Healthy Minds Forum: Notes of meeting on 21/2/23

On Tuesday 21 February 2023 we re-launched the Healthy Minds Forum, which had not been able to run for several years due to lack of resource and challenges throughout the pandemic.

Healthy Minds service users, volunteers, staff and others from relevant organisations locally attended the event, coming together to explore ideas around membership and the future of the Forum.


Attendance: 26

Definitions
HM: *Acronym for 'Healthy Minds'*
Statutory service: *A service mandated by the government e.g. provided by the local authority or the NHS.*
Lived Experience: *Things people have experienced themselves in their lives which provide knowledge and understanding that those who haven't had these experiences do not have.*

Membership Workshop

In groups we explored what benefits people in the HM community would like from a future membership offer, posing the question: 'If you could become an official member of Healthy Minds, what would you like to get out of your membership?'.
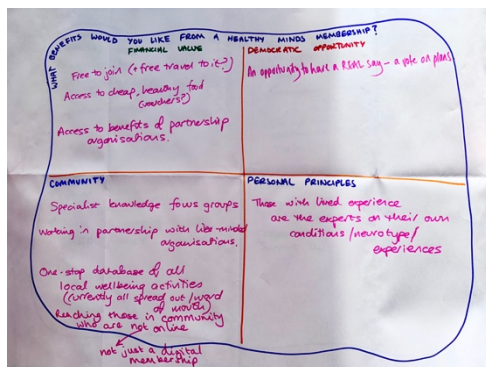
We separated these possible benefits into four categories: financial value; democratic opportunity; community value; personal principle.

There were also discussions about what benefits membership would also bring to HM as an organisation, although this was covered in less detail.

Although some ideas were discussed around possible benefits for organisations as members, this needs a more focused consultation as the group were mainly made up of individuals and therefore thinking more from the perspective of an individual as a future member.

The ideas generated from the workshop will become part of an ongoing co-design process to develop Healthy Minds' membership offer in 2023.

	Benefits to Members (individuals or organisations)	Benefits to Healthy Minds
Financial	• Merchandise – badges, personalised items. • Free to join (and free to travel to it?) • Produce more funding translating into… • Scheme similar to NHS 'blue light card' - Discounts for members at local businesses – e.g. access to healthy food vouchers. Or possible points system. • Access to benefits of other partner organisations. • Discounts for other wellbeing services – e.g. network of CC4Us providers. • Member organisations could access Healthy Minds' Calderdale Wellbeing Services (project in development).	• Encourages members to fundraise for the charity. • 'Pay as you feel' or tiered model could provide some income. • Encourages regular donating. • Data strengthens HM's position for funding bids. • Strengthens HM's standing in local and regional health-scape – statutory bodies more likely to respect HM. • Volunteering time = financial value. • Income from member organisations and businesses

Democratic	• Understand better how HM operates. More transparency and strong communication with members about changes – members are better informed. • Engagement, involvement, consultation and coproduction opportunities, having a real say in the organisation. • Members can join the Forum group and take collective action on issues that matter to them. • Right to vote on key issues/changes. • Members respect the consensus of the whole membership. • Less-heard and underserved members' voices are amplified/on equal level as more outspoken members. • Members direct what services they want (more 'user-led') • Space to give talks and share knowledge.	• HM gets a clearer picture of what members want through democratic processes. • Better attendance at the AGM and other democratic/engagement events – e.g. the Forum. • HM can quickly and easily consult the membership on key issues – e.g. when HM is asked by other organisations to share insight, we can quickly do this. • HM is accountable to the Membership, decisions are collectively considered.
Community	• Social activities and opportunities, e.g. taster sessions at drop-ins guided by service user's interests. • Friendship and connection with other members. • Clearer sense of the HM community and interacting with different people. • Networking opportunities for professionals. • Idea to create a one-stop database/platform of all local wellbeing services/activities – HM could create a signposting and wellbeing network. • Specialist knowledge focus groups. • Not just a digital membership – available to those offline. • Member organisations can access and connect with individual members.	• Membership creates a solid community of supporters. • Members will raise awareness of HM through word of mouth and sharing a sense of belonging with others, bringing new members in. • Members will value HM's services more. • HM staff teams feel supported and motivated by the backing of a membership. • Members are more likely to stand by the organisation through difficult periods. • Develop network of member organisations who are more likely to support us, with resources or otherwise.
Personal Principles	• Membership card – symbolises membership as part of one's identity. • Feeling valued by the organisation & lived experience is valued. • Opportunity for members to help people. • Supporting Calderdale's mental health, supporting local communities. • Members and member organisations align with HM's values. • Needs to be an inclusive membership. • Member organisations/businesses can learn about HM's approach to mental health and apply it to their own organisation.	• Exercises HM's 'user-led' ethos. • Exercises HM's core values: Local, Honest, Respect, Empower, Lived Experience. • Creates a shared identity between staff, service users, volunteers etc. helping to remove the 'them and us' feeling that arises in healthcare settings.

Speakers

Jen Fagan – Healthy Minds

Jen, a co-founder and current trustee of Healthy Minds, briefly spoke to the group about the history of the Forum and how it came to be. She described how Healthy Minds began as a small group of people with mental health needs who came together to create provision that was lacking locally. She explained how the Forum group became a kind of service user action group alongside Healthy Minds, where people with experiences of using mental health services (usually statutory services) could bring concerns to the group and collectively explore ways of tackling issues, providing for needs, and influencing change in the 'system'. Jen expressed how excited and hopeful she is to see the Forum be up and running again.

Debbie Neary – Healthwatch Calderdale

Debbie is the Mental Health Engagement Officer at Healthwatch Calderdale, an independent watchdog for NHS health and social care services. She explained the ways in which Healthwatch work to challenge those in authority to listen to service user voices and needs. This includes things like gathering feedback from the public and holding healthcare services to account, and providing information, signposting and advice for people struggling to navigate health and social care systems.

She shared how the ['Never Heard'](#) project gives a voice to people who are often unheard – engaging with people through creative means to capture their voice. She explained how Healthwatch aim to 'close the loop' so that those who share their stories are continually involved and informed. She encouraged anyone with concerns, stories or complaints about services to get in touch with Healthwatch.

Arlie Haslam – Leeds Mind
Arlie is the Suicide Prevention Coproduction Coordinator at Leeds Mind, she joined us via teams to share about her two-year project engaging volunteers with personal experience relating to suicide to create system change across West Yorkshire. The project aims to play a role in suicide prevention by championing the voices of lived experience, raising awareness and reducing stigma around suicide, and producing recommendations for changes in current services across the region.

One aspect of the project is 'Community Conversations' - led by volunteers, these are co-produced questions to find out more about people's experience of asking for help, gaining insight on what needs to improve in terms of access to support. Arlie is looking for groups and communities to host these Community Conversations – **could the Forum be a space for this?**

Arlie now has two volunteers recruited in Calderdale – if you are interested in [volunteering as part of the project](#), please get in touch with her: arlie.haslam@leedsmind.org.uk

Topic Generation

In the final part of the session, we discussed and collected future topics that the group members wanted to explore in future meetings. These were the topics which mattered to people in the room. We also noted a few strategies and methods that we could use to run our Forum, tackle issues and influence change. Following the session, a poll will be created to gain consensus on which issues the group would like to prioritise in upcoming Forum meetings.

Topics/issues

Structural & Social
- Disparity and inequality in mental health in Calderdale.
- Medicalisation of mental health.
- Teenage and young people's mental health (looking at 14 – 30 range) including issues such as isolation, exam stress, leaving school, lack of opportunity, low pay.
- Destigmatising mental health.
- Media negativity and misinformation.
- The role of the police in mental health.
- The covid pandemic
- Mental health in BAME and Asian communities.
- Language and terminology.
- Loneliness and isolation.
- Addiction.
- Suicide prevention.
- Finances and mental health –
    - Food banks, dignity, and the long-term stress of financial struggles.
    - Long, drawn-out benefits processes and appeals and the traumatic impact of these.

Service-based
- Clarity in the mental health sector – how does it work and who is a part of it?
- Lack of compassion and humility in services.
- Impact and demand on the voluntary sector.
- Signposting to A&E.
- The concept of 'Them and us' (NHS and HM, Professional and service user)
- Support for late diagnosed Autistic adults (or any late diagnosis)
- The gap between primary and secondary care and the time lag this causes with nothing in the interim.

Strategies/Methods

- Showing progress from each Forum meeting – e.g. at the next meeting sharing what has been done from/since the previous Forum meeting.
- Hybrid group – some online, some in person meetings/activities.
- Disseminating information to other areas or forums.
- Locality based.
- Considering timing.
- Awareness raising campaigns.
- Fundraising.
- Signposting.

A feedback form for those who attended the session was circulated in order to capture people's experience of the session and to get a sense of times and locations that could work for future meetings.

Thank you to all who are getting involved in the Forum at this early stage of its re-launch.

If you are interested in joining the Forum group, please complete this form to register your interest, or contact Georgia: georgia@healthymindscalderdale.co.uk