In this special issue to mark World Mental Health Day:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World Mental Health Day</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mental Health Campaign</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launch of new Community grant</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men’s mental health</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social isolation and loneliness</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting your five a day</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading well</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and wellbeing</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical activity and mental health</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The benefits of volunteering</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health in the workplace</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Mental health training</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Talking point in Clevedon</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>16 – 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**World Mental Health Day**

Today is World Mental Health Day and this year the focus is on suicide prevention. Every year close to 800,000 people globally take their own life and there are many more people who attempt suicide.

Every suicide is a tragedy that affects families, communities and has long-lasting effects on the people left behind. It's the leading cause of death among young people aged 20-34 years in the UK and is the second leading cause of death among 15-29-year-olds globally.

**New Mental Health Campaign - Every mind matters**

We all have mental health. Which can go up and down, directly affecting our wellbeing and quality of life. But just like physical health, there are things that we can do to help protect ourselves and stop things from escalating. The new Every Mind Matters (EMM) campaign, aims to help us do this. It was launched last Monday (7 October). Many of you may have seen the video, but for those that haven’t caught it yet you can still [watch it]. It has a dedicated [website], full of expert advice and practical tips.

Locally we are hoping to benefit from the local focus on mental health and have created our own Every Mind Matters page. Included in this page are links to local services and a free NHS-approved online tool. The tool will help you build an action plan offering suggestion on things you can do to help improve your wellbeing.

![Discover simple steps to look after your mental health](https://www.nhs.org.uk/)

**Wellbeing in Older People Community Grant**

To coincide with the EMM campaign North Somerset Council are launching the Wellbeing in Older Age Community Grant. The grant is to fund community-based projects which aim to improve wellbeing and reduce feelings of social isolation and loneliness among older people.

The grant is aimed at community and voluntary sector who can apply for one-off funding grants of between £1,000 to £4,500. There is a total funding pot of £9,000 available. We are keen to receive bids from innovative projects which are guided by the Five Ways to Wellbeing. These projects should be new or emerging and be based in North Somerset.

The application deadline is 5pm on Friday 1 November and to find out more please contact: [Helen Yeo](mailto:Helen.Yeo@northsomerset.gov.uk), Advanced Health Improvement Specialist (Healthy Communities), 01275 885 154
Men’s mental health

There’s nothing unusual or shameful about mental illness. Most of us have problems at some time in our lives, such as money worries, stress at work or the death of a loved one, which can affect our mental health.

Recent data demonstrates that men have high rates of mental health issues, including elevated rates of suicide. Suicide is the biggest killer of young and middle-aged men locally and across the UK. Coupled with low levels of mental health service use many people are arguing that there is a silent crisis in men’s mental health.

In North Somerset a new male health stakeholder group has been launched to tackle these issues and wider health inequalities among the male population such as lower life expectancy.

Supported by North Somerset Council and facilitated by ‘Community Connect’, the group meets quarterly in Weston-super-Mare.

If you’d like to come along to a meeting or to express an interest in this group, please email: Stefania.rulli@curo-group.co.uk
Social isolation and loneliness

Research tells us that poor social relationships is as bad for our health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Also, we have a 50% more likelihood of surviving better, happier for longer if we have good social connections, than those who don’t. This is not because people who don’t, don’t get ill, it is because those that do cope better.

So, it follows that a big part of keeping well and enjoying life as we get older, is being able to stay connected to our friends, family and community.

But as they say, “life happens” and events over the years can erode these connections. This may be through retirement, illness, disability, memory loss, becoming a carer, breakdown of relationships, moving to a new house or into sheltered housing or care home etc.

Such events can chip away at our confidence, but with the support of those closest to us, we are more able to come to terms with the changes to our lives.

However, life events don’t always conform to anticipated timetables, and they’ve no manners – they don’t wait for one to finish before another starts! For some, without help, this can escalate into not knowing where they belong any more. This sense of ‘unbelonging’ is at the heart of loneliness.

But there is light at the end of the tunnel! If we are willing to take the time to listen to people and understand what matters to them, then with access to the right information and advice, we can support them to take the first steps to find a way of ‘belonging’ again and enjoying life.

We can all do something to help older people alleviate social isolation and loneliness.

The Community Connect over 50s service, helps people to connect-up again. Find out more on the website.

Also - if you’re wondering how someone is and you keep meaning to call/pop-in, then there’s no time like the present – and no present like the time.

Community, 01275 888 803/01934 888 803

Heather.Whittle@n-somerset.gov.uk. Lead for Social Isolation and loneliness and Social Prescribing.
Getting your five a day

Research shows that there are five simple ways to feel happier and improve our wellbeing. Called the ‘five ways to wellbeing’ they are about making conscious and deliberate choices to look after our mental health.

All the five ways are free, achieved easily and can apply to everyone – no matter what the circumstances. Most of us will be doing many of the measures already but even small increases in the frequency or trying one new thing can add up to big benefits. Which of the five have you already achieved today, and what else do you think you could do?

People need people. **Connect** with the people around you, your friends, family and neighbours, at home, in school, at work, or in your local community.

**Suggestions** - Join local groups, a choir, a book club or sewing club; arrange a coffee morning with colleagues; smile and make eye contact with the next person you pass in the street.

**Learning** can increase your wellbeing and provide a sense of achievement. Choose something you enjoy and that interests you.

**Suggestions** - Learn a new recipe or how to play an instrument; learn one new fact a day; Google-search something you are interested in to find out more about.

Being **active** makes you feel good inside and out. Make sure you find an activity you enjoy and that suits your level of ability and fitness.

**Suggestions** - Get outdoors! Go for a walk on the beach, in the woods, or down your street; take up dancing or karate or get digging in the garden. Have a look at this [Mind video on getting active](#).

**Take notice** of the world around you. Reflecting on your experiences and how things make you feel helps you to appreciate what matters to you.

**Suggestions** - Be curious, be in the moment and not the past or future; catch sight of the beautiful, notice the changing seasons; remark on the unusual. [This video](#) is about taking notice.

**Giving** makes us happier and it’s infectious. So, when everyone’s doing it, we get given more too!

**Suggestions** - Volunteer your time; join a community group; give a compliment, a smile or a word of encouragement to someone.
**Reading Well**

Reading Well are collections of self-help books to help you manage your health and wellbeing. Books in the collections have been carefully chosen by medical professionals and people living with the conditions.

The books are available to borrow for free at all North Somerset libraries, and can be reserved for free if the book you want is not on the shelf. The books can also be checked out confidentially through self-service machines for a longer loan period of six weeks.

Reading Well is a national scheme delivered by the Reading Agency and partners.

More information about the Reading Well collections is available at any North Somerset library or the [Reading Well website](#).

**Reading Well Mood-boosting Books**

There is evidence that as little as six minutes reading can significantly reduce stress. The Reading Well [Mood-boosting Books booklists](#) feature uplifting titles recommended by readers and reading groups, and include novels, poetry and non-fiction.

**Library events and volunteering**

We have a range of [events and volunteering opportunities](#) in our libraries, many of which can benefit mental health. These include events for children and their parents/carers, reading groups, and craft groups.

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1 [Claire Burgess](#), Community Librarian, 01275 888 447
**Art and wellbeing**

Art is a popular pastime with an estimated 9.4 million people participating in art activities on a regular basis. That’s 17% of the population, equating in North Somerset to over 35,000 people.

Ask anyone why they do it and they will talk of expressing their creativity and taking time out from the daily pressures of life. In recent years, there has been a growing body of evidence demonstrating how getting involved in community arts project can improve people’s health and wellbeing.

In North Somerset we benefit from a vibrant art scene with grass roots organisations such as Boomsatsuma, Create Together, Terrestrial and Theatre Orchard, offering a variety of opportunities. Below is a short case study from Ann who participated in art classes run by Create Together. These classes, funded by North Somerset Council and are aimed at tackling social isolation and building connections in the local community:

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**Case Study**

Ann and her husband Pete moved to the area just over two years ago after the death of her mother. She suffers from **OCD**, anxiety and depression and has sadly had a number of breakdowns in the past. She is a naturally outgoing and lively person but talks about the isolation that comes with her depression, her fear of leaving the house and how she loses her sense of humour.

When Ann moved to Clevedon, she decided to join the art classes because she wanted to meet new people. Having done jewellery making in the past she was also keen to learn new skills. On the course she has done a wide variety of activities including mandala painting on stones, collage and basket making.

“**I enjoy giving. I gave my friend a mandala dotted stone. She really enjoyed the fact that I gave her something that I had made. It’s nice to give presents that way, something personal**”.

The creativity is only one element of why she enjoyed the classes. For Ann the other important thing was the connecting with people. Some twelve months on and Ann has made new friends within the group who meet up regularly outside of the classes to catch up and start new art projects. She continues to be involved in the group and volunteers welcoming new members to group and making the time to talk to people.

“**I have spoken to other people with mental health problems and have been able to help them and vice versa. People have been supportive, they listen. Also, whilst we are there, we have a laugh and joke, that’s important too.**"
Physical activity and mental health

Being active is great for your physical health and fitness, and evidence shows it can also improve your mental wellbeing.

We may think that the mind and body are separate. But what you do with your body can have a powerful effect on your mental wellbeing. Mental wellbeing means feeling good – both about yourself and about the world around you. It means being able to get on with life in the way you want.

Being active

The good news is being active doesn’t mean you need to spend hours in the gym, if that doesn’t appeal to you. Try to find physical activities you enjoy and think about how to fit more of them into your daily life.

Being physically active means sitting down less and moving our bodies more. Many people find that physical activity helps them maintain positive mental health, either on its own, or in combination with other treatments.

If you want to get active, think about physical activity in the broadest sense. It can help to read the physical activity guidelines for adults (summarised in the infographic). Adults aged 19 and over should do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, such as fast walking or cycling, a week. The key message is to find activities you enjoy and make them a part of your life.

There’s lots of information and advice on the NHS website to help you get active:

- Find activity ideas in Get fit for free
- Start running with the Couch to 5K podcasts
- Find out how to start running, swimming, cycling and dancing.

For local physical activity opportunities visit our go4life website.
Volunteering and its benefits

Why volunteer?
For some people it provides an opportunity to:

- give something back to an organisation that has impacted on a person's life, either directly or indirectly
- make a difference to the lives of others
- help the environment, others less fortunate or without a voice
- feel valued and part of a team
- spend quality time away from work or a busy lifestyle
- gain confidence and self-esteem.

For others, volunteering appeals because of its social benefits. These include:

- meeting new people and making new friends
- getting to know the local community.

Want to volunteer?
Think about what interests you - this could be something that you enjoy doing or something new. Think about what time or skills you can give - it's a great idea to narrow down the choices by deciding what you're willing to give.

Get researching – access VANS VC Broker website (VANS) which lists over 300 volunteering opportunities within the voluntary sector across North Somerset.

Organisations list their opportunities with VANS which posts them on VC Broker with the role information. Once registered an individual can apply for the role through the online site.
Mental health in the workplace

For many of us, work is a major part of our lives. It is where we spend much of our time, where we get our income and often where we make our friends. Having a fulfilling job can be good for your mental health and general wellbeing.

We all have times when life gets on top of us – sometimes that's work-related, like deadlines or travel. Sometimes it's something else – our health, our relationships, or our circumstances. In 2017 the then Prime Minister, Theresa May, commissioned an independent review into workplace mental health. Called ‘Thriving at work’ it looked at the extent of poor mental health and the effect this was having on our workforce and economy.

The review’s findings were stark, with 300,000 people who experience long term health problems losing their job every year and 15 per cent of people in work having symptoms of an existing mental health problem.

In response they set out six core standards that all employers should be meeting to create more mentally healthy workplaces. Take, a look at them, and see how your employer fares.

A year after its publication Paul Farmer the CEO of Mind reviewed the progress that has been made noting that it takes time for employment practices and cultures to change. He acknowledged that employers have made great strides in the past year or so indicating a commitment to creating mentally healthy workplace cultures. He concluded that whilst “the scale of this challenge cannot to be underestimated but, on the whole, things are moving in the right direction”
Free mental health training courses

While one in four people will experience mental health problems, virtually everyone is likely to have worried about the mental health of a friend, family member, colleague or service user at some point.

At times it can seem hard to know how to talk to people; worry about making the situation worse, sometimes stops us from getting involved. North Somerset Council recognises this and is investing in training courses that help you improve your confidence giving you the skills you need to tackle these concerns head on. All the courses are free to anyone who works or volunteers in North Somerset.

Current training course

- Connect 5 is a three-stage mental health and wellbeing training course. It is designed to increase your confidence and skills so that you can talk openly to people about their mental health.
- ASIST teaches people to recognise when someone may have thoughts of suicide and work with them to create a plan that will support their immediate safety.
- Male Mental Health Champions Training. Sadly, male suicide rates remain high. There is a growing evidence-base and understanding about how services can, and Public Health has commissioned Mengage to run a one-off training course to help us tackle this locally.

To book a place on the above training course please visit the Public Mental Health Eventbrite page.

Wellbeing for sport coaches training

A three-hour workshop designed for coaches, sport administrators, and frontline staff/volunteers takes place on Monday 11 November from 6pm (arrive at 5.45pm to register) at Castlewood, Tickenham Road, Clevedon BS221 6FW. The course aims to help:

- Understand common misconceptions about mental health
- Identify the positive impact that physical activity can have on mental health
- Appreciate the barriers that stop people with mental health imbalances in becoming active
- Identify practical actions for making your service more inclusive and accessible for everyone.

To book or for more information contact: Catherine Devonshire, Physical Activity Development Officer, 01275 882 732
Clevedon’s talking point

We are Aware is funded by North Somerset Council to raise awareness about mental health. Running for less than a year they have gained more than 70,000 followers on social media and raised over £1,500 for a local mental health charity. Here’s an article on one of their initiatives:

The semi colon has risen as a symbol of hope in respect of suicide and mental health. The sentiment of ‘my story isn’t over’ is summarised beautifully in one punctuation mark. It has become a symbol for hope; of overcoming adversity; survival; and finding the strength to go on.

This symbol has become a celebration of life itself and the resilience which keeps us all here. As the author uses the semi colon to show the sentence has not ended, so the symbol evokes continuity of life’s story.

A public seating area in the form of the semi colon is set to be unveiled on World Mental Health Day (10th October) on Clevedon seafront between the Bandstand and the yacht club.

It will provide a talking point for complete strangers to strike up a conversation. The information with the seat will include crisis numbers, conversational points of interest and promote future local mental health events and support.

The symbolism of the bench may also bring comfort to those who have lost someone through suicide and this project empowers the local community to provide their own support for each other.

North Somerset Council are supporting the project; The Clevedon Men’s Shed helped with the final installation; Stowells of Yatton are providing free concrete for the foundation; and Somerset Wood Recycling have turned the idea into a formal design and are building it.

There are plans for a second bench in Weston-super-Mare, and hopefully more after that! Let’s make this the #ClevedontalkingPoint. Let’s reduce isolation, encourage connection, build community and end the stigma of mental health!

Contact We are Aware for more details or visit their Facebook site at https://www.facebook.com/AwareNS/