

WELLBEING

Supporting wellbeing services in Bath & North East Somerset for **World Mental Health Day 2017**

INSIDE!

- ✓ Wellbeing in the workplace
- ✓ Stay 'fit of mind' in B&NES



THE FACTS:



Approximately 1 in 4 people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year



The overall number of people with mental health problems has not changed much in recent years but worries about things like money, jobs and benefits can make it harder for people to cope



How people try to cope with mental health problems is changing and the number of people who self-harm or have suicidal thoughts is increasing



Mind yourself

World Mental Health Day is observed on 10th October every year, with the overall objective of raising awareness of mental health issues around the world and mobilising efforts to support the wellbeing of everyone. The Day provides an opportunity for everyone working on mental health issues to talk about their work and what more needs to be done to make mental health care a reality for people worldwide.

This year, the theme of the Day is

Mental Health in the Workplace. It is an important issue because it affects many more people than we might think and when things go wrong for someone we work with, it impacts us all.

Professionals in Bath and North East Somerset have come together to produce this short guide to mental health issues in the local area. There is support available if you need it, responding to health, money, employment or housing problems. Increasingly, all these things are linked together and when one thing goes wrong, it can affect our wellbeing.

This guide aims to remind us all that

we are not alone, that mental health issues can be an everyday part of life and that it's okay to talk about them. We'll provide you with some background and point out where help is available should you, your colleagues or your friends and family need it.

Quids in!, a Bath-based money advice magazine has found that more than half of people on lower incomes feel frightened, anxious or depressed because of money worries. That's why we teamed up with mental health professionals in B&NES to support World Mental Health Day.



MAX THE CASH, LOWER THE BURDEN

Whether in work or not, could you increase your income and reduce those money worries weighing heavy on your mind?

Money worries impact our wellbeing so what more can we do?

A better job may help but billions of pounds of benefits also go unclaimed each year even when people struggle with mounting costs and spiralling debt. Many, including people in work and pensioners, do not realise they can claim.

CLAIM YOUR DUES

Nationally, the average unclaimed Housing Benefit is £58-64 per week. Tax credits (for working people) could benefit non-claimers by £48 (Working Tax Credit) and £71 (Child Tax Credit). Pension Credits and out of work benefits were also left in government coffers.

Use an online benefits calculator, like entitledto.co.uk, to check what we're, erm, entitled to. Advice agencies in B&NES can help make an application.

WORK OFF THE STRESS

If we're unemployed or in a job that isn't right for us, help across B&NES is available. Having control and security (and more money) will boost our wellbeing no end.

The Work Development Team at Virgin Care takes referrals of people who are in work or looking for work but need support with their mental wellbeing. Suzanne Morys from the team shared this advice:

"Securing employment or changing your job while supporting health concerns can be complicated. Support tailored to your needs could include help with an action plan to keep you motivated towards your goals. This can make a big difference, it's like career mentoring.

"Take the individual approach, don't just upload your CV to websites. Target the place you want to work and find out about the company. Look on companies' websites

"Don't just upload your CV to websites"

as not all employers advertise through job sites.

"Spend time investing in your skills. Volunteering can demonstrate to an employer your commitment and that they should hire you."

HEAR FROM PEERS

People who struggled to find work themselves in the past are actually employed by Bath-based Clean Slate Training & Employment to help others in that position now. It offers drop-in support across B&NES and a training programme to explore "the 7 Signs that show you're right for the job".

■ See page 4 for a list of contact details.

HOW ANXIETY CAN START IN THE WORKPLACE

[Money worries are a common cause of stress, anxiety and other health issues, so how do the local employment stats stack up?](#)

Research carried out by *Quids in!*, the money management magazine, found that people who are working age and not in full-time employment are at particular risk of mental and physical illness and that because of money worries:

44% More than two in five were skipping meals
51% More than half were turning off heating despite being cold



MORE THAN THE MONEY

While money and the right job are part of the equation, having a supportive workplace – and boss – can keep us on an even keel

There is ‘doing the right thing’ and then there is ‘doing the legal minimum’. The best employers make sure their staff are fully supported, others do the least they can get away with. Many, though, do not understand the law when it comes to wellbeing in the workplace.

Just knowing our rights and where to go if they’re not being respected at least offers a little peace of mind.

WHAT LAW WHERE?

The Equality Act became law in October 2010. It ensures employers and employees know what to do to make workplaces fair. It is increasingly recognised that mental illness should be dealt with just like physical illness and so, at a point, it can be considered a disability.

An employer is required to consider making ‘reasonable adjustments’ for staff or job applicants who are in anyway disabled by a health condition. This could mean a desk near a window for someone with vision problems or, say, flexible hours for someone with a mental health issue. They may not be able to meet our needs but if they don’t even consider it, they could end up in an Employment Tribunal.

Bosses should think about reasonable adjustments as soon as they become aware of someone’s disability or if



“An employer is required to consider making ‘reasonable adjustments’ for staff or job applicants”

to help employees or job applicants with a disability or health problem, so long as it does not discriminate against other people.

Many employers believe a more diverse workforce creates a better working environment for everyone. ‘Lived experience’ can sometimes be a benefit to employers, for instance if their customers have similar needs.

In Bath and North East Somerset, SARI offers support to anyone who feels they have

someone has difficulty with their job. An employee’s sickness record should trigger the question to be asked too. If they do not make or even consider adjustments, and if it discriminates against disabled people, they must robustly prove that their business would be harmed if they did.

Good employers can level the playing field by taking what the law terms ‘positive action’

been discriminated against. ACAS has the ‘go to’ website for anything to do with your rights in the workplace.

■ See page 4 for contact details.



‘The Two Ticks scheme help employers show they are positive about disability. Look for the logo in job ads.

58% Almost three in five felt frightened, anxious or depressed

28% While almost a third felt physically ill

Luckily, in Bath and North East Somerset, there are relatively good employment levels but not everyone is in reliable, full-time work. There are also other factors affecting the financial pressure local people are under:

79% The working age population is 116,000 and four in five are earning some form of income - the highest for B&NES since 2005

10% Average wages are 10 per cent lower than the national average

43% Almost half of workers, however, do not have full-time jobs

14% And more than one in ten people is self-employed, which is higher than the national average, and means more stress and uncertainly about money

40% House prices are 40% higher than the national average

The cost of providing mental health services in B&NES is £32m, largely in line with national and regional averages.

WELLBEING AT WORK

Anyone can find work stressful at times, so what can we do to keep ourselves on top?

Bath Mind provides a range of support for people with mental health issues, including home visits, group activities and benefits advice. Here are their 5 Top Tips to Wellbeing in the Workplace:

1 BREATHE. If you start to feel anxious, just stop. Take a moment. Gather your thoughts. What is making you anxious? Can you deal with it now or park it for later?

2 BE MINDFUL of what gets you down and perks you up. Try to do the right thing at home, to help you cope at work. Eat right, drink water and take lots of exercise, which is good for both body and mind. If it doesn't work for you, avoid alcohol

3 PLAN TO COPE WITH STRESS. Pressure can help us perform but if unmanaged, it can get on top of us. Keep a list of what you need to do and take it step by step. If it looks like it cannot be done in the time you have, prioritise essential things and ask for help. **Always take breaks,** don't soldier on.

4 DISTRACT YOURSELF with a book, some relaxing music or a quick walk.

Be clear of your boundaries between work and home, do not take work home with you

5 ASK FOR HELP. Try to be open with colleagues, if you can. They'll probably want to support you, even if you only say 'I'm struggling a bit today'. If things are getting in the way of your performance at work, it can cause more stress if you don't now open up to your boss. They have a duty of care to you

ASKING FOR HELP

It is hard to know when to disclose a mental health problem to an employer. When applying? After being appointed? Or when a problem comes up?

To a degree, it is more important that it's when you're ready but the law, (the Equality Act 2010), is clear on barring employers from asking about health issues during any part of the recruitment process, except in rare circumstances where it is relevant for them to know. They can ask about someone's sickness history, for example, but only if and when they've been offered the job. See page 3 for what you should be able to expect from a good employer (and if you don't have one of those, see above on finding a new job).



If it feels like it's going wrong...

✓ **Talk to someone.** Tell someone you trust about how you're feeling, you don't have to deal with this alone. If you don't have anyone right now, call the Samaritans on 01225 460888

✓ **Contact one of the organisations** listed below. Even if they can't help, they will know someone who can.

✓ **It's ok to feel rotten,** all of us do at some point. You can take 'time out', book a break or go and do something else you enjoy more.

QUIDS IN! USEFUL NUMBERS

MENTAL HEALTH

There are a number of services on offer but some are by referral only, so your first port of call might be your GP. A list of some services and activities on offer can be found at qimag.uk/mhbanes17

• Bath Mind offers a range of support including group activities, home visits, and advice on benefits and housing. Contact: ☎ **01225 316199** or admin@bathmind.org.uk

• Young people can find support and advice at Off the Record. ☎ **01225 312381**, text **07753 891745** or email office@offtherecord-banes.co.uk

• Affordable, person-centred counselling is available from Focus Counselling. ☎ **01225 330096** or email office@focusbath.com

• For people really struggling to cope, contact Samaritans on ☎ **116 123** or jo@samaritans.org. (www.samaritans.org)

WELLBEING AT WORK

• Clean Slate offers drop-in services across B&NES to people thinking about finding work or a job that better suits their needs. They also direct people to help with benefits and legal support. FFI: ☎ **01225 302200**, email bath@cleanslateltd.co.uk or visit www.cleanslateltd.co.uk.

BENEFITS

• For unemployment and work-related benefits talk to Jobcentre Plus.

• People with disabilities or carers should contact the Disability Benefits Centre (☎ **0345 605 6055**) and for Child Benefit and tax credits call Inland Revenue (☎ **0845 300 3900**).

• Council Tax and Housing Benefit are dealt with by B&NES council. Call **01225 477777**, email enquiries@bathnes.gov.uk or visit

www.bathnes.gov.uk

• Pensioners should call the Pensions Service (☎ **0800 99 12340**).

• Free benefits calculator www.entitledto.co.uk

ADVICE AND YOUR RIGHTS

• Citizens Advice provide help for everyday problems from employment to housing and debt. Call **0344 848 7919** or visit www.citizensadvicebanes.org.uk

• Reach offers practical and emotional support around housing issues. Call **01225 422156**, email info@dhireach.org.uk or visit <http://qimag.uk/reachbath>

• SARI offers local support and advice if you feel you have been discriminated against. For more information, see www.sariweb.org.uk

• For information on your rights in the workplace, visit the ACAS website on www.acas.org.uk