10 years of the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival

Mental Health Awareness Week 2016
Dear Supporter,

This year’s Mental Health Awareness Week was our most successful to date. Reading through this issue of TalkBack reminds me of the message from that week: that our relationships have a huge impact on our health and wellbeing, as much as diet, exercise and smoking. It’s important that we all put time into nurturing good quality relationships if we’re to look after our mental and physical health.

It’s also worth remembering the part we can all play in promoting this message. That, after all, is what makes Mental Health Awareness Week special – all our supporters doing their bit locally by holding Tea & Talks, community walks, arts activities, gardening therapy or simply spending an hour with someone close to them.

So I want to say a big thank you to everyone who got involved in Mental Health Awareness Week. I hope you enjoy reading about the week and all the other life-changing work you make possible.

Best wishes,

Jenny Edwards CBE, Chief Executive

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A marathon effort

David Sherman was part of our amazing London Marathon team in 2016

“During my mid-twenties, I had a fierce encounter with anxiety and depression. It was a very dark time and something I couldn’t see a way through for a while. Thankfully, I started to open up to my family, friends and some colleagues to help me get better. Regular CBT sessions have helped a lot too. I still have some rough days but my amazing support network is always there to pick me back up again.

“Not everyone has this kind of support. Knowing that my fundraising would help the Mental Health Foundation provide support to others, running for them was the obvious choice for me.

“My training actually made me quite anxious and low at times. That’s pretty ironic when you think what I was raising money for! I learned that running home in the dark or going 20 miles in hail and rain on a Sunday morning wasn’t as fun as it sounds. Thankfully my incredible wife, Sabrina, and my amazing family and friends kept me going with mind-blowing donations and constant messages of encouragement.

“Crossing the finish line was an unforgettable experience. Not only am I proud for finishing, despite hurting more than I’d ever hurt before, but I’m also proud of running for everyone’s mental health and being part of the team.

“Would I run it again? Never say never. Will I remember this as one of the best and most important experiences of my life? Absolutely!”

David raised an incredible £7,500. Congratulations and thank you!

Inspired by David? There are loads of ways to support us with a challenge event. Visit www.mentalhealth.org.uk/get-involved for more ideas or email events@mentalhealth.org.uk

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The Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, with over 300 events taking place across the country between 10th and 31st October.

With events encompassing film, theatre, visual arts, literature, music and dance, the festival provides artists and communities throughout Scotland with a platform to celebrate their achievements and challenge negative perceptions about mental health.

To recognise reaching this landmark year, the theme for the 2016 festival is Time. The programme explores time in many different ways, from how attitudes towards mental health have changed over time to the impact time has on our minds and bodies. Events will also explore how we can maintain a healthy relationship with time, particularly as we live in an age when it all too often appears to be running away from us.

Highlights from this year’s programme include One Thinks of it All as a Dream, a specially commissioned touring play written by acclaimed playwright Alan Bissett, which tells the story of Pink Floyd’s enigmatic front man Syd Barrett. Emma Jayne Park will return to the festival as its first ever associate artist, using her interactive dance performance Experts In Short Trousers to initiate conversations about mental health with young audiences. And once again, the SMHAFF International Film Competition will introduce audiences to filmmakers from around the world who have chosen to explore mental health through their work.

SMHAFF has grown exponentially in the last decade, reaching increasingly wide audiences and involving ever more renowned artists in conversations about mental health. Yet, throughout that time, it has remained firmly rooted in the communities that both create and inspire the events that it brings together. The programme offers something for everyone, so get involved in what is happening near you.

For full listings and information on how to buy tickets, pick up a SMHAFF brochure in your local area or visit www.mhfestival.com
Refugee Mental Health

The Foundation are proud to lead a programme to enhance mental health and wellbeing amongst refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland.

Asylum seekers and refugees can experience some of the greatest mental health challenges, including pre-migration traumas, the stress and losses associated with migration, and often stigma, isolation and inequality once in the UK.

Part of our programme of work to address these issues is the Amaan project, which works with asylum-seeking and refugee women across Scotland. Its unique approach promotes empowerment and peer support with mental health problems.

Our programme is led by Amal Azzudin. Amal first started campaigning against the detention and deportation of asylum seekers in Glasgow when she was at school. Her work and campaigning is now recognised internationally. In July, Amal Azzudin was recognised by the Saltire Society as a Young Outstanding Woman of Scotland for 2016.

Amal was one of 10 women, including Sarah Brown, JK Rowling OBE and Annie Lennox OBE, to be celebrated for “the significant difference women have made through their influence and leadership”. Amal was specifically recognised for her work in promoting human rights and social justice. This is a great achievement and well-deserved recognition of her incredible work.

Thanks to the success of the work done by Amal and the many other people involved, we are delighted to announce that further funding has been secured for the programme and the Amaan project to extend the support they provide.

We will be working in partnership with Freedom from Torture to support national and regional partners to respond more effectively to the mental health needs of refugees and asylum seekers.

Together we will ensure that the voices of asylum seekers are heard and used to develop health policies and support programmes.

Other projects within the programme:

- Mental health stigma project (with The Scottish Refugee Council and See Me)
- Training health staff to respond to trauma and mental health (with the NHS)
- Peer research on human rights (with Strathclyde University)
- National arts events and film production
Mental Health Awareness Week provides an opportunity to start a national debate on the importance of supporting good mental health. The success of the week is largely down to the involvement of our supporters, followers and the public, who really grab the theme and run with it each year.

In previous years, the Foundation has focused on how mindfulness, anxiety, sleep deprivation and exercise can impact our mental health. This year, the theme was the importance of ‘Relationships’.

There is striking evidence that good-quality relationships are key to helping us live longer and happier lives with fewer mental health problems.

The quality of our relationship has as big an effect on our health as smoking and an even greater impact than obesity.

Most people wouldn’t think relationships make the same difference to their health as whether they smoke or not. That’s why the main focus of the week was challenging everyone to go the extra mile in prioritising relationships. We hope you rose to the challenge.

It’s spreading vital messages like this that makes Mental Health Awareness Week so important.

Our Chief Executive, Jenny Edwards, appeared on the BBC Breakfast sofa to talk about the importance of relationships for older, recently retired men and on SKY News focussing on the importance of children being treated for mental ill-health close to their friends and family.

We also had lots of great coverage throughout the press and reached an incredible 8.5 million people through social media.

In recent year’s mental health has risen up the public policy agenda. Mental Health Awareness Week helps maintain momentum. We used the week to call for action from national governments, public bodies and employers to promote good relationships and tackle the barriers to forming them, holding a keynote Westminster seminar which was attended by then Minister for Mental Health Alastair Burt (Conservative), Luciana Berger (Labour), Norman Lamb (Liberal Democrat) and Philippa Whitford (SNP).

The biggest success of the week though is always the millions of people throughout the UK who help spread the message in their communities.

Thank you for the part you played in Mental Health Awareness Week.

As part of Mental Health Awareness Week we launched our TIPS texts sending out daily tips for a week about improving your relationships. Did you receive them?

Here are the three favourite relationship TIPS at the Mental Health Foundation:

1. Put time aside to nurture important relationships and friendships. Today, call a friend who you haven’t spoken to in more than a month.

2. Your relationship with yourself sets the tone for every other relationship. Today, spend 15-30 minutes doing something which you enjoy and uplifts you. It could significantly improve your mood.

3. Actively listen to what others are saying in a non-judgemental way. Reach out to a friend or relative who you know has something on their mind and make it clear you’re willing to listen.

Following the success of the relationships TIPS, this summer we launched our new travel aware TIPS on travelling abroad and mental health. To receive these daily tips for a week text ‘TIPS’ to 70300. Keep an eye out for other TIPS series over the coming months.

Although the texts are free to receive, you will be charged your standard network rate when you text 70300. By texting this number you consent to us keeping you up to date on how you can donate to us, and how you can get involved in our activities including fundraising, unless you tell us otherwise by emailing supporter@mentalhealth.org.uk. You can stop communication at any time by texting STOP to 70300.
Mums and Babies in Mind

This project is now up and running in four areas of England. Women with mental health problems are receiving specialist support during pregnancy and the first year of their child’s life. Most importantly, everything we learn is being collected and shared throughout the country so that more mothers can benefit from this fantastic work.

Young Mums Together

Recent estimates put the rate of depression amongst young mothers as high as 53%. To date, seven peer support groups have been created. These groups are supporting almost 100 young parents with their mental health. They’ve given them training and volunteering opportunities, including leading peer support groups themselves.

“I’ve been attending the group since last October. I truly believe it’s made a difference to my confidence, my self-esteem and me as a young mum.”

Values, Equalities, Rights and Dementia Network (VERDe)

The aim of this work is to prevent the distress that can be experienced by people living with dementia by changing the way we approach their care.

Events throughout the UK are bringing together a wide variety of people, including those living with dementia and their friends and family, to create new ways of supporting people based on their rights, not just their immediate needs. Three events have been held, in Edinburgh, London and Cardiff, and there are more to come.

Empowerment

For millions of people in the UK, the impact of receiving a diagnosis of depression or schizophrenia can be life-changing.

Medical diagnoses like these are standardised in something called the International Classification of Diseases (ICD), a document that hasn’t been updated since 1990. The ICD is now finally being revised and the Foundation is leading the UK’s contribution to this influential document. Significantly, the views of people using mental health services and family carers will, for the first time, contribute to how diagnoses are defined.

Learning Disabilities

Our work in this area continues to be ground-breaking. We are currently working with schools to raise aspirations of young people with learning disabilities and support them to find employment.

We are also tackling the hate crime that people with learning disabilities experience by sharing the best ways of preventing it gathered from throughout the UK.

Standing Together

This project continues to address the problems of isolation and wellbeing in later life. It’s now halfway through its three years and has established nine peer-support groups in retirement and extra-care homes.

The groups have had a hugely positive impact on residents, involving them in a variety of activities that establish new relationships with their neighbours and strengthen their communities.
A group of supporters are focusing their fundraising on teenage mental health

Fiorella Massey was introduced to the Mental Health Foundation by trustee Douglas Blausten. She quickly became passionately involved with the cause of preventing mental health problems and proceeded to form the “Friends of the Foundation”. Their purpose was to raise funds to put “knowledge into action”.

“We urgently need to create a more honest environment to enable people to talk openly. The burden of silence and privacy only exacerbates the pain.” Fiorella Massey

The Friends of the Foundation held their first Gala Dinner in March 2016 with the aim of raising money to fund our new Peer Education Project (PEP) as well as some of our other work.

The project is aimed at equipping young people with the knowledge and understanding of stigma, mental wellbeing and the ways in which they can safeguard themselves and their peers. By training Year 12’s to teach Year 7’s, PEP aims to bypass the walls many young people put up when being taught personal topics by adults who are often detached from their personal experiences.

PEP is unique in that it was produced together with young people to ensure the programme resonated with their peers. It’s designed to increase self-esteem, life satisfaction, mental health awareness, and awareness of peer support, and create a willingness to seek help.

The project successfully underwent its initial pilot in 2015/16 and showed “significant changes in the overall level of the pupils’ knowledge and understanding of the aspects of mental health covered by the project”. The project’s second stage, taking place in 2016/17, will incorporate key lessons from 2015/16. The number of schools will be increased and there will be an emphasis on developing a model that is capable of going nationwide.

The focus on teenage mental health was in part inspired by Amber and Sophia, two girls who were campaigning for better mental health awareness in schools with the aim of it being on the national curriculum. Introduced to the Foundation by Fiorella, the girls became youth ambassadors and helped to catalyse the Foundation’s existing work on peer-support into the Peer Education Project.

“What this campaign has proved is that everyone DOES want to talk about mental health and people DO want to help. Through the Peer Education Project, students can learn from a young age both how to help themselves and their friends.” Amber and Sophia

Over a quarter of a million pounds was raised at the Gala Dinner. An incredible achievement. The Friends succeeded in galvanizing incredible support for the Peer Education Project. By gathering parliamentarians, doctors, lawyers, teachers and many more in one place, the event left a lasting impression of the crisis facing young people today, and the need to strengthen their mental wellbeing for the future.

Thanks to The Friends’ efforts, we have ensured the future of the PEP with the hope that knowledge will indeed turn into action.
Britt Whyatt, founder of www.shewhobakes.co.uk, tells us how baking can have a surprising effect on your mental health.

"After the loss of my mother when I was just 16, I spiralled into a deep depression and developed bad social anxiety. I was on strong medication that numbed everything. I struggled to hold down a job, a decent relationship, close friendships. I had no hobbies. I wasn’t living, merely existing. After a failed suicide attempt, I went back to the doctors and asked for stronger medication and was told I would probably be on them for the rest of my life.

"Then a friend asked if I would bake a cake for a Children in Need bake sale. ‘But I’ve never baked a cake in my life,’ I said. Still, I decided to give it a go. Off I went to the supermarket, picked up a packet mix, icing and squeezy coloured icing tubes and set about making a Pudsey face. Halfway through making the packet mix monstrosity, I realised I had been smiling the whole time. I didn’t know what I was doing but I was enjoying myself. I baked the cake and decorated it. I was so proud. I was so happy.

"In the days and weeks that followed, I must have made 30 cakes. I loved it. I felt great and I was being complimented on how well I looked. ‘Happiness looks good on you,’ someone remarked. Every time I baked or decorated a cake, even if it went wrong, I was smiling. I decided to set up a blog to document my baking and recipes I was trying for myself.

"I write this now as someone who is out the other side of what felt like a dark and treacherous tunnel. If I hadn’t found baking, if I hadn’t found blogging, I honestly don’t know where I would have ended up. Instead, I now have everything to live for.”

You can find more delicious recipes at www.teaandtalk.org.uk along with everything you need to hold your own Tea & Talk.

Lemon and White Chocolate Slice

These delicious slices taste just like fondant fancies (but better!) and will be a welcome addition to any Tea & Talk event.

Ingredients
- 170g white chocolate
- 85g unsalted butter
- 170g caster sugar
- 250g plain flour
- 2 eggs
- Juice of 2 lemons
- 1tsp lemon extract

To decorate
- Icing sugar
- Sprinkles

1. Preheat the oven to 170°C and line a 10x8in baking tray.
2. Melt together the butter and white chocolate in a glass bowl either over a pan of hot water or in the microwave.
3. Mix in the caster sugar then add the lemon juice and lemon extract. Mix well.
4. Add in two eggs
5. Sift in the plain flour.
6. Stir until your mixture is smooth.
7. Pour your mixture into the prepared baking tray and bake for 20-25 minutes or until a cocktail stick comes out clean.
8. Now make the topping. Mix together two tablespoons of icing sugar with a teaspoon of water and drizzle it over the top of your bake. Then sprinkle with toppings of your choice.
9. Cut into squares and enjoy at your Tea & Talk.

Thanks to Britt at www.shewhobakes.co.uk for this delicious recipe.
Why should I write a will?

Writing a will is the only way you can guarantee what happens to your money, property and possessions after your death. It also lets you decide who should look after any dependants that you leave behind.

If you die without a valid will, the courts may take these decisions for you. People often assume that their spouse or partner will be the main beneficiary, but the courts may decide otherwise.

You also have the opportunity to continue your support for the Mental Health Foundation by leaving a gift in your will, a legacy, to support our work. However, there is no obligation for you to do so.

A gift in your will, no matter how big, would make a significant difference to what we can achieve, helping people safeguard their mental health. To find out more about leaving a gift or to inform us of your intention to do so, please visit www.mentalhealth.org.uk/legacy; email supporter@mentalhealth.org.uk or call 0207 803 1121.

Thank you for considering leaving the Mental Health Foundation a gift in your will.

To help us encourage more people to think about their will, would you share your story with us about why you decided to leave the Mental Health Foundation a legacy when you wrote or updated your will? Please email us at supporter@mentalhealth.org.uk.

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

Text THRIVE to 70300 to give £3 (MHF gets 100%)

We’d like to contact you with updates. If you’d rather we did not text you again then include the words “No Info” when you text e.g. THRIVE NO INFO

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