

Winter | Spring 2023

Welcome

It seems a very long time since our last newsletter pre Covid-19 and we have all been through such a lot since then. During 2022 it was wonderful to hold most of our meetings face-to-face again.

The fantastic work of our Experts by Experience has continued throughout the last couple of years, and we are really pleased to share with you some of their amazing work. For anyone who doesn't know us, Mental Health Together (MHT) is the commissioned mental health engagement service for Derby and Derbyshire.

The focus of our work is to recruit and support people with lived experience of mental health challenges to help shape and improve the services that people receive.



Our Experts come to us with different experience and different skills but with one unifying passion - to make a positive difference! We think you'll agree they've been doing just that as you read their stories on the following pages.

Get in touch with us



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healthwatchderbyshire.co.uk/mental-health-together



'Freepost HEALTHWATCH DERBYSHIRE'

Highlights

- The Living Well service and how our Experts are transforming services.
- Meet our new Living Well team members.
- Information on our High Peak Engagement group.
- Take a look at our Good Practice Guide, designed by our Experts.

Transforming Community Mental Health Services

Mental Health Together has been supporting Experts by Experience to help design and develop the new 'Living Well' mental health community service. This is a national transformation of services and in Derbyshire it began in the High Peak.

Three of our Experts volunteered their time and experience to help shape the vision and values of the new service. They were part of a 'Collaborative' of people – experts, voluntary sector, social care, and health – who met regularly to design the new model. In 2021 more Experts joined a Collaborative for Derby City and have been helping design the service local to them.

You can find out much more about Living Well and Derby Wellbeing here: livingwelderbyshire.co.uk

or by scanning the QR code below. In Derby city the service is called 'Derby Wellbeing' instead of 'Living Well' but it is exactly the same service model.

The work is also starting to roll out right across the north of the county so if you'd like to get involved, please do contact us.

scan me with your
phone camera



Two of our Experts tell us what it's been like for them to be involved:-

Lisa - Expert for Derby Wellbeing Service

"I joined the Collaborative meetings for redesigning Derby City's mental health offer. It was nerve-wracking, but I was supported and encouraged by Mental Health Together. I did a presentation on the importance of the voice of lived experience being involved when designing new services. I stressed the importance of including as many and varied people as possible. When you have heard from one person, you have only heard one person! I wanted to highlight especially how easy it is for those of us who are quieter to miss out on having a say at all.

"I have also been part of interviews for Derby Wellbeing staff and assessed applications from organisations to provide Peer Workers and Wellbeing Coaches. This was important to me as it puts lived experience at the heart of Derby Wellbeing and will add much value. I have appreciated using my mental illness experience in a positive way. It gives meaning and value to some dark times."

Claire - Expert for High Peak Living Well

"I became an Expert by Experience a few years ago but wasn't able to attend meetings in person because of my anxiety disorder and health problems. So, I couldn't fully contribute in the way I wanted to. Then came the opportunity for me to virtually attend the Living Well Collaborative so I started attending the monthly meetings with the great support of the MHT team. Myself, and a few other Experts, have shared our views from our own experiences to help create the new person-centred approach of 'Living Well'.

I feel like my opinions are valued and that I am contributing towards the future vision for mental health services

"Being part of the Living Well Collaborative as an Expert by Experience has made me feel like my opinions are valued and that I am contributing towards the future vision for mental health services in my community. It's also given me a sense of purpose which helps with my own mental health."



Introduction to the new Living Well team

Our team has expanded as the community mental health transformation programme rolls out across Derbyshire. Our latest team members are new in post and look forward to meeting some of you very soon.

"Hello, I'm Ronique. I have very recently joined colleagues at MHT as an engagement officer for the Living Well transformation project. As an engagement officer, I am committed to listening to individuals and providing space to share stories, whilst empowering people to be part of creating changes in the services they access.



"I have extensive experience of working within child and adolescent mental health, most recently as a family support practitioner. I am passionate about supporting others with their mental health and wellbeing. Through my current studies in psychotherapeutic counselling and by joining MHT, I am now making the transition into adult mental health."

"Hello, I am Elena and I have recently joined the team as Living Well Engagement Lead Officer. I am excited about my new role, and I cannot wait to share my passion and enthusiasm for supporting and helping others with their mental health.



"I am a qualified teacher with a combined degree in Psychology and Criminology, with broad knowledge and understanding of mental health. Working with vulnerable adults has helped me to understand the difficulties individuals with mental health challenges experience daily and the need for change. My greatest aspiration is to break down existing barriers and stigma around mental health, and to inspire others to be part of this change."



The Living Well model is starting to be developed in Chesterfield, Bolsover/Northeast Derbyshire, and Derbyshire Dales. Do contact us if you think you'd like to get involved. We'd be more than happy to support you.

Pictured: The Mental Health Together team and new Living Well colleagues

More examples of our Experts' great work



Our Experts have been using their experience to help improve the way services are designed and delivered. Their influence extends into urgent mental health care, in-patient care, veteran mental health, maternal mental health, physical health and serious mental illness to name but a few. We are proud of, and grateful, for all their work.

Matt - Expert by Experience

"Speaking out and sharing experiences is an essential part of being an Expert by Experience. In 2021, I was suffering with my bipolar disorder and at times felt suicidal. The waiting time was eight months, and it simply was not and is not good enough. I spoke out about this, put together a presentation, and delivered this to the suicide prevention teams. I talked about how the process, from start to finish had too many holes into it. It led to me supporting the re-writing of letters sent out to patients to ensure that they contained all the necessary information a patient needs and to be more compassionate. These letters have now gone live.



"I truly believe that by myself and other Experts by Experience speaking out about what we know, what we have learned, and most importantly what we have experienced, we are in the very best place to guide change that will benefit all who suffer with mental health issues. I am proud to be an Expert by Experience and encourage anyone with lived experience to get involved and speak out. Together we can create change for the better"

Hazel - Expert by Experience



"Life can be cruel sometimes and I have probably had more than my share of knocks, rape and then a physical assault at work leading to a brain injury. I was a psychiatric nurse. Looking back the physical and mental effects of trauma had a profound effect on me, and I had lost myself. I became very reliant on others, anxious in new situations with no confidence and no purpose. I felt frustrated and useless. Today I can't believe I'm that person.

"I can't actually remember how I got involved with MHT, I'm so glad I did though. With support and guidance from Niki, Kath, and the team, I finally feel useful again. I think the nurse in me needs to still care. I'm still passionate about mental health. I think we are still the 'Cinderella' service.

Now I feel in a unique situation - nurse turned patient. I've experienced the horrors and trials of a social care package and private care. The system is so flawed but many with mental health problems are either too unwell or lack the confidence or ability to complain or question what's going on.

"I was really surprised when it was suggested I stand for hospital governor and even more thrilled when I was elected. Now I'm representing my own community in South Derbyshire. I'm learning so much. My friends at MHT have been invaluable with this. For example, I am learning about the needs of autistic people from fellow Experts so I can better represent them as a governor.

"I'm speaking up, raising issues, asking questions, and meeting the most amazing people along the way"

I'm meeting the most amazing people and am honoured to learn their stories. I'm able to network with different organisations to try and improve things. Our local First Responders now have access to mental health training and our local community mental health staffing levels are increasing. Personally, I'm thriving! I love the challenge of the role and my confidence has come on. Finally, I'm useful and the old Hazel again."

Thomas - Expert by Experience

“As an Expert by Experience I have been talking to senior commissioners in Derbyshire about dual diagnosis and acute inpatient admissions and about prototyping new services. Whilst in hospital myself I helped to design a new sensory assessment tool to help clinicians understand the sensory needs of autistic people on an inpatient ward.

“I have also met with the Chief Inspector for Derbyshire constabulary about changes to the way police can act and process a person in crisis or distress in a community setting. I feel the police have really listened and taken on board my views.

“My work as an Expert by Experience has been a lifeline and passion for a few years now and with the backing and support of Mental Health Together I hope the role has allowed me to make changes to better patients’ services in a few settings.”



James Lewis - Head of Joint Strategic Commissioning for Learning Disabilities & Autism

“Thomas has provided invaluable insights into how local services can better help autistic people be recognised, validated and live the lives they want. We are so grateful for his generosity & honesty in sharing his experiences and ideas.”

If you're autistic, have a learning disability, or are neurodiverse and would like to play a part in improving local services then please email: james.lewis25@nhs.net to schedule a confidential discussion.

“ I will continue to use my knowledge experience and passion alongside the professional bodies I work with to make better change ”

Pictured: Thomas with James Lewis and Occupational Therapist Andy Wright at a recent visit to the Radbourne Unit.



High Peak Engagement Group

This group was originally set up in partnership with Derbyshire Healthcare Foundation Trust to bring together service receivers, carers, and professionals in the High Peak. MHT has been facilitating the meetings since 2018 and it continues to be a thriving group. During the past year, we have invited several guest speakers to share knowledge of local services and to hear the perspective of people who use them. The group has also attended the High Peak Place Alliance to ask questions and make observations about local mental health provision.



We asked some of our members to share their thoughts about the High Peak engagement group:

Rose - Expert by Experience

"It's a group that listens, that has the diverse voice of lived experience at its heart. It provides a fulcrum for mental health issues in the High Peak. Many powerful experiences have been offered as a feedback loop from the ground, from lived experience back to the professionals.

As a carer of 20 years for someone with a severe mental illness, it is very rare to meet such an authentic, respectful, and empathic team. The leadership is outstanding, and it comes across that the agenda of those with lived experience is genuinely top of their agenda."

Louise Lee - Derbyshire Districts Citizens Advice

"I manage a debt advice team and I'm not a mental health professional but many of the clients we work with have mental health issues which are made worse through worrying about debt. It therefore, helps us to know about local provision and changes to the services available to them.

Any barriers our clients may face are highlighted which helps us to improve our own work process. I learn more from their first-hand experiences than I ever could from a training session. So, a big thanks to the group."

Helen - Expert by Experience

"We have a regular membership which involves carers, service receivers, and organisations such as the local Community Mental Health Team, Crisis Team, Stepping Hill Hospital (which is outside of Derbyshire), Citizens Advice, Derbyshire Carers Association, Living Well, and Derbyshire Federation for Mental Health to name a few. Without the engagement meeting, none of these services would be 'joined up'. By bringing everyone together, sometimes even the professionals learn from each other."



Good Practice Guide for involving voices of lived experience



Pictured: Experts Helen and Faye with the new Good Practice Guides. Photo Credit: Tony fisher

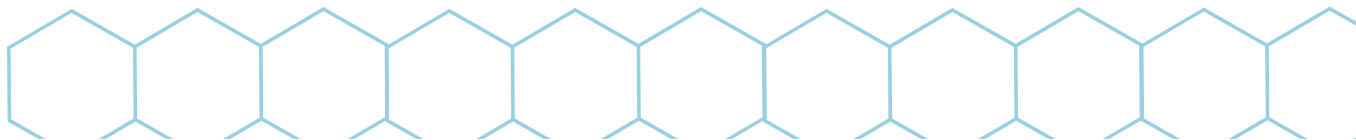
Over the last few months, we have been busy pulling together the combined wisdom of our Experts to create a Good Practice Guide. The aim of it is to help professionals create the right environment for people with lived experience to participate fully and effectively. Over time they have experienced many barriers to involvement but also some excellent examples of how to do it well.

We hope this Guide and its accompanying checklist will prove valuable and help ensure the best possible opportunities in the future. We have already received positive feedback from professionals -



“I think the documents are fantastic. Really clear, well laid out and answers pretty much every question I could think of in terms of involving lived experience.”
- Kath Rowe, Suicide Prevention Programme Manager

You will be able to read the Good Practice Guide and download it for yourself from our website soon. If you would like a copy of the Good Practice Guide, please contact us and we'd be happy to email or post one to you.



Become an Expert by Experience

Mental Health Together believes that people with first-hand experience, and those who care for them, should have a say in future services. This is why we are recruiting Experts by Experience, people who have personal or caring experience of mental health services.



What should I do if I'm interested in being an Expert by Experience?

Give us a call or send us an email and we will arrange a chat with you. We can help you think about the best ways to use your experience to make a difference. We will take time to understand your needs and your skills and what time you have available to offer. We can also introduce you to our other Experts to share support, knowledge, ideas etc.



I am proud to be an Expert by Experience and encourage anyone with lived experience to get involved and speak out. Together we can create change for the better - Matt, Expert by Experience

Pictured: Experts at a recent peer support meeting. Photo credit: Tony Fisher



Mental Health
TOGETHER



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