TalkBack
June 2014

The anxiety issue
Dear Supporter,

Anxiety is one of the most common mental health problems affecting people in the UK. Everyone gets anxious from time to time, but for some anxiety can develop into something much more serious, harming their everyday life.

Thanks to your support, we’ve been working hard over the last few months to raise awareness of anxiety and the support that’s available. In May, our annual Mental Health Awareness Week asked the question, “Are you Anxiety Aware?”. On page 8 you can read some of the advice we’ve been providing to help people recognise and manage the signs and symptoms of anxiety.

Throughout June we also held the first Anxiety Arts Festival. This was a landmark achievement for us and for the Arts and Mental Health – it was the first time we had brought together artists and mental health professionals in this way to examine and celebrate the interaction between their two fields. Don’t miss the highlights from the Festival on page 6. Our established Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival launches in October.

Few things in life are more stressful than the early years of parenthood. Our Babies in Mind programme has been supporting mothers to form healthy, happy emotional bonds with their children. On behalf of all the mothers and babies who have taken part, I’d like to say a big thank you to everyone who supported our appeal in March. Please read about Charlotte on page 4 to see how your generous gifts are helping mothers.

Best wishes,

Jenny Edwards CBE, Chief Executive

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Growing older

Like the population in general, people with learning disabilities are living longer; this is good news but raises questions about how commissioners and support providers will ensure that the right support is available. The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities has been working with the Association for Real Change to encourage support providers to respond to people’s changing needs as they grow older, so that their lives are as happy, healthy and fulfilling as possible.

The Foundation has developed an evaluation toolkit for support providers to assess how well they are currently doing against statements such as, “I feel safe and secure in my own home” and “I am well supported when the people who are important to me move away or die”. Organisations are encouraged to involve people with learning disabilities and their families and friends throughout this process and then contribute to planning and improving support, delivering training to managers and staff. Family carers have also found the toolkit useful to know what they should expect from support providers and be able to advocate for better support.

The toolkit is available at www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/growingolder

Christine Towers
Research and Service Development Manager

“It’s been great to see the positive response to the evaluation toolkit from organisations providing support; they have said it will make them have an honest look at how they are supporting people as they grow older. Families are also keen to start using it to advocate for better support for their relative.”

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In March, many of you received our appeal for support for our Early Years programme. The programme works with vulnerable families to develop warm and sensitive relationships with their babies, giving these children the best chance of a mentally healthy life. Thanks to your amazing response, we’ve been able to support many more mums to bond with their children.

One of the mums we’ve been working with is Charlotte. Charlotte is a single mum to twins, Emily and Holly, who are 8 months old. When we first met Charlotte she was feeling overwhelmed by the constant needs of the twins and feeling that no one was supporting her.

Before joining the programme she said, “I haven’t had much support before, and this past month, when you proposed the programme, I’d kind of hit a wall. I was starting to feel depressed, and a bit angry and just regretful... all these feelings that I didn’t recognise and that I really didn’t want to be, you know, around my children...”

Taking part in our programme enabled Charlotte to reduce her stress and anxiety, increase her confidence as a parent and develop her relationship with her children. By reflecting on brief video recordings of positive interactions with Emily and Holly, we helped Charlotte, in a non-judgemental and empowering way, to develop the best possible relationship with her children.

“The programme, in my situation, has helped me to be a lot more positive and happy at a difficult time and has enabled me to move forward into the dreams I have for me and my children.”

If you’ve not yet seen our film about the importance of healthy relationships in infancy please have a look at www.mentalhealth.org.uk/smile

On 6 April our BBC Radio 4 appeal, very kindly presented by the actor Nigel Planer, was broadcast.

Nigel is best known for his role as Neil in cult 80’s comedy The Young Ones and more recently starred as Grandpa Joe in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory in the West End.

Nigel was raising awareness of our life-changing work to help people take control of their mental health. The appeal focused on Lily Horley who turned her life around thanks to one of our self-management courses.

Nigel said, “These days more and more people seem to be affected by mental ill health, and more and more families, my own included, and that’s why I’m here.

“As well as campaigning... the Mental Health Foundation run groups and courses that will help people take control of their own lives. The results are quite amazing really, that people can find a fulfilling life even with the condition and they can learn to manage it.”

Please visit www.mentalhealth.org.uk/radio4 to find out more about self-management, Lily’s story and to listen to the BBC Radio 4 appeal.

The appeal was very successful in reaching a new audience who are now supporting our work, raising awareness of mental health and bringing in much needed funds, raising over £8,000.

Our sincere thanks go to Nigel and Lily for their invaluable contributions.

“I support the Mental Health Foundation and I hope that you will too.”

Nigel Planer, actor
Anxiety Arts Festival
London 2014

Anxiety 2014 was a new London-wide arts festival, curated by the Mental Health Foundation, that took place throughout June.

The festival explored anxiety, looking at its causes, how it affects all of our lives, and how it can act as a creative force. It brought leading and emerging artists together with community centres, healthcare institutions, mental health professionals and academics to address anxiety from different angles, offering insights into our modern day neuroses.

Anxiety 2014 presented a dynamic programme of visual arts, film, performance, music, dance, theatre and talks spanning venues across London.

Visual arts

This programme of new commissions and existing works explored our ideas of normality and the pressures of fitting our experiences within that mould. The Military Industrial Complex, a new work by Bonnie Camplin, collected an array of materials and theories to form a study room, which examined the anxieties caused by categorising people’s experiences as either valid or abnormal.

On stage

The highlight of this series of music, spoken word and comedy events was a new work by acclaimed composer Jocelyn Pook. Anxiety Fanfare and Variations for Voices was commissioned by the Foundation specifically for Anxiety 2014 and received its world premiere at the Wigmore Hall on 12 June with members of the Aurora Orchestra. We were delighted that Jocelyn produced this work for Anxiety 2014.

Some of the Festival’s events continue into July. Visit the website for the full programme.
This year’s Mental Health Awareness Week was held from the 12-18 May on the subject of anxiety. From coffee mornings to nature walks, supporters from around the UK hosted over 100 events and activities to spread anxiety awareness and promote good mental health.

Anxiety is a type of fear associated with a perceived threat or worry about the future. Unlike fear itself, anxiety is an ongoing sense of worry without a specific cause. Small amounts of anxiety can be a motivating force; however, severe and chronic anxiety can lead to negative effects on health, changing the way we live our daily lives.

We all recognise the physical symptoms of anxiety, such as a churning stomach, dry mouth, increased heart rate, difficulties with breathing, and sweating. However, anxiety can also lead to trouble with sleeping, concentrating, low mood and loss of self-confidence. It is important to be able to spot and understand what triggers our anxiety and take steps to prevent it developing into a more serious problem.

Managing anxiety

There are some simple ways of improving your mental wellbeing during stressful times. Although it can be hard to open up about anxiety, talking it through with friends and family can be hugely beneficial. Discussing your anxiety makes it easier to cope with and helps you feel supported, leaving you better prepared to deal with stressful situations in the future.

Learning relaxation techniques through practices like yoga, meditation or massage can help you calm feelings of anxiety. It is also important to take care of your physical health by eating healthily and exercising. This can improve your mood and wellbeing, acting as a prevention and treatment for anxiety.

Getting help

It may also be useful to join local support or self-help groups to meet people with similar experiences and share stories and different ways to manage anxiety. Your doctor, library or local citizens advice bureau will have details of support groups near you.

We have produced a publication with more information about recognising, managing and seeking help for anxiety, which is available from our website www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications.

45% of people say that financial issues cause them to feel anxious
44% of young people aged 18-24 find their relationships cause anxious feelings
36% of people aged 55 and over say ageing causes them anxiety
28% of young people aged 18-24 cite loneliness as a cause of anxiety

Source: YouGov Plc April 2014
Mental health policy

Mental health services are chronically underfunded – mental health accounts for 28% of the ‘disease burden’ but gets just 13% of the NHS budget.

When we discovered that NHS England and the regulator Monitor were recommending that the amount of money the sector will receive in “tariffs” (or fees) for its services would be cut by 20% more than that for acute hospitals, we decided to join forces with some of the leading mental health charities to try and do something about it.

Our open letter to The Guardian (www.theguardian.com/society/2014/mar/12/risks-deep-cuts-mental-health) resulted in huge media coverage, including an interview on BBC News with our CEO, Jenny Edwards CBE.

Whilst to date we have not seen a reversal of the funding issue, we have the backing of many, including the Care Services Minister, Norman Lamb MP, who described the decision as ‘flawed and unacceptable’.

He has promised that the Department of Health will scrutinise trusts’ draft budgets in the coming months. We will continue to lobby on the issue of mental health funding.

To keep up with the debate on Twitter, follow the hashtags #keepyourword, #lostgen, #mentalhealth and #fairshare4mentalhealth.

You can also sign Mind’s petition to ensure a fair share for mental health funding at www.change.org

Project updates

Research

The Research team are hard at work on several long-term projects. Our evaluation of self-management groups for people with mental health problems in Southwark is nearing completion, with results due to be published later this year.

We are also midway through two important evaluations for the charity Together.

These three-year projects, due for completion in 2015, will assess the effectiveness of Together’s Your Way and Progression models of support. Other projects include several evaluations for the Later Life team and a survey piloted at the Anxiety Arts Festival (page 6) to record people’s perceptions of arts and mental health and measure the stigma associated with mental health problems.

Later Life

It’s been a very busy few months in our later life programme with a flurry of new projects starting and others finishing. These include:

• a project looking at how we can better understand and respond to people living with more severe dementia experiencing extreme confusion, disorientation and delusions
• a European-wide project that will map out ‘dementia friendly’ communities,
• a project looking at how the Mental Capacity Act and adult safeguarding is applied in London’s prisons and young offender institutions
• getting the views of people living with dementia before and after a move from one care home to another.

Other projects nearing completion include developing a set of mental health principles for the social care workforce, self-help groups for people living with dementia and a project looking at ‘positive risk taking’ and dementia.
The aim was to get young people involved and let them lead on developing the services they wanted. They would then work in partnership with other organisations to see that real change was delivered.

From over 200 applications across the UK, 4 projects were chosen: Brighton and Hove, Newham, Fermanagh and Sheffield. As the project work comes to an end and the evaluation begins, we take a look at one of the great achievements of the Brighton and Hove team below.

Established in 2009, Right Here was a five year project aimed at developing new approaches to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 16 to 25.

Jointly funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the Mental Health Foundation, it focused on intervening early to help young people at risk of developing mental health problems and combatting the stigma that can prevent them seeking help.

Right Here’s legacy

Right Here’s work, however, isn’t finished. Four ‘How to...’ guides are being produced to pass on what was learnt.

Due to be released later this year, these will be supported by training programmes for youth workers to build their skills and confidence, learning from the best practices of the Right Here projects and the experiences of the young people involved.

Right Here’s success lay in empowering young people to design the services they needed. By bringing youth and mental health work together, it could build young people’s resilience and wellbeing.

The goal now is to support other organisations in taking forward Right Here’s work, so that we can see a real, long-lasting improvement to the services provided for this most vulnerable group.

Helping GPs help young people

Good research and persuasive presentation is better than just complaining – that was the view of the young volunteers who set out to improve services in their area.

With Right Here’s support, the volunteers were trained in the research and analysis skills needed to take the views of their peers. Being outside the healthcare profession enabled them to hear from people at risk of mental illness, rather than just those already seeking treatment. Indeed only 52% of the people they spoke to said they would be comfortable talking to their GP about mental and emotional problems. Confidentiality was a big issue, as were appointment times and the difficulties of building a relationship with a single GP.

“I realised that our work was really being listened to by GPs.” Ryan, volunteer

From what the young volunteers learnt they made a series of recommendations that they were then able to present to GPs, patient groups and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The response they received was overwhelmingly positive.

The staff said their eyes had been opened to the issues and they had gained excellent ideas for how to make improvements. The volunteers have now formed a partnership with the CCG and are visiting individual surgeries to help make them more young people friendly.

“I think the more we learn from groups like this, the better it can be.”

Dr Xavier Nalletamby, chair of Brighton and Hove Clinical Commissioning Group
Events spotlight

Thank you to our London Marathon runners

Hundreds of people apply every year for a prized place on our London Marathon team, but only a select few make it. One thing they all have in common is a special connection to our work: runners either have first-hand experience of mental illness themselves or know someone close to them who has struggled with their mental health.

This year our team was our biggest ever: 90 runners raised awareness of mental health at the world’s most iconic marathon.

Martina Swainson was one of them: “I chose to run for the Mental Health Foundation in memory of my partner, Nathan Chisholm, who suffered from depression and took his own life 3 years ago on 6 April. The timing of this marathon was perfect to mark this and remember his struggles, as well as to do something positive for others in his memory. It was also a big marker for me, as running helped me to get back to being a more positive me after losing Nathan and helped me get out of my own dark place.”

It was a very special day for our runner Christine who married fellow runner Gordon just the day before the Marathon. They ran in fetching bride and groom outfits and even posed for us at our cheering point.

For a full list of runs and challenges that you can sign up for please visit www.mentalhealth.org.uk/events

Save the date

World Mental Health Day 2014 is on Friday 10 October, and we are inviting you to join us by holding your very own Tea & Talk. Talk about mental health with your friends, colleagues and neighbours and help us break down stigma – all while having a nice cuppa and delicious treats.

More than £70,000 has been raised at Tea & Talks held in kitchens, offices, on the radio and even on top of a mountain! We have achieved a lot with that money, but if you take part you can help us make an even bigger difference.

You can pre-order your free Tea & Talk pack at www.teaandtalk.org.uk or call us on 020 7803 1123.

Remembering a loved one

“We chose the Mental Health Foundation as our charity to support in Paul’s memory and set about raising money and awareness to help others, who may be in a similar position and unsure of where to turn for help.” Jean and Mike, Mental Health Foundation Supporters.

Raising money for a cause that was close to a loved one’s heart can be a very special way to honour their memory. We have produced a booklet for other people, like Jean and Mike, who choose to raise funds in memory of a loved one.

For further information or to receive the booklet please call 0207 803 1121 or email supporter@mentalhealth.org.uk The booklet is available to download from www.mentalhealth.org.uk/inmemory
Supporting wellbeing long into the future

Loneliness and isolation can pose as big a health risk as lifelong smoking and are associated with dementia, depression and anxiety.

We know that by learning practical independent living skills and memory techniques, mental wellbeing can be significantly improved. Our self-help groups were developed to improve the lives of people with dementia living in sheltered and extra-care accommodation. We are now working towards offering this to more groups of people at risk of loneliness and isolation in later life.

This is just one example of how we help everyone to live a mentally healthier life. By leaving a gift for the Mental Health Foundation in your will, you can ensure you continue to support our essential research, campaigning and project work long into the future.

To leave a gift to the Mental Health Foundation in your will, or to let us know you have already done so, please contact our legacy team on 020 7803 1121 or legacy@mentalhealth.org.uk. You can read more at www.mentalhealth.org.uk/legacy.

If you would like to make a gift towards our work, please go to www.mentalhealth.org.uk/talkbackdonate

Alternatively you can call 020 7803 1121, or to donate by text, simply text the word MHFP11 followed by the amount you wish to donate (between £1 and £10) to 70070.

For regular updates on our work via email, please sign up to our e-newsletter at www.mentalhealth.org.uk/newsletter