

MAINTAINING A HEALTHY MIND

FUNDED BY: The Healthy Minds programme is funded by Greets Green Partnership and sponsored by Sandwell Primary Care Trust (PCT). It works in partnership with Sandwell Mind.

PROJECT BACKGROUND: The Healthy Minds programme in Greets Green was launched to improve support in the community for vulnerable people with mental health needs, reduce depression and cycles of despair and raise awareness of mental ill-health in order to address the stigma associated with it.

This was a key priority within the overall Health Theme plans for 2005-2010 for Greets Green Partnership, which sought to improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life for residents. One in four people in Britain will experience some sort of mental health problem in their life. Research confirmed an established



Local women enjoyed an eight week course of laughter yoga thanks to a grant from the Healthy Minds Community Fund.

local need and gaps in mental health provision and awareness in Greets Green, particularly in relation to community-based access to support, early interventions and signposting to services.

The Healthy Minds project was therefore, launched with the long term aim of enabling individuals, families and communities within Greets Green to become mentally healthier. It also prioritises mental health promotion activities to address inequalities in health, through work directed at vulnerable and socially excluded individuals and groups.

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PROJECT DETAILS: Mental health issues range from the everyday worries and stresses that we can all experience to the diagnosis of serious long-term conditions. Mental health problems can affect us all even if we do not have a medical diagnosis.

Good mental health or 'wellbeing' is not just the absence of mental illness – it's the ability for someone to function in a number of ways:

- By learning
- By feeling, expressing and managing positive and negative emotions
- By forming and maintaining good relationships with others
- By coping with, and managing, change and uncertainty

People often recognise that they're not coping on a daily basis or are experiencing difficulties, but may not realise that they're actually anxious or depressed. Raising awareness of these issues can help people to acknowledge that they, or someone they know, may have a problem. This can be the first step to recovery.

The majority of people who are diagnosed with a mental health issue are experiencing 'neurotic' symptoms which include illnesses like depression, anxiety, panic attacks and phobias. These are often known as 'common mental health problems'. Triggers for these conditions may include bereavement, divorce or separation, redundancy, pregnancy, personal injury or illness, bullying or stress at work. Low self-esteem or lack of self-confidence can often contribute to how a person may be feeling and how they cope.

The Healthy Minds project aims to achieve its key aims by:

- Preventing, promoting and addressing the mental and emotional health and wellbeing of Greets Green residents through earlier detection of issues
- Raising awareness of the local services available to support and help
- Promoting mental health and wellbeing through events and group support

It does this by working with a range of partners to implement a co-ordinated community-based outreach programme to support individuals and groups. This complements existing work and builds on good practice, as well as providing opportunities to pilot new approaches. The framework for the project took into account key population groups (children and families with under 5s; children and young people aged 5-21; adults and older people over 50), responding to need, and providing specialist targeted support where required.

Areas for specialist focus and support included black and minority ethnic communities, carers, domestic abuse, drugs and alcohol, learning disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, newly arrived communities, and the workplace.



Underpinned by community development and empowerment through an outreach approach, action taken by the programme is designed to:

- Improve access to support, ranging from speedier referral for crisis intervention to befriending, support groups, advice and counselling
- Raise awareness among professionals, local people, schools and communities of mental health and signposting to services
- Provide training and development for professionals, volunteers and residents
- Improve partnership working and co-ordination
- Enable information sharing with residents and between agencies

A multi-agency Healthy Minds Core Steering Group was established to oversee the implementation of the programme. This was supported and informed by a multi-agency Healthy Minds Full Working Group which was established to incorporate wider consultation.

Julie Davies was appointed Greets Green Healthy Minds Co-ordinator to lead the project on the ground, and the first year proved such a success that a new volunteer, Joanna Tweed, was subsequently recruited to assist.

ACHIEVEMENTS: The Healthy Minds Programme has made a significant contribution towards raising awareness about mental health issues in Greets Green, both among professionals and the public, and towards improving the provision of, and access to, services.

Healthy Minds Co-ordinator, Julie Davies, said: “The Healthy Minds Programme has been raising awareness and reducing the stigma around mental health at local events and network meetings. Information and advice has been available to local people and professionals.”

“This has made it easier for people to discover and access support services. Networking at local meetings has also encouraged partnership working with other agencies.” Maintaining positive mental health can help everyone to stay well and the Healthy Minds Programme has been promoting the following messages:

- Don't be isolated – talk about your worries and problems
- Keep your brain and mind active – learn something new
- Take some regular exercise
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet
- Be creative
- Get plenty of sleep
- Get involved; volunteer or help others



Julie Davies, Healthy Minds Co-ordinator, with the Healthy Minds Directory which aims to make it easier for people to access the correct support services when they need them.



- Set achievable goals
- Focus on the positive aspects of life
- Accept yourself

To this end, the Healthy Minds Programme has seen a whole variety of initiatives in Greets Green, ranging from promoting mental health through exercise, food awareness and complementary therapy sessions, to funding stress management initiatives in the workplace and supporting young people.

Its varied work has tackled all the key aims originally set out for the programme.

PROJECT IN ACTION: The variety of initiatives successfully undertaken by the Healthy Minds

Programme, ranging from grassroots schemes in the community to working with professionals in the field, have included:

- Producing a directory of services containing contact details of local and national support agencies and organisations which promote good mental health and wellbeing. More than 2,500 copies have already been distributed in the local area. The directory aims to make it easier for people to access the correct support services when they need them
- Delivering taster sessions of complementary therapies to local community groups, including relaxation and aromatherapy. These give individuals a chance to experience how complementary therapies can help to promote physical and mental wellbeing
- Delivering stress awareness and wellbeing sessions to local community groups to help people become more aware of their own stress levels and how to manage them
- Launching a monthly Self-Help Bereavement Group which allows individuals to come along for a drink, share experiences and access support and information
- Taking the lead in arranging Wellbeing events to celebrate World Mental Health Day in October 2007 and 2008. Both were held at West Bromwich Town Hall and attracted more than 250 people. The events included displays, stalls and refreshments, plus a number of workshops in African Drumming, Relaxation, Baby Massage, Food and Mood, Creative Writing and Tai Chi
- Funding the Head2Head young persons' counselling service to set up the Place2Place project. This helps young people going through the transition from primary to secondary school in Greets Green by making support, workshops and counselling available to pupils and their parents



Julie Davies with Healthy Minds volunteer, Joanna Tweed.

- Linking in to Sandwell PCTs 'Depression' and 'Anxiety' self-help booklets which enable people to use positive thinking and self-help to manage their feelings. A total of 1,000 copies have been distributed to local GPs
- Making available funding for Sandwell Mind to deliver mental health / wellbeing awareness training throughout the community.

In addition, the Healthy Minds Consultative Working Group is to be taken over and mainstreamed by Sandwell Mind and will provide a networking facility for mental health organisations throughout Sandwell. This will promote good practice, partnership working and information-sharing.

Finally, various community groups have been awarded grants of up to £500 from the Healthy Minds Community Fund to help with local, grassroots wellbeing projects. The funding for these projects has now come to an end but have covered a whole range of initiatives and in some instances, the work will be continuing. Community pilots included:

- The development of a stress-management training and a policy for employees at local company, William King
- Sandwell Mind running 'Food and Mood' and 'Wellbeing' workshop sessions for local people
- Egyptian Dancing and Yoga sessions to improve the health, wellbeing and confidence of local women
- Funding painting equipment for a local social/art group for older people called Paintbox at Lodge Road Community Centre
- Providing 'Extend' gentle exercise classes for older people at the local Hindu community centre
- 'Ladz to Ladiez' and 'Geezer to Gents' classes to help George Salter Collegiate Academy's male and female pupils with self confidence and self esteem by teaching them everything from self-defence/boxing, first aid, climbing and salsa dancing
- Equipment to promote relaxation and wellbeing at Aquarius



The Healthy Minds programme took the lead in arranging Wellbeing events at the Town Hall.

CASE STUDIES

Residents Get Creative

A group of enthusiastic amateur artists get together every Monday at Lodge Road Community Centre to be creative and enjoy a relaxing chat. Paintbox is the name of the group, and they have recently been awarded a grant of £500



from the Healthy Minds Community Fund to run a project which promotes wellbeing. Maureen Neale runs the group which is mainly, but not entirely, made up of older people and those with disabilities.

Maureen said: "We help each other and give those new to the group a few pointers. Each of us has a little skill so when anybody comes along we support them and see what they can do and we work together as a team. It's a friendly atmosphere and we always have a cup of tea and a biscuit."

Maureen said although the group are only amateurs they work in different art forms, including pencil drawing, acrylics and watercolours, and paint subjects such as still lifes and portraits. People who come along pay just £1 a session towards the hire of the room. The £500 grant has also helped pay for easels and materials.



Members of the Paintbox group at work.

Maureen adds: "We're trying to encourage more people to come along. In the future we're hoping to be able to pay for an artist to come and give us some more tips."

Learning to Relax

One of the targets of the Healthy Minds Programme has been to give local people an introduction to complementary therapies. This has been done by engaging with a variety of community groups to run 15 minute 'taster sessions' where individuals can try therapeutic massage.

Also known as 'Swedish Massage', therapeutic massage is suitable for most people and has been found to improve circulation, stretch ligaments and tendons, assist the release of toxins from the muscles and reduce physical and mental tension. People often feel a sense of calmness afterwards and conditions like depression, stress and anxiety can be improved. A whole range of people in Greets Green have been enjoying the benefits of therapeutic massage with the Healthy Minds Programme running sessions with elderly groups, young parents, carers and people with learning disabilities.

Pat Briscoe, Manager of Ryder's Green Day Centre, said: "The sessions were thoroughly enjoyed by all who took part and they felt it was very beneficial to their mental and physical health.'



Local employee, Anne Thomas, said: “The session was very helpful. It was quite good for me as I can get very tense.”

Call in for a Cuppa!

Residents across Greet's Green have been invited to call in for a cuppa at Lodge Road Community Centre where the Healthy Minds Programme is funding a drop-in service.

Run by Aquarius in partnership with the programme, the service is completely confidential and enables residents to gain information on alcohol awareness, wellbeing awareness and healthy minds, as well as general support and advice.

“It’s also a valuable chance for people to meet others and just have a friendly chat,” explains Julie Davies, Healthy Minds Co-ordinator. The service runs on a fortnightly basis on Mondays between 2.00 - 4.00pm.

FACTS & FIGURES: The World Health Organisation states: “There is no health without mental health. Mental health is central to the human, social and economic capital of nations and should, therefore, be considered as an integral and essential part of other public policy areas such as human rights, social care, education and employment.

“Mental health and mental wellbeing are fundamental to the quality of life and productivity of individuals, families, communities and nations, enabling people to experience life as meaningful, creative and active citizens.”

- One in four people in Britain will experience some sort of mental health problem in their lifetime
- One in 10 children and young people in Britain aged 5-15 are suffering from behavioural, emotional or hyperactivity disorders. One in five are experiencing a range of less severe mental health problems which affect their daily lives. These figures are much higher in cities and deprived areas
- Mental wellbeing protects physical health and improves outcomes and recovery times for coronary heart disease, stroke and diabetes
- Poor mental health increases the risk of poor physical health and is associated with poor self management of chronic illness, along with damaging behaviours such as smoking, drug and alcohol abuse, unwanted pregnancy and poor diet
- Sandwell’s prevalence of mental ill health is low compared to that of England - 0.67% in Sandwell and 0.71% in England. However, levels of depression are higher - 7.3% in Sandwell and 6.5% in England
- Smethwick, Tipton and West Bromwich have the highest prevalence of newly diagnosed depression, across the Six Towns in Sandwell



Baseline data in 2002 revealed that in Greets Green:

- 3% of the population described themselves as having been a 'very nervous person' in the last four weeks compared to 2% nationally.
- In response to the question - 'Have you felt so down in the dumps in the last four weeks that nothing could cheer you up?' - the percentage of residents answering yes for all, most or some of the time, was higher than the national average. The number of people who had felt 'downhearted or low' was also higher than the national average
- The Healthy Minds programme aimed to reduce the number of people who over the last four weeks had felt so down in the dumps (all, some or most of the time) that nothing could cheer them up from 14% in 2002 to 12% by 2007-08 and to 10% by 2009-10. However, by 2006 this target had already been met with the figure falling to just 4%. This demonstrates not just the good work of the Healthy Minds project, but the success of Greets Green Partnership as a whole in addressing the wider determinants of health

Contact: For further information about the Healthy Minds Programme, contact Julie Davies or Joanna Tweed on 0121 553 7074, or email healthymindsprogramme@hotmail.co.uk

Greets Green Partnership was awarded £56 million in 2000 to deliver a 10 year regeneration programme under the Government's New Deal for Communities (NDC) initiative. It has funded over 340 projects throughout the area, covering community services, crime & community safety, health, housing & urban form and jobs & skills. The Partnership area, which is adjacent to West Bromwich Town Centre, is home to just over 12,400 residents living in 4,900 households.

For permission to publish this case study and to request photographs, please call Brian McKinstrie, Greets Green Partnership's Communications & PR Manager on freephone 0800 953 0215 or email brian_mckinstrie@sandwell.gov.uk

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