
Latest news from Mind in Taunton and West Somerset

New Somerset Mind partnership will strengthen service provision across the county

The population of Somerset may soon be able to access the services of 'Somerset Mind'; as the three Local Mind Associations in the county are joining forces in a bid to form an umbrella organisation. There are currently three Mind affiliated charities in Somerset - Mind in Taunton and West Somerset, South Somerset Mind and Mind in Sedgemoor (also known as New Directions).

Many charities are 'feeling the pinch' as grants are harder to secure, and statutory agencies are moving towards county-wide tendering. As a collective, the three Mind Associations have a wealth of experience in different types of support and training. By working together it is hoped that we can continue to provide high quality services, whilst providing a stronger voice in campaigning to reducing the stigma and prejudice experienced by people with mental health problems.

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If you do one thing today...
Thank you
Contact us

Do you have something you would like to put in the next edition of Mind update? If so, please contact Jo on 01823 334906 or email on JoM@mindtws.org.uk

The deadline for articles for the next edition is:

1 March 2008

Stuart Hooper, Mind in Taunton and West Somerset's Chief Executive, is excited about the prospect of closer partnership working. "It is a difficult time at the moment for small charities" said Stuart. "We hope that this new partnership will enable us to offer competitive, tailored support across the whole of Somerset. South Somerset Mind and New Directions currently provide excellent support and training in their areas, and we are very excited about working more closely with them in the future".

Vacancies - Board of Directors

There is currently an exciting opportunity to join our Board of Directors. The Board provides strategic direction for the organisation and oversees spending and standards. Being a Director means making a vital contribution to the development and delivery of Mind in Taunton and West Somerset's independent, local mental health services.

The Board meets monthly and we are looking for two individuals who can commit to the equivalent of approximately two hours per week. We particularly encourage and welcome applications from people who have direct experience of using mental health services and who live in Taunton Deane or West Somerset. For more information please contact Stuart Hooper, Chief Executive, on 01823 334906 or Stuart.Hooper@mindtws.org.uk

Project updates

New manager for Mindline

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome to our staff team Andy Pritchard. Andy has recently moved to the area, having previously worked for Mind in Westminster, and took over the role of Mindline Manager in December. Andy will be working hard over the next few months getting to know staff and volunteers – do introduce yourself if you see him in and around the office!

If you would like to find out more about Mindline or would like to contact Andy you can call the office on 01823 334906 or email Andrew.Pritchard@mindtws.org.uk

Mind Christmas hand appeal



Back in November National Mind sent out their Christmas appeal to around 55,000 supporters.

Christmas can be a difficult time for many people and the appeal focused on the distress and loneliness often felt around Christmas. It discussed talking therapies and the wide variety of services on offer through Local Mind Associations, such as support groups and counselling.

Inside the appeal, donors found a green 'hand card', which they were asked to write a message on. This way, Mind were trying to encourage people to show support by performing an act beyond giving a gift. Hundreds of the hand messages were sent back to Mind and distributed to Local Mind Associations across the country where they were displayed on Christmas trees or as decorations.

The picture above shows staff and clients from Peace of Mind and our string of hand messages.

Dulverton drop-in

The West Somerset Inclusion Project is beginning its new outreach programme with the launch of a service in Dulverton offering information and advice on all aspects of mental health. Staff from the Minehead office will be in Dulverton Town Hall every Thursday between 12noon and 2pm– anybody is welcome to drop in.

Carnival capers

Mind in Taunton and West Somerset were delighted this year to be chosen as one of the charities to benefit from the fundraising activities of Taunton and District Carnival Committee. Staff and volunteers were out in force on carnival night shaking their tins and an enjoyable - and profitable! - night was had by all. At the end of November we attended the Carnival Committee's annual presentation evening and were thrilled to receive a cheque from the committee for £1,500.

Have your say over services

Have you been affected by anxiety, depression and phobias and other stress related illness? Somerset Primary Care Trust are asking people in Somerset to tell them about their experiences of accessing services in a bid to ensure that local people have access to the help they need, when they need it. This is your chance to have your say about the future of our local mental health service.

Copies of the consultation document can be obtained by calling 01460 238625 or from the www.somersetpct.nhs.uk

Volunteering news

As a small organisation that has to raise all of its own funds we very much need and value the input of all our unpaid staff – as do those who need and use our services.

Many of our services would not exist if it were not for a dedicated team of volunteers. Mindline for example, our out-of-hours telephone helpline, is supported by a team of 20+ trained volunteers, without whom it would not be able to operate. Whether or not you have a personal interest in mental health issues you will get a lot out of volunteering with us.

- ◆ **Make a difference** - Volunteering gives you an opportunity to make a difference to people's lives in your community.
- ◆ **Improve your employability** – Volunteering proves to your future employer that you have developed necessary skills & are a committed person.
- ◆ **Have fun** – Volunteering is a fun and fulfilling allowing you to experience masses of opportunities not usually available to you.
- ◆ **Gain experience** - Volunteering gives you a chance to get experience in a field you'd like to work in.
- ◆ **Access training** – Many of the volunteer projects will include training, which will be useful both on the project and in later life.
- ◆ **Experience diversity** – Volunteering gives you the chance to meet new people - perhaps people who you would not normally come across.

Robin's story...

"I was diagnosed paranoid schizophrenic 11 years ago and also suffer from depression. Having been detained under Section 3 of the Mental Health Act three times, I have found it very difficult to find a stable job. Indeed, I have found that the system one becomes accustomed to after a mental health diagnosis is a kind of trap. Often the only company are other people in the system and the scope for adult conversation is very limited. This is very different from the academic world I was formerly accustomed to, having performed research at places as diverse as the University of Oxford and the University of Bayreuth.

I have worked voluntarily for Mind in Taunton & West Somerset for some time now. I enjoy interacting with the people there, many of whom have been through the mill too. The atmosphere offers an escape from the mental health trap I alluded to earlier. Furthermore, opportunities to retrain exist and the possibility exists that I might rejoin the job market at a later stage."

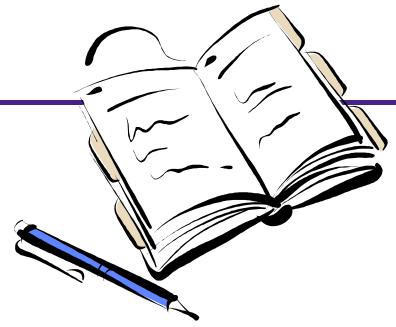


ABOVE: Robert T. Riley, one of our top fundraising volunteers, regularly holds collections at local supermarkets and other events. Robert enjoys getting out and about on the streets of Taunton looking for potential supporters!

Help us make a difference...

...now is the time for New Year's resolutions after all! If you are thinking of getting involved in some charitable activity why not get in touch with us and find out how you could make a difference to the lives of local people in emotional distress. Whether you would like to become a Mindline volunteer or just rattle a tin for an hour, we will have something to interest you!

Dates for your diary



Every Thursday: Food co-op at Chamberlains Café, North Street Congregational Church, Taunton. Fresh, local, organic food straight from the farmer. Orders need to be placed a week in advance. You can place your order through our Taunton office or by coming along to the café on a Thursday afternoon.

Wednesday 30 January, 2.30pm - 4.30pm: Coffee afternoon at the YMCA, Lisieux Way, Taunton. Come along, have a cup of tea and some home-made cake and enter yourself into the free prize draw - you may win yourself some Marks & Spencer's vouchers! Everyone welcome.

Saturday 1 March: Street collection in Taunton town centre. As many volunteers as possible are needed to make this event as successful as possible. If you are able to spare an hour or two to shake a tin for us please contact Jo at the Taunton office.

Thursday 20 March: Easter Extravaganza at Chamberlains Café, North Street Congregational Church. Come and treat yourself to some home-made Easter crafts and cakes. There will also be an Easter Egg raffle to be drawn on the day.

If you do one thing today...

- ◆ **Make a donation.** You can do this by sending us a cheque to the contact address below or via our website at www.mindtws.org.uk
- ◆ **Do your shopping online** at www.buy.at/mindtaunton and we will earn commission on all your purchases at no extra cost to you. There are loads of great offers so do check it out!
- ◆ **Put up a poster.** There is a poster enclosed with this newsletter - just stick it up on your office notice board or local shop and you will be helping us to raise valuable funds.
- ◆ **Tell us your story.** If you have personal experience of a mental health problem, your story could help others. We are often in contact with the media who need stories about mental health to help raise awareness. Your contact with us will be totally confidential.
- ◆ **Pass on this newsletter** to a friend and help to spread the word about mental health issues.

Thank you...

...Marks & Spencer for donating £100 of store vouchers

...The Souter Charitable Trust for a £1,000 grant for Mindline

...The Alchemy Foundation for a £500 grant for Mindline

...The Norman Family Charitable trust for a grant of £250 to help develop and distribute the newsletter

...Everyone in Wellington who stopped to put money in our collection tins

Contact us

We welcome feedback on any aspect of our work - good or bad!

You can contact us at:
The Market Building
Canal Road
Taunton
TA1 1PN

Tel: 01823 334906

Email: JoM@mindtws.org.uk

