

RESULTS OF MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

Blackburn with Darwen Adult Learning Service took part in a Department for Education (DfE) funded Community Learning Mental Health research project between October 2015 and August 2017. The research project looked at whether non-formal adult and community learning can support people in managing mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. The focus of the research was on helping people to develop the tools, strategies and resilience to manage their mental health and aid recovery.

The findings were released on Mental Health Awareness day in October. A key positive finding from the research was that 39% of learners who started their course with clinically significant symptoms of anxiety and/or depression no longer had these at the end of the course.

During the project the Adult Learning Team developed strong operational links with health partners and continues to offer the Positive Minds provision as part of the wider Health and Wellbeing offer.

Additionally, three Adult Learning tutors have successfully completed the nationally acclaimed Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) accredited training to develop an MHFA offer for local communities, individuals and local businesses and organisations.

ARTFUL MINDS GROUP

A group of people with anxiety and more complex mental health conditions such as bipolar attended the 'Relaxing through Painting and Drawing' Positive Minds class. All participants reported gains in confidence and wanted to build on their learning and achievements in the classroom. Supported by a Tutor and a Community Connector they formed a peer led art group and they have been helped in planning, resourcing and managing the group. The Artful Minds Group now meets weekly at Hopwood Court and members have continued to grow in confidence, working independently and supporting each other which has reduced feelings of isolation. Members have expressed that they are now seen as people rather than as medical conditions and recommend the group to anyone who is anxious or low.

With support from Community Connectors the group is planning to be constituted to achieve charitable status and apply for funding. The group has been so successful that there is now a waiting list and the possibility of starting a second group is being explored.

DOMESTIC ABUSE UPDATE

Blackburn with Darwen Council, alongside partners from across the region, has successfully bid and been awarded £1.2m funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government funding. This will support people who are in refuge from Blackburn with Darwen to be able to move into their own accommodation with additional outreach support. This also increases our ability to support more local people with commensurate measures available across the wider Lancashire footprint.

COUNCIL SUPPORT FOR STREET REACH

The Street Reach Service has been re-introduced in Blackburn Town Centre. The service, in partnership with town centre businesses and the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire, proactively engages with adults in the town centre who may need help and support, are begging or are homeless or at risk of homelessness. As part of the Making Every Adult Matter offer the service has a range of support services that they are able to refer people to including one to one support, mental health services and housing.