take a look inside to hear from some of the staff, volunteers and clients from our befriending service, Community Companions.

Van Gogh Alive exhibition partners with Mind in Bradford

Mind in Bradford is proud to announce a new fundraising partnership with Van Gogh Alive, the multi-sensory, smash-hit exhibition created and produced by Grande Experiences which opened in Bradford last month.

As an artist, Van Gogh depicted a whole range of human emotions in his work – alluding to the struggles he himself faced throughout his life.

His expressive and impulsive style frequently hinted at a darkness that often comes hand in hand with creative genius.

This partnership seeks to raise money to help Mind in Bradford continue to provide its crucial services, while bringing mental health to the forefront of audiences' minds when reflecting on the Van Gogh Alive experience.

Visitors are able to donate to Mind in Bradford via 'Tap to Donate' points throughout the experience.

John Carrigan, Project Director at Van Gogh Alive, said: "We are absolutely delighted to be partnering with Mind in Bradford to highlight and raise money to support their incredible work delivering crucial mental health services across the district."

Helen Davey, Chief Executive at Mind in Bradford, said: "We want to use this partnership to raise awareness of our local services to people visiting the exhibition that may not know about

their local Mind."

Van Gogh Alive opened at the Grade II listed Regency Hall on 13 October and runs until 8 January 2023. To learn more, visit vangoghaliveuk.com.

How to get help with the cost of living

Mind in Bradford is encouraging people to access support for their mental wellbeing during these difficult times.

The surge in prices over recent months has created a cost-of-living crisis that is causing many of us to feel insecure and harming our mental health.

We know this is going to have a devastating impact for people up and down the country and our most vulnerable communities in the district who are already having to make tough decisions.

Bradford Council and Craven Council have webpages full of support and advice on everything from finances and mental health to food.

To find out more, visit costoflivingbradford.co.uk or cravenc.gov.uk/community-living/help-with-cost-of-living.



@mindinbradford

 mind in Bradford
mindinbradford.org.uk



What does befriending mean to you?

Our befriending service Community Companions offers weekly one-to-one support to people experiencing loneliness or social isolation by pairing them with one of our volunteer befrienders.

To celebrate Befriending Week, staff, volunteers and clients share how they became involved with or sought support from the service, and what befriending means to them.

Mohammad, client

I've received befriending support for the last year.

I reached out for support after my GP gave me information about Mind in Bradford and its services.

Befriending has helped me understand different cultures and different views. I felt lonely before even though I had people around me, like my wife and kids, but I needed a friend which I got in my befriender.

“Now I feel valued and understood - the people at Mind in Bradford care for me.”

Before I was very vulnerable, but when I met my befriender it was a distraction to other things that could harm me.

Jas, staff

I'm a Project Administrator for Community Companions. I began as a befriending volunteer at the start of the pandemic and was later asked about working as a temp on the project (which came about due to the pandemic). The thought of helping people that were lonely and isolated in their homes by matching them with a friendly volunteer was really rewarding, especially at a time when it was truly challenging for all.

“I just wanted to help those who felt alone feel less alone and reach as many people as possible.”

It's really rewarding when we get feedback from a good match and when people decide they want to stay in touch when the match ends. This can lead to lifelong fulfilling friendships. I also enjoy interviewing volunteers and realising how many people out there want to give their time in the pursuit of supporting others.

To me, befriending means having an understanding and non-judgemental person to talk to and see in the community. It means supporting someone to do something they may not at first have thought possible. It means giving someone the confidence to interact with people and the world again. **However big or small a step they take, befriending for many means progress.**

Oliver, volunteer

I have been volunteering for seven months now. I wanted to be a part of the team for this important charity that focuses on mental health and wellbeing, and, for a psychology graduate like myself, it's been a valuable experience.

“The thing I enjoy most about volunteering is talking with clients - making them feel valued, cared for and understood is my reward.”

Community Companions is an important service that enables me to use counselling skills and psychological approaches to improve clients' mental wellbeing.





Sandra, client

I've had befriending support for a year. I reached out for support after my daughter passed away. I went to my GP for help and they referred me.

"Befriending has really lifted me up."

I can't praise my befriender enough - it means a lot, having someone to talk to and listen.

Rebecca, volunteer

I started volunteering with Mind in Bradford in April 2022. I wanted to volunteer as a befriender as I know the value of having someone to talk to. This can make such a difference to someone who could be feeling isolated because of their mental health. **It's important to break the stigma of mental health and people feeling they need to hide away, as talking to someone or just knowing someone is there can help so much.**

On our first call, my befriender and I discovered we had quite a few things in common - we liked the same sports and just got on from the get-go, we do get on very well which is really nice. I think I've learnt a lot from the person I'm matched with, and I think hearing their story has made me look at certain things in a different way as well. I know what it is like to be alone and I can understand the value of having someone telephone or arranging to meet up for a coffee.

"Some people may not get to see or speak to many people or even anyone at all for days at a time, so for them to know someone will be contacting them, wanting to talk to and meet up with them can make a huge difference."

For them to know someone has an interest in them for no other reason than friendship, for them to talk to, or for them to just listen to someone else talk for an hour or so a week can help that person's confidence, self-belief and just all round wellbeing.



Reshma, staff

I'm a Project Administrator for Community Companions. Mind in Bradford is a vital organisation that offers and does so much for the community of Bradford. I wanted to work here to support this wonderful service and bring my personal experience of my own mental health to support others. Before joining as staff, I was a volunteer befriender.

"I really enjoyed getting to know someone who you may not usually meet, and learning about their life, hobbies and experiences."

Speaking to someone on a regular basis not only supports their life but also your own. For me, befriending represents regular connection to someone, which I think is one of the important types of support someone can receive - knowing that someone is there to listen and be there.



Are you feeling isolated, lonely or alone? If you live in the Bradford District or Craven and are aged 18+, you can access our befriending support. Visit mindinbradford.org.uk/befriend-me.



‘Living Better’, Alastair Campbell

Book review by client Ian Lamb

Ill mental health doesn’t discriminate regardless of your age, gender, race or whether you’re poor or, indeed, famous as journalist and Tony Blair’s former political and professional buddy, Alastair Campbell shows.

He says it himself: ‘I have it all’ - a loving partner, children who he is proud of, a comfortable home and a good career but still, Campbell is also a depressive and this book is about just that.

Marking a refreshing approach, here is a fellow guy who has penned a very heartfelt account on what it’s like for him to have battled depression.

Reading how those dark clouds descend and his experience of extreme lack of motivation for everyday tasks such as self-care greatly resonates with me as does so much more within this book. It certainly must have taken Campbell a lot of guts to be able to put himself out there and talk about such a difficult subject.

As the nationwide campaign to get people talking more about their mental health continues, Campbell hopes his story will help break down so much misunderstanding and taboo that surround mental health and he sets out to understand it more as well as explore why his depression keeps coming back.

Keighley-born Campbell takes us on a journey which includes his brother Donald, who was diagnosed with schizophrenia, and, at last, a true and stigma-free explanation as to what schizophrenia is because (unlike what the media portrays) it isn’t a split



Alastair and Ian at Bradford Literature Festival

personality but a very terrifying and serious mental illness where your mind becomes separated from the reality around you.

Seeing a loved one go through this ordeal is bound to be traumatic and it’s understandable for it to be one possible reason as to how and why Campbell faces his own battles.

This book not only connects us with traumatic events but also highlights Campbell’s alcoholism and how it became a destructive tool for his depression.

But after years of suffering in silence, it was only when he began seeking professional help and therefore talking about it, that he saw a difference.

Various suggested tools are used within this book including a ‘depression scale’ (which gives Campbell early warning signs) as well as dream recordings, mindfulness techniques and a jam jar - using pen and paper and filling a jam jar up with the people and activities that matter to you.

So, this account of depression isn’t just a tell-all, reflective account but is also something practical and could provide a self-help guide too.

Did you spot us out and about for World Mental Health Day?

In October, Bradford District and Craven Health and Care Partnership teamed up with Mind in Bradford and other voluntary and community sector organisations to run information stalls across the district. We shared information on how people can look after their mental wellbeing during these difficult times.



Mind in Bradford and Healthy Minds apprentices with the Deputy Mayor of Keighley, Cllr Kirby, and Cllr Adams

This newsletter is produced by clients and volunteers and does not necessarily represent the views of Mind in Bradford. You can contribute by emailing 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 12pm-12am. For urgent help, call First Response on 0800 952 1181. You may be referred to our crisis service Safe Spaces, open 12pm-2:30am.