

MENTAL HEALTH CHARTER

NEWS

WELCOME

Welcome to the second edition of our Mental Health Charter News.

With this edition being the last before the Christmas break, we wanted to highlight that this time of the year can be difficult for those who are experiencing poor mental health, grief after bereavement, homelessness, loneliness, domestic abuse and dementia.

This newsletter will be on a bi-monthly distribution and it will carry features, news, information and resources to assist the journey to remove the stigma attached to mental health and improve wellbeing.

As an individual you may find the information personally helpful but you may also be able to use the resources to support someone else or signpost them in the right direction for some support.

This edition does contain some sensitive information.

We hope you find the content useful.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Team.



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Have you signed the Mental Health Charter?

Everyone in the workplace has the right to work in an environment that promotes good mental health and wellbeing.

As an employer and service provider, you should work to create a workplace culture that promotes equality of opportunity and respect for those with mental ill health and provide a positive service to people with mental ill health.

Your goal should be to embed the three Charter Principles in your organisational structure to demonstrate leadership in mental health and wellbeing.

The Mental Health Charter is not a set of quality standards or an accreditation but is a voluntary commitment to developing best practice in the workplace.

SIGN UP HERE

Christmas is not a magical time for all

If an opinion poll were carried out on Christmas, the country would split down the middle, with each half respectively liking and disliking it. And among the 50pc with negative feelings about it, the reasons would be varied.

Some would say it reminds them of their childhood poverty when they had very little; others would say that the religious significance has been overtaken by commercial interests. For others, it's a reminder of the violence that they have suffered as a consequence of excessive alcohol. And the lonely feel more isolated and the unloved more bereft than at any other time of year. So, too, the homeless surely feel forgotten and without hope.

The other half would speak of togetherness, family and children. For those who live in happy families, who are sufficiently provided for financially and are not afflicted by any illness, it can be magical, with a vital sense of belonging and being valued.

So our perception of Christmas is closely tied in with our past memories and our current personal circumstances.

Once the Christmas period is over, the sense of purpose is believed to diminish as life again becomes humdrum and routine.

Marital breakdown also increases in the post-Christmas period as the tension of being in the constant company of one who is no longer loved erupts into arguments and sometimes violence.

Even for the most united of families, this long holiday can, at times, be a duty, especially as there is compelling pressure to be snug and loving with personal space at a premium.

And the Christmas cards are replete with images of tables beautifully decorated in red and trimmed with gold, of children happily playing in the snow or of a young infant surrounded by parents and adoring visitors. These reinforce to our desire to be part of that perfect family. These are potent images and remain etched in our consciousness, even as we age. Christmas is also a time when those who work at breakneck pace during the year are forced out of the workplace as the long recess begins. This is one of its rewards as it affords an opportunity to take stock of values, of life and of our good fortune.

We have the opportunity to contrast it with the plight of those who are destitute, bereaved or ill, but of course, we may choose to avoid such uncomfortable thoughts.

Yet Christmas does not need to be a difficult time, at least for the majority of people. A little forward-planning can significantly reduce the tribulations of losing personal space and can transform it into a time for reflection and renewal.

Many use the transformative power of tragic events to take stock of their lives at this time. In practical terms, a walk in the country or a visit to friends for a few days can ease the tension of being in an intense or suffocating environment, even if we are with those we love.

Instead of binge eating and drinking, saying "yes" to moderation will prevent post-Christmas guilt. We must take care of ourselves, mentally, physically and spiritually. Then we will have the stamina to also offer support to those who are less fortunate than we are in the months ahead.

Support for male victims of domestic abuse

The statistics are stark. One in every six to seven men will be a victim of domestic abuse in their lifetime and that includes many men in Shropshire. But behind every statistic is a real life experience and that is what matters. Everyone matters.

Many men, including those reading this now, do not recognise they are a victim of domestic abuse. That somehow the physical violence, psychological and emotional abuse, living in fear, being regularly humiliated and being controlled so they have no independence is not domestic abuse. The same is said when being deliberately isolated from friends and family.

The key issue is that these behaviours and many more are domestic abuse and there are laws not only to protect men as well as women who suffer from these – the police will take you seriously and also they are support organisations, websites and helplines for you.

Men who are victims of domestic come in all shapes and sizes. We get calls to our helpline from bankers to builders, from chaps who are 5ft6 to 6ft+ rugby player and from those in their early 20's to those in their 80's. There is no identikit type of male victim.

If you are a man suffering from domestic abuse, please call the Mankind Initiative's helpline and speak to our dedicated team who can provide support and information.

National Helpline for Men
01823 334244

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For those men who are going through this or think they may be, please reach out for support. There are anonymous helplines local and nationally who will listen and believe you. West Mercia Police will of course help you too and please reach out to friends, family and work colleagues.

The key is – if you are going through this, you are not weak, you are not to blame and you are not alone. There is help out there.

WEBSITES

Shropshire Domestic Abuse Service -
<https://www.shropsdas.org.uk/services/men>

ManKind Initiative - www.mankind.org.uk



Mark Brooks, OBE
Chairman, Mankind Initiative

A poster with a dark background and a photograph of a man's face. The text on the poster reads: "Are you a man suffering from domestic abuse?" in white and blue. Below that, it says "You are not alone" in white. At the bottom, it states "One in every six men will be a victim of domestic abuse in their lifetime" in white. The ManKind Initiative logo is in the bottom right corner.

Are you a man suffering from domestic abuse?

You are not alone

One in every six men will be a victim of domestic abuse in their lifetime

Please call the ManKind Initiative's helpline and speak to our dedicated team who can provide support and information

National Helpline for Men 01823 334244
Weekdays 10.00am – 4pm
www.mankind.org.uk

ManKind Initiative
Charity Number 1089547

Sam's story - a survivor of domestic abuse

I was with my wife for six years. I used to do everything I could for her. I paid off her debts, paid her bills and paid for her car. But I soon learnt that nothing would ever be enough for her.

The emotional abuse started first. I was very rarely allowed to go anywhere by myself. When I was it would only be to work and even then she would phone me constantly throughout the day. I tried to leave her when this started, but she emotionally blackmailed me to stay by overdosing on tablets; which I later found out she would spit them out under the bed. She would also threaten to hurt any future girlfriends I have so badly that I wouldn't want to be with her.

Optimistically thinking that things could get better between us I proposed to her after two years of being together. This was the biggest mistake of my life- things went dramatically downhill from that moment.

The first time she viciously attacked me was on Good Friday 2008. I don't know why or what provoked her. She ran into the house, grabbed a knife and as soon as I walked in she was attacking me with it. She then grabbed my testicles and twisted them as hard as she could and would not let go. It was excruciatingly painful. To this day I still do not know what caused her to be so violent. She would just snap from nice to nasty in an instant. The violence only got worse from there.

The second time she attacked me, she followed me around the house

punching me in the head, hitting me with a pint glass, knocked me to the floor and proceeded to drop her knee into my head repeatedly. It was ferocious and I genuinely feared for my life.

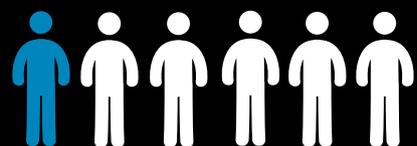
I also remember on another occasion she was punching me in the eye when I was driving around a roundabout, so hard that she bruised her knuckles. I was however later in the wrong for causing the bruising.

The most shocking attack however, happened on our wedding night. She really beat me, kicking and punching me repeatedly. I remember her digging her nails into my cheek, it felt like she was going to rip my cheek off. I managed to get away and ran down the road in bare feet and my wedding suit. I went back because she was threatening to hang herself with my wedding tie. I later got beaten because the cuts on my face ruined our honeymoon pictures.

She was eventually convicted of assault by beating three years ago and given a six month restraining order. She subsequently lost her job as a care assistant. I have been left with a lot of fear and I am constantly on a state of high alert. I am however in the process of explaining my experience to my therapist. I am working on dealing with what happened to me and slowly moving on.

It is a long and difficult process but I know that there is light at the end of the tunnel, and I will not allow her to ruin my future.

One in every six men will be a victim of domestic abuse in their lifetime



Keeping Mental Health on the agenda all year round

World Mental Health Day and the surrounding wellbeing focus may be over for another year, but looking after your team consistently for the other 364 days is just as important.

That's the message from the health and wellbeing specialists at Paycare, who have developed an employer checklist to ensure a continuous focus on the issue.

It comes after 18 months of turmoil have highlighted just how essential a supportive environment, effective policies, and a progressive culture are to the health and happiness of teams and the resulting success of the company.

Kerry B Mitchell, manager at Paycare Wellbeing - a division of the overall not-for-profit organisation, said there were certain actions which should be undertaken as a matter of course by team leaders and managers.

“By regularly checking in on staff, updating wellbeing policies and procedures, and having genuine two-way conversations with their teams, organisations can ensure mental health isn't simply a once-a-year focus but is an integral part of the culture.

“The benefits to individuals are clear, but so too are the benefits for the organisation itself: lower absence rates, less presenteeism, raising team morale, attracting higher quality candidates, and much more.

“That's why we have developed our employer checklist, and why we're here all year round to support team leaders and managers who want to gain knowledge about mental health, or need a helping

hand to support the implementation of new policies and procedures.”

THE CHECKLIST:

At least weekly:

- Are you checking in on your team members? Not just asking 'how are you' as you pass in the corridor, but starting a meaningful conversation (you may need to ask them twice how they are to elicit the real answer) and querying their workload, stress levels and if there's anything you can support them with.
- We could all do something better when it comes to our own wellbeing – and it's important to model good habits yourself. If you're staying late every night, eating lunch at your desk, and not getting enough fresh air then your team may think that's expected of them too – whatever you're telling them. Actions speak louder than words, so regularly analysing the wellbeing behaviours you're modelling for your team and the message that gives out can be really impactful.

At least monthly:

- Depending on the size of the team, appointing a Wellbeing Champion or putting together a Wellbeing Focus Group can greatly assist in ensuring the needs of everyone in the team are put forward. Scheduling regular Wellbeing Group meetings, or one-to-ones with the Wellbeing Champion, means they can put forward any ideas which have come from the team, highlight any areas of concern, and give an opinion on any new policies, practices or workplace benefits you may be thinking of introducing.

- There are so many opportunities when it comes to mental health – whether that’s taking part in webinars or courses, bringing experts in to talk about key wellbeing issues, or putting on sessions centred around relaxation, mindfulness or a related topic. Actively sharing or organising these opportunities again ‘shows’ rather than ‘tells’ staff you care about their health.

Every few months:

- Sharing information within the workplace is a fantastic way of focusing on specific wellbeing topics, highlighting support available to the team, and encouraging an open culture around mental health. Posters can be displayed on restroom doors and in other key places, and information can also be shared on your organisation’s intranet or messaging service for those working from a different location. Changing this information regularly helps keep it current, and at the forefront of the team’s minds.

- While everyone has ‘mental health’, an estimated one in four people struggle with ‘mental ill health’ in any given year. Where people have a diagnosable condition such as bipolar, anxiety, depression, or schizophrenia they may need ongoing support from their workplace to assist them in managing their symptoms. This may vary over time, and so too may any alterations you’ve made to their role or workday to accommodate their needs.

At least yearly:

- Do you have a range of Mental Health First Aiders? While their training may not need to be updated annually, staff

turnover or team members moving into different department may mean more people could do with undertaking training.

- How’s your Workplace Wellbeing Policy looking? Over time, the needs of your team may change and that’s why a watchful eye over your policies is ideal. Through times of transition (like a merger, introduction of remote working, or a restructure for example) it can be even more important to evaluate whether your policy needs updating.

An easy task to tick off your checklist is reading **Paycare’s Workplace Wellbeing Brochure**, which is designed to share a range of policies and practices which would be of benefit to any organisation looking to introduce or strengthen their existing offering.

To read the brochure visit:
www.paycare.org/workplace-wellbeing

PaycareWellbeing

Domestic Abuse and Dementia

There are around 850,00 people living with dementia in the UK. The majority of those people receive social care that is informally delivered by unpaid family members and partners. And those carers usually provide excellent care, love, support and understanding.

But in some relationships the power dynamics can shift and the boundaries between care and control can become blurred, causing distress and sometimes harm to the victim.

For some the Domestic Abuse may have been present before dementia. So verbal and physical aggression were there behind closed doors previously, but now can be hidden less due to more care requirements.

So if you are in contact with someone who has dementia, how do you spot signs that Domestic Abuse may be taking place:

- Does the partner/carer/family member speak to the person in a way that concerns you? – words they use, tone, attitude.
- Does their partner/carer/family member answer on their behalf, interrupt them or dismiss what they are saying?
- When the partner/carer/family member is around does the person appear reluctant to speak, quieter or looks anxious?

- Do you think someone is withholding food, heat, medication or other necessities for someone they are caring for?

- Have you noticed any behaviour changes or increased anxiety in either a person being cared for or the carer?

- Are there any signs of physical abuse to the person being cared for or to the carer?

- Have you noticed that the carer and person being cared for have become more isolated? – do they miss appointments, make excuses why you can't visit, not answer the door, refuse help and support.

The above may not be signs of Domestic Abuse, but they may be, so getting support through local helplines and organisations may be required.

And there may be other things you feel are showing a pattern of abuse – either emotional, psychological, financial, technological or physical.

So how do you start a conversation with someone?

The most important thing is to listen and believe. This is going to be a difficult conversation for the person being subjected to Domestic Abuse, so let them tell you in their own way.

Asking some indirect questions may help to start a conversation:

- How are you doing at the moment?
- Is there anything you would like to talk about?
- How are you feeling at the moment?
- Do you feel safe at home?
- Tell me more about how you feel unsafe?

If you are talking to someone with dementia you may need to ask different questions or the same question in a different way. Be patient and understanding – Domestic Abuse is difficult for anyone to talk about, but if you can't find the right words you may be frustrated.

If you are either a carer or someone being cared for, and a partner or family member makes you feel afraid, threatened, controlled or hurt, talk to your local Domestic Abuse support service. They are there to help and you are not alone.

Domestic Abuse support services:



- **Shropshire Domestic Abuse Service:**
 - Call: 0300 303 1191
 - Email: sdas@shropsdas.org.uk
 - Website: www.shropsdas.org.uk



- **The Haven Wolverhampton:**
 - Helpline (24 hrs): 08000 194 400
 - WhatsApp 9.00am-19.00pm (excluding bank holidays): 07719558183
 - Online Chat Mon-Fri 9.00am- 5.00pm:
www.havenrefuge.org.uk



- **Police: 101 or 999** (in emergencies only)



- **Samaritans: 116 123 (24 hrs)**



- **National Domestic Abuse helpline:**
0808 2000 247

The challenges faced by the homeless at Christmas

Shelter ad highlights the challenges faced by the homeless at Christmas
Created by Don't Panic, the hard-hitting spot highlights how Christmas might look to the hundreds of thousands of people in the UK without a permanent home.

While many Christmas ads this year have been focused on the opportunity for family and friends to come together again after the restrictions that were in place in 2020, this film from homelessness and housing charity Shelter paints a different picture.

Centred on the relationship between a mother and her teenage daughter, it initially seems to tell a fairly typical tale of complicated family interactions in the festive season but takes a darker turn at the end.

The aim of the spot is to highlight the complicated Christmas many families will face this year. Most will be families trapped in inadequate temporary accommodation, but there will also be people sofa-surfing, as well as those forced to sleep rough under bridges or in parked up old cars, constantly moving from one spot to the next.

“We wanted to counter the traditional ‘us and them’ narratives you see so regularly in this space, and in doing so create a shift in power towards the people Shelter

is here to help,” says Rick Dodds, creative partner at Don't Panic says. “We heard and read the stories of some people experiencing homelessness to ensure we came up with an idea that captured the raw reality of what it's like to be homeless this Christmas. For us, it was all about humanising the issue of homelessness, making it relevant and in some way relatable, building an emotional scene that truly resonates.”

The film launches as the UK is experiencing a housing emergency, with 180,000 households tipped into homelessness during the pandemic. “A run-down hostel where you have to share a kitchen and bathroom with strangers is not a home,” says Andy Harris, director of fundraising at Shelter. “Nor is a cramped cold car in the corner of an empty carpark.

“This film is a powerful testimony to the resilience of the people we help, who are dealing with the trauma of homelessness and hoping for a brighter future. Our frontline services are working hard to be there for people facing homelessness and we hope the public will be inspired to donate what they can this Christmas, to help us carry on this vital work.”

View advert [HERE](#)

Eliza Williams, Creative Review
November 2021



The Demon and the Dark Side

James's story



There is nothing scarier than being trapped inside your own mind. It's a feeling of unease and nausea that doesn't subside - it just gets stronger. Circulating thoughts of worry turns to anxiety which leads to depression, and once you're in that hole there is no escape.

I've suffered from anxiety and depression since I was 13-years old, a time which is hard enough when you're dealing with hormonal changes let alone understanding your thoughts. I've been bullied throughout school, criticised by bosses and co-workers, and let down by family, friends, and those I loved.

All through my life I have worried what other people thought of me and wasted energy and effort trying to be liked. Three years ago I had a breakdown at work, where I ended up sitting in a toilet cubicle crying, me, a forty something, 6'1" tall bloke reduced to tears.

It was at that point I told myself that I didn't want to live anymore, I didn't want to wake up with the constant nausea and anxiety in the pit of my stomach.

It's at that moment you don't care about anything else, you don't care about who you're going to leave behind. All that matters is that you end the suffering. If it wasn't for the intervention of one friend I wouldn't be here today, that much I'm certain.

During my life I've had group therapy, one to one counselling and CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy) all of which has helped in some small way. Now I take medication, and have done so for the past five years, it helps take the edge off and while I saw it as a last resort, right now I don't think I could cope without it - but I'm not ashamed of that.

Over the last few months I've done a lot of soul searching and have come to the conclusion that I cannot let my brain control my thoughts and feelings. I have to be the one to tell it where I want to go, what I want to do and with whom. If you let your brain control you then it's game over.

Now, I don't care what anyone thinks about me. I won't lose sleep over not being accepted and I won't bow down to anyone. This way of thinking has given my mental health a new lease of life, and while I know it won't always be smooth sailing, I'm the one in control, which is how it needs to be.

I've likened anxiety and depression to that of a demon. You can't see him, but you know he's there, whispering in your ear, standing over your shoulder controlling every thought. Throughout my entire life to this point I have relied on him, used his energy for all the wrong reasons - now he's not there anymore.

Don't be afraid to speak out, you'll be amazed at just how many people are going through similar experiences. The best way to combat mental health is to talk whether that's to a family member, friend or person at the bus stop, there is always someone willing and waiting to listen.

Adam's story

“Ever since I first came across the Zero Suicide Alliance’s suicide prevention training through work, I’ve been a strong advocate of it, urging friends, colleagues and relatives to take the course. Like most people, I sat down for 20 minutes, absorbed the messages and then got on with my life.

That was over a year ago and I always meant to go back and refresh my memory about what to do if you came across someone in crisis. Of course, like all the best intentions, they get shelved while other activities take priority.

So, when I came across a teenager sat on the bridge over the River Severn on my way home from a night out with old friends in Worcester last summer, I

was desperately searching my memory banks to remember what to do and, more specifically, how not to react. I remembered enough to know I should be direct, non-judgemental and try and direct them towards help.

After establishing they were in crisis, I suggested they talk to someone who could really help and rang the police, who picked them up moments later.

The moral of my little story is that as soon as I returned to work, I went through the training once again and have set up a reminder to do it again every six months. I didn’t think I’d ever need to know what to do in such a situation but my random situation proves it could happen to anyone.”



Break the stigma associated with suicide

Take our **ZSA Suicide Awareness module** today

Support the Zero Suicide Alliance campaign

END THE
SILENCE
END
SUICIDE

The Zero Suicide Alliance is a collaborative of National Health Service trusts, businesses and individuals who are all committed to suicide prevention in the UK and beyond. The alliance wants to improve support for people contemplating suicide by raising awareness of and promoting FREE suicide prevention training which is accessible to all.

The aims of this training are to:

- enable people to identify when someone is presenting with suicidal thoughts/behaviour
- provide confidence to speak out in a supportive manner
- empower you to signpost the individual to the correct services or support.

SAVE A LIFE...

TAKE THE TRAINING

zerosuicidealliance.com

Scan QR code below
to take the training



Action for Happiness

We all want to lead a happy life and want the people we love to be happy too. But as a society we are not giving this enough priority. Despite decades of economic growth we are no happier now than we were sixty years ago. We need to re-think our priorities.

The good news is that our actions and choices can affect our happiness. What makes us happy has less to do with our money or possessions and more to do with our attitudes and relationships with other people.

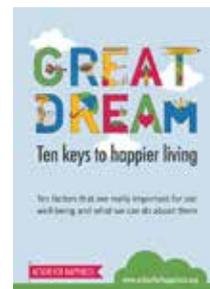
Action for Happiness is a movement of people from all walks of life who are taking action in their personal lives, communities, workplaces and schools to help create a happier and more caring society.

We help people learn practical ways to increase their well-being and make

others happier too, all based on the latest scientific evidence of what really works. You can start with these Ten Keys to happier living.

A happier world is possible. Your actions really make a difference.

The Action for Happiness pledge: "I will try to create more happiness and less unhappiness in the world around me".



Download the Ten Keys to Happier Living.



WEBSITE
actionforhappiness.org

Click the image to download the Action for Happiness October Calendar

December Kindness 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
5 Give a gift to someone who is homeless or feeling lonely	6 Leave a positive message for someone else to find	7 Give kind comments to as many people as possible today	1 Spread kindness and share the December calendar with others	2 Contact someone you can't be with to see how they are	3 Offer to help someone who is facing difficulties at the moment	4 Support a charity, cause or campaign you really care about
5 Give a gift to someone who is homeless or feeling lonely	6 Leave a positive message for someone else to find	7 Give kind comments to as many people as possible today	8 Do something helpful for a friend or family member	9 Notice when you're hard on yourself or others and be kind instead	10 Listen wholeheartedly to others without judging them	11 Buy an extra item and donate it to a local food bank
12 Be generous. Feed someone with food, love or kindness today	13 See how many different people you can smile at today	14 Share a happy memory or inspiring thought with a loved one	15 Contact an older neighbour and brighten up their day	16 Look for something positive to say to everyone you speak to	17 Give thanks. List the kind things others have done for you	18 Ask for help and let someone else discover the joy of giving
19 Contact someone who may be alone or feeling isolated	20 Help others by giving away something that you don't need	21 Appreciate kindness and thank people who do things for you	22 Congratulate someone for an achievement that may go unnoticed	23 Choose to give or receive the gift of forgiveness	24 Bring joy to others. Share something which made you laugh	25 Treat everyone with kindness today, including yourself!
26 Get outside. Pick up litter or do something kind for nature	27 Call a relative who is far away to say hello and have a chat	28 Be kind to the planet. Eat less meat and use less energy	29 Turn off digital devices and really listen to people	30 Let someone know how much you appreciate them and why	31 Plan some new acts of kindness to do in 2022	25 Treat everyone with kindness today, including yourself!

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Happier · Kinder · Together



Do you have a Domestic Abuse Workplace Policy?

A Workplace Policy will include:

-  **Clear workplace policies & procedures.**
-  **How to respond to disclosures.**
-  **How to manage risks in the workplace.**

Contact training@havenrefuge.org.uk to find out more.

DATES

**Suicide Awareness
Introductory Session (Virtual)**

**9 December
11am - 12noon**

BOOK HERE

**Safer Drinking Awareness
(Virtual)**

**16 December
10 - 11am**

BOOK HERE



Adrian Barker
Managing Director
CBSL Accountants



Lorna Stephens
Thomas Thomas & Co. Ltd



Neil Bevan
Director
Hunter Bevan
Marketing & Design



James Gough
Clear Design
Consultancy Limited



Rhea Alton
Managing Director
J&PR



James Staniforth
Principal
Shrewsbury Colleges Group

**Some of the
organisations who have
signed the
Mental Health Charter**



Shropshire
Chamber of
Commerce



Merulae
"With you through it"

SIGN UP HERE