

TALKBACK

Your supporter magazine from the Mental Health Foundation

January 2020

Making Prevention Happen



Mental Health
Foundation





Dear Supporter,

Welcome to your first Talkback for 2020.

We are proud and excited to announce that we have launched the Mental Health Foundation's new Strategy for 2020-2025, "*Making prevention happen*". Prevention of poor mental health is not only possible, but urgently needed. Our Strategy affirms our commitment to making prevention happen, so that people across the UK can live mentally healthier lives.

In this edition of your Talkback, we will illustrate each of the five strategic aims below by articles and demonstrate how fundraising, policy, research and communications work together with our programmes.

1. **Tell the world** – on page 4 our Director of England and Wales for Research, Programmes and Policy explains why prevention is fundamental to effectively address the mental health crisis.
2. **Find solutions** – learn more about our innovative, universal and targeted evidence-informed community programmes. Read the personal story of Jean Williams who benefited from one of them, *Standing Together Cymru*.
3. **Inform and Empower** – on page 7, find out about our 'human green ribbon' event in London's Trafalgar Square, on World Mental Health Day which demonstrates how we enable mentally healthier lives through public information and engagement.
4. **Change policy and practice** – from community friendly buildings to quality jobs, we have been working with Thrive LDN to improve the factors that influence mental health in the capital. Read more on pages 10-11.
5. **Build a strong Foundation** – we are starting a new corporate partnership with Italian restaurant chain Zizzi which will help us build an organisation which is sustainable and thriving.

This edition's 'A letter to my younger self' is written by the Chief Executive of the Foundation, Mark Rowland.

As the Foundation marked its 70th anniversary in 2019, we also announced the appointment of Jacqui Dyer MBE as our new President whose letter accompanies the Talkback.

Thank you for your continued support.

Kind regards,

Kalina Peresterova, Individual Giving Officer

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A letter to my younger self

Mark Rowland, Chief Executive Mental Health Foundation

One of my first memories growing up in Rwanda was when the village decided to cut down two huge Kapok trees. Just before the trees were felled, someone realised that they were going to land on the chicken coop (and much more importantly, the chickens).

My heart was beating as I watched a man risked his life to rescue the chickens, literally just before the trees destroyed them.

Looking back, so many of my childhood memories centre on moments of drama; the falling kapok trees, getting

run over, falling into a trench of molasses (treacle), getting lost in an airport etc. Those were the moments (and there were quite a few) when my brain was swinging into **flight and fight**.

As I got older, these defining moments tended to be less about danger to my physical body and more about threats to my sense of self and my ego. **That didn't make them any less painful. Quite the opposite.** Being rejected by friends, passed over for promotions and later living through a divorce all felt like existential threats that struck at the core of whether I was of value to the world.

If I could go back, I would say to my younger self, **'hey, the things you fear happening are also the things that will help you grow and that your own sense of value can only come with practice of self-acceptance.'** I would also say 'hey, there is no script you have to follow. You can make it up as you go along and its more interesting that way!'

And that if you keep giving yourself to the present moment, you can loosen the tentacles of anxiety and self-doubt and find the beauty and joy in being alive – even when the trees are falling.'



Making prevention happen

Dr Antonis Kousoulis, Director of England and Wales for Research, Programmes and Policy

Our new Strategy makes it clear that prevention should be a priority when it comes to addressing the unacceptably high rates of mental health problems in our communities.



Biological factors

To achieve prevention, we need to understand what are the factors that lead to poor mental health. Even if we look at the biological changes among those of us who experience symptoms, it is important to ask what causes those. In some cases, it will be our stress levels, a chronic experience of discrimination, a lack of exercise or sleep, unhealthy eating habits, or an experience of trauma.

Psychological factors

And, in turn, we have to ask: What makes us stressed? What increases the chances that we'll be discriminated against? What shapes our opportunities to be active or sleep well? What determines our choices of what we eat? What exposes us to a higher chance of experiencing trauma?

The answers lie in the circumstances in which we are born, grow, live, work and age. These either enable us to thrive, or not. So, beyond our genes, our mental health is fundamentally shaped by two sets of circumstances:

- 1) **The deeply personal experiences that define us. Our mental health can be influenced by our family, our relationships and how we see ourselves.**
- 2) **The social circumstances we find ourselves in. This includes poverty, violence, our education and employment.**

The interaction of our biology and circumstances is key to our health. It can either protect our mental health or be a risk to it. However, there are factors affecting this interaction that are not controlled by us as individuals and instead come from our environment.

Environmental factors

These are conditions in which we are born, grow, live, work and age, shaped by our social and physical contexts and health services. These, in turn, are affected by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels.

Social factors

These are things such as income and wealth, family and household structure, social support and isolation, education, occupation, discrimination, neighbourhood conditions, and social institutions. **Mental health is complex.** There is not, nor will there be, any biomedical test that can predict what combination of personal history and current circumstances determines a person's unique state of wellbeing.

Hence, at the Foundation we are focusing on one integrated model of mental health that understands the **biological, psychological, environmental and social factors together.** Opportunities for protection of our mental health lie within those factors and understanding these is the cornerstone to starting to achieve the critical mission of reducing the number and severity of mental health problems.



Our work with Barnardo's

Robyn Millar,
Research & Evaluation Officer –
Barnardo's

The Mental Health Foundation Scotland, alongside the University of Strathclyde, have been appointed as the evaluation and learning partners for a programme of work, funded by Barnardo's, that addresses mental health and wellbeing in children and young people in three localities across the UK (North Tyneside, Renfrewshire, and South Eastern Trust, Northern Ireland).

Through this programme, Barnardo's have the goal of redesigning services for children & young people and supporting the transformation of whole systems in local areas, primarily through encouraging new ways of working. These include working collaboratively with a range of partners from health, education, local government, the third sector, and with children, young people, and families, in what Barnardo's have called 'strategic partnerships'.

The overall aim of this work is to transform systems to focus on early intervention and prevention so that the risk factors influencing children & young people's mental health and wellbeing are minimised and their resilience maximised. The first stages of our evaluation work will be speaking to those closely involved in the

creation of the strategic partnerships to understand how those have been developed, what they aim to achieve in each of the local contexts, and how they have engaged with children, young people, and parents.

From there, we hope to engage more closely with children, young people, and families to help us design, conduct, and disseminate this evaluation work. Moreover, a large part of this work will involve closely engaging with those steering the strategic partnerships in order to ensure that the emerging findings of the evaluation inform practice.

This is an exciting piece of work which we hope will support positive changes in local systems working to support children and young people across the UK.

Jean Williams' story

Standing Together Cymru

Standing Together Cymru (STC) is the Peer Support project for people in later life delivered across South East Wales. One of the project participants Jean Williams, was part of her scheme's STC group for six months earlier this year. Jean has been speaking to the STC team about her involvement with the project and the effect it had on her life.

"(STC) helped me talk about things that I hadn't spoken to people living here before. I opened up more..."

Jean has lived experience of a long-term controlling relationship. During one group session she shared details of this period in her life. It was the first time she had spoken about this with other residents in the scheme. Jean also witnessed others in the group share poignant moments from their lives, which she found both enlightening and emotional.

"It's made us more friends than neighbours"

Jean enjoyed talking about things outside of everyday conversations. Talks in STC groups delve deeper into people's lives. Jean feels people better understand her since she was able to talk about her life and feels she better understands the others in the group too. By talking about things, they wouldn't usually discuss together, Jean feels they have become closer.

"Things I said here I wouldn't say outside the group to anybody else in the complex"



The level of trust within the group was important to Jean. She felt safe and comfortable to talk about things she wouldn't usually choose to share. Jean found it interesting learning about others in the group too; she has learnt new things about people she has been living with for many years.

Research indicates feelings of loneliness and isolation could play a major role in the problems older people are facing. Nearly three-quarters of older people (72%) think that having more opportunities to connect with other people (e.g. joining local activity groups) would be the best way to help people who are experiencing mental health problems.

World Mental Health Day

Rachel Baird, Media Officer

How do we help people to feel hopeful about preventing suicide? That's what we asked ourselves in the run up to World Mental Health Day on 10th October, the theme of which was suicide prevention.

Part of the answer, we decided, was to show people how they personally can help. Because even though it might seem like something best left to professionals, the truth is that we can all make a difference. Essentially, it's about showing an interest in how other people are really doing. And being open to the possibility that they are struggling.

Our research suggests that around one-in-three people have felt suicidal at some point in their life. So it is a pretty common experience. To show how everyone can help with suicide prevention, we produced the WAIT graphic below and unveiled it at our 'human green ribbon' event in London's Trafalgar Square, on World Mental Health Day.



We and many others shared the graphic on social media. It was also published by some media organisations, including Huffington Post.



In Wales and Scotland, we marked World Mental Health Day by projecting giant images of the green ribbon onto prominent buildings in Cardiff and Glasgow respectively. In Glasgow, the projections included messages about suicide awareness and prevention.

You may worry that asking a person if they're feeling suicidal will put the idea into their head. **But be reassured: asking about suicide makes it less, not more likely to happen.**

For someone who is feeling desperate enough to contemplate taking their own life, it is an enormous relief to be able to talk about how they really feel.

Our Chief Executive Mark Rowland lost his brother Daniel to suicide. He now asks friends if they have had suicidal thoughts.

"If asking about suicidal thoughts became a normal part of our cultural exchanges – like putting on a seatbelt – I think hundreds if not thousands of lives would be saved," he says.



Increasing reach through new partnership

Chris O'Sullivan & Berta Nuredini, Corporate Partnerships Team

Our new strategy “Making Prevention Happen” includes a commitment to build a strong Foundation – building the systems and structures that allow us to grow as a charity, reach more people, and enable our people to thrive at work.

At the heart of our work to expand our fundraising and engagement is an expansion of our corporate partnerships programme. Through our work with business, we look to achieve three things – **Income, Impact, and Insight.**

We are delighted to work with partners that want to raise money for us through staff activities and reaching out to customers – but our interests are deeper than that. Our partnerships also enable us to get our message to staff, to customers and to the communities the business serves.

We spend a third or more of our life at work – workplaces have a key role to play in protecting and improving our mental health. We're delighted that partnerships often enable companies to start a mental

health programme for staff, that can include adapting our evidence-based content, and bringing in the training and development programmes we offer directly and through Mental Health at Work, our thriving subsidiary that specialises in delivering tailored programmes to high pressure businesses. This January sees the launch of a major new charity partnership with Zizzi Italian restaurants.

Zizzi is one of the most-loved Italian restaurants with over 160 restaurants across the UK & Ireland that welcome 10 million customers a year. The company employs nearly 40,000 people across the restaurants and the head office.

Zizzi wanted to partner with a mental health charity – and they were drawn

to the focus we have on prevention and the potential to reach out to customers and staff with an inclusive message on mental health as something we all have.

‘We were looking for a partnership that would be meaningful to everyone and enable us to not only raise money for a worthwhile cause but also really engage our teams. Mental health can affect everyone in some way or another and we want to ensure we support our employees in achieving good mental health. We are really excited at how the partnership will enhance and support our wellbeing strategy and we are planning some fun and inclusive events to raise funds for the foundation. Our aim is to raise £1 million for the Mental Health Foundation over the next three years.’

Ruth Jackson, Zizzi People Director

As Ruth says, we’re planning a lot of exciting things with Zizzi – developing a programme of internal activities with staff both in fundraising and mental health awareness, and a programme of activities with customers.

At the core of the partnership will be the opportunity for every customer the option to donate 25p to the Foundation as part every card transaction, working with Pennies, the digital charity box, who have pioneered the technology to process this kind of donation. This feature went live in October 2019 and we have already had over 60,000 donations through scheme – each one an opportunity to bring the charity to a new person who could benefit.

Zizzi

INDIVIDUALLY ITALIAN



Zizzi staff are going to benefit from tailored versions of our publications, and content for their staff app. We’ll be working with them to bring the green ribbon to staff and customers and supporting the HR team as they develop a staff wellbeing programme.

We’ll be connecting Zizzi restaurants across the UK to fundraise, allowing them to compete to raise the most money while sharing stories of personal commitment and daring along the way. As a UK wide charity, it’s great to be able to work with a truly national business like this.

Zizzi will also be supporting us in kind, inviting some of those involved in our programmes to come and enjoy a meal, and supporting some of our events catering. Zizzi gives its customers opportunities to share a meal with people that matter – and we’re excited about the potential for the partnership. You can support us by enjoying a meal and by clicking yes when invited to donate as you pay.



Leisure centre rebuild shows we can construct thriving communities

Edward Davie – Communities Lead

From community friendly buildings to quality jobs the Mental Health Foundation has been working with Thrive LDN to improve the factors that influence mental health in the capital.

Our health is influenced by three main factors: genes, environment and social determinants such as poverty and inequality.

As a community we can influence the environment and social determinants making it more or less likely that someone, even those with a high genetic risk, develops symptoms. For example, a person might be born with a heightened genetic risk for developing schizophrenia but if they are lovingly parented in a well-resourced nurturing environment, they are less likely to become unwell than a person with the same genes who has a harsher start in life.

So, when Thrive LDN, a partnership between the Mayor of London, London Councils, NHS England and Public Health



England, asked the Foundation to support them to try and change these factors in the capital we grabbed the chance.

Using 30 different indicators like poverty and crime rates, the Foundation began by mapping the comparative environmental and social determinant risks across the 32 London boroughs.

We found that seven boroughs clustered around the former docking and industrial areas of the East End had the highest risk factors. Working with Thrive LDN and the local borough public health teams we organised Community Conversations

bringing together residents and services to hear the evidence for what supports healthier communities and listen to people's ideas on how to make improvements.

In all we spoke with over 1,000 Londoners in 16 different Boroughs collecting 180 pages of ideas we published as the Londoners Said Report. Conversation participants were sent feedback and asked to try and make the changes suggested.

Nearly two years later we followed-up to find out what, if anything, had changed as a result of the conversations. We surveyed and interviewed the public health organisers and collected electronic survey returns from 10% of everyone who had participated.

We found that large numbers of participants had learned useful information, forged productive relationships and made positive changes. As a result of the conversations people had volunteered, created new jobs and support services in their areas. Health and wellbeing, suicide reduction and inequality strategies were

changed to reflect the feedback resulting in improvements to services and the factors influencing mental health.

In one, almost literally concrete example plans for a new leisure centre were changed by feedback from the Hackney Community Conversation where participants said they wanted more free, safe community space. As a result Hackney Council changed its planning guidance and subsequently the Britannia design of a new leisure centre, currently under construction, will now have more 'pro-social' space in the finished building than originally planned.

Through our research, sharing and relationship building Mental Health Foundation has been able to improve some of the environmental and social determinants in half of all the London Boroughs, home to about four million people including some of those most at risk of developing mental ill health. It is learning and an approach we now want to share across the UK so that more of us can thrive regardless of our genes or where we live.



SITUATE project

**Students In Transition at University:
Aiming To Enhance mental
and social health and wellbeing**

Katrina Jenkins, Project Manager

Led by the University of Sussex and delivered in partnership with the Mental Health Foundation, the SITUATE project will develop and provide a programme of activities which promote positive mental health and wellbeing of higher education students.

This project was developed in response to the need for young adults to have information and strategies that they can use to protect and sustain their mental health as they adjust to post-school study and work. It will focus on college students and university students, particularly on first year undergraduates who are experiencing the important transition into adulthood and higher education.

Sustainability

The overarching aim of the project is to produce a sustainable, best practice model for the higher education sector which supports students and promotes positive mental health and wellbeing outcomes. Key outcomes include enhancing mental health literacy and the development of healthy coping strategies for maintaining positive mental health throughout university life.

The Mental Health Foundation's highly successful Peer Education Project in secondary schools will be adapted for a higher education setting, utilising the strengths of peer-led education and mental health literacy programmes to promote positive mental health outcomes



for university students. The Mental Health Foundation will also be working with students to develop a series of campaign messages for delivery on social media to enhance mental health literacy across the wider student cohort, and to enhance student engagement with the project co-design and delivery of activities. The SITUATE project will run for two years and will be delivered on the University of Sussex campus, in addition to a number of local colleges in Brighton.

Resilience

75% of adults with mental health problems experienced the first onset of symptoms before the age of 24. Young adults also show lower rates of help-seeking and cite a lack of confidence and worries of being judged as reasons behind their reluctance to seek help for mental health needs when they arise. University students' mental health is often impacted by the experience of multiple transitions, such as changing home environments, moving away from friends and family, and the need for increased self-reliance.

Mental health problems at university are increasing and mental health services on campus are reportedly oversubscribed, indicating a strong case for prevention of difficulties before they arise, and the need for early intervention for those students who do experience mental health difficulties whilst at university.

Peer Education Project

Helen Bohan, Project Manager

The Peer Education Project continues to grow nationwide. Since the launch of the project's dedicated website in Spring 2019, getting involved has become much easier for participating schools – schools can sign up, book onto staff training, access all the project materials and order printed workbooks all in one place.

The PEP website also provides a hub of useful resources to support the project. We are increasingly supporting schools to use PEP as a starting point for a whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing.

In addition to our tried and tested face-to-face sessions, since Summer 2019 we have been offering staff training via webinar. The webinar training option allows school staff to access these online sessions from wherever they are based, reducing the time and travel commitment for those taking part. Staff training sessions are available regularly throughout the year, and we have already set dates for the Spring term.



Over the last year, our team in the Glasgow office have been delivering a pilot of the project in Scotland, to understand how well the project works in Scottish schools. The pilot, which is now coming to a close, has been very well received by both students and staff. In the new year, we hope to strengthen our presence in schools in Scotland, with a staff training session in Glasgow already arranged for February.

In recent weeks, the project team has been busy reviewing the core project materials with young people to ensure they are as up to date as possible. The review also allows us to act upon the evaluation feedback we have received from the 2018-2019 cohort of schools and the pilot project in Scotland. A new and updated set of project materials will be rolled out in Spring 2020.



To find out more about the project or get involved, you can go to pep.mentalhealth.org.uk or email schools@mentalhealth.org.uk



A day in North Wales

a new partnership

Jenny Burns, Programme Lead Wales

‘Bore da’ said the receptionist as my colleague Nicole and I step into some council offices in North Wales. We both quickly realised that English was not her first language and Welsh was not ours.

Having got up at the crack of dawn, leapt onto a small plane and descended over the glorious mountains of Snowdonia, we felt like we were in a different country.

We sat in our first meeting on Anglesey looking across at Caernarfon Castle where many a battle had been fought in the past, but today we were joining forces with Gwynedd County Youth Services to fight a different battle – that of the mental wellbeing for the young people in the area.

They had commissioned us to be a critical friend for eight months to the current youth services, looking at what they were doing to build resilience for young people’s mental health. Gwynedd has the

second largest land area in Wales but the population of 125,000 are often remote.

Tourism is the front running economy, but farming is also an important identity for many. The Welsh language is spoken fluently by 83% of the population.

As we discussed and built rapport with our new partners over the day, designed our work with them and listened attentively to the ‘Wenglish’ being spoken, we quickly recognised the impact this work could have. As Nicole and I flew back into Cardiff that evening, we felt excited to join these impassioned few in their quest.

... to be continued.

Manchester Marathon

Join 25,000 runners and take on the Manchester Marathon on Sunday 5th April 2020 for the Mental Health Foundation.

Take part in the UK's fastest, flattest and friendliest major marathon to help us prevent poor mental health for current and future generations.

Take on the challenge and sign up here: mentalhealth.org.uk/get-involved/manchester-marathon



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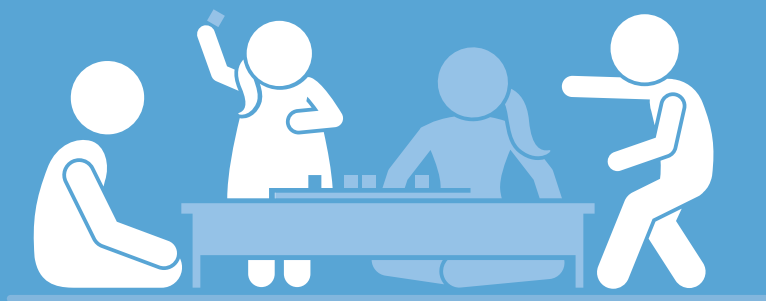


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75% of adults with mental health problems experienced the first onset of symptoms before the age of 24.



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Take part in a challenge event or hold your own fundraising event:

mentalhealth.org.uk/get-involved

Keep up to date with our work: **mentalhealth.org.uk/newsletter**



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