

Groundbreaking new platform launched to support mental health

Public Health England (PHE), in partnership with the NHS, today (Monday 7 October 2019) launches Every Mind Matters to help people take simple steps to look after their mental health, improve their mental wellbeing and support others.

It is increasingly recognised that taking care of our mental health is as important as maintaining good physical health. A new PHE survey reveals more than 8 in ten (83%) people have experienced early signs of poor mental health including feeling anxious, stressed, having low mood or trouble sleeping in the last 12 months. While these can be a natural response to life's challenges, they can become more serious if people don't take action, and many wait too long.

Over a quarter (27%) of people who experienced signs of poor mental health waited at least 6 months before taking action to manage their mental health, with three quarters (74%) of those who waited this long wishing they had done so sooner.

Every Mind Matters shows people the simple steps they can take to be better prepared for life's ups and downs. The new platform, which has been endorsed by the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP), will enable people to create a personalised action plan recommending a set of self-care actions to deal with stress, boost mood, improve sleep and feel in control.

A special film to promote Every Mind Matters has been written by Richard Curtis and directed by Rankin, narrated by Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and The Duke and Duchess of Sussex. It shows how we can all look after our mental health and will be aired at around 8:45pm on Monday night (7 October 2019) across ITV, Channel 4 and Sky channels.

The powerful film features a range of people whose lives have been affected by poor mental health, including a cast of well-known faces: Gillian Anderson, Glenn Close, Freddie Flintoff, Professor Green, Davina McCall, Jordan Stephens, Will Young, Sir Bradley Wiggins, Nadiya Hussain, Sarah Taylor, Rob Beckett, Katie Piper, Joe Sugg and Alastair Campbell.

The launch follows 18 months of planning and local and regional piloting, developed with clinical and academic experts, national mental health charities and input from people with experience of poor mental health. Clinically-assured by the NHS, Every Mind Matters is evidence-based and it shows people how to build simple changes into their daily lives – such as reframing unhelpful thoughts, breathing exercises and increasing physical activity.

All of these have well evidenced impact on improving and maintaining good mental health, which can help people to get more out of life, feel and

function better, have more positive relationships and manage difficult times – now and in the future.

Every Mind Matters is backed by a coalition of mental health charities and champions, including Mind, Mental Health Foundation, MHFA England, Samaritans, Heads Together, Centre for Mental Health, Rethink, Time to Change, NSUN, What Works Centre for Wellbeing and Good Thinking.

This new resource is available for the public and for GPs to advise their patients to use. The NHS will also promote Every Mind Matters to its one-million plus workforce.

Some of the nation's biggest companies from the high street, entertainment, sport and finance have pledged to adopt Every Mind Matters for their employees, customers and fans. These include Nationwide, Greggs and the England and Wales Cricket Board, who will be empowering their staff and the public to take their mental health into their own hands and encouraging them to create their own action plan.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Our health – both mental and physical – is an asset that needs to be nurtured. We're all aware of the benefits of looking after our physical health and the steps we can take to keep ourselves healthy, but many of us are not as knowledgeable or proactive as we could be when it comes to our mental health.

Every Mind Matters will benefit us all with an accessible tool to help manage our wellbeing at the click of a button. It will offer vital support to those living with a mental health condition and give each of us valuable and personalised tips on how to better cope with life's daily struggles, while contributing to tackling the stigma that can still surround mental health.

Duncan Selbie, chief executive of Public Health England, said:

Our health is affected by our circumstances, including having a job, friends and a roof over our heads. Anxiety, stress, low mood and trouble sleeping can affect everyone. Every Mind Matters aims to help people to better handle life's ups and downs.

Simon Stevens, NHS chief executive, said

Over the past few years there's been a profound sea change in public attitudes and awareness about mental health. So at the same time the NHS is expanding the availability of specialist mental health support and treatment, people are increasingly interested in practical steps they can take themselves to prevent and manage

common mental health problems such as anxiety, stress and depression. That's where Every Mind Matters comes in, as a helpful complement to the work of NHS mental health teams and services.

Paul Farmer, chief executive of Mind, said:

We all have mental health just as we all have physical health, and it can vary from good to poor. Most people know how important it is to look after their physical health and more and more people are understanding the need to look after their mental health as well, but lots of us don't know where to start.

That's why Mind has been helping develop Every Mind Matters, to empower people with the tools they need to deal with everyday causes of stress, anxiety, low mood and trouble sleeping. Taking proactive steps like increasing physical activity and connecting with others can help prevent these issues developing into more serious mental health problems further down the line.

At a time when only a third of people with a mental health problem get access to any kind of help and support, it's important to do whatever we can to help people take steps to stay well and try and prevent mental health problems developing in the first place.

We hope that this campaign will help increase public awareness of how we can all stay as mentally well as possible.

You can discover simple steps for a healthier mind and create your bespoke action plan at www.everymindmatters.co.uk.

PHE survey results

The PHE survey also found that nearly 6 in ten (57%) people who experienced concerns about their mental health turned to unhealthy behaviours – smoking, drinking alcohol, unhealthy eating or taking recreational drugs

Just over half (53%) of people who experienced concerns about their mental health avoided social situations or contact from friends and family.

Of those who took action, around a third (31%) only did so when it was having an impact on their daily life.

Background

New research to improve treatment for adolescent mental health

- £35 million programme will build a better understanding of the adolescent mind to improve the standards of care available
- Mental health issues affect around one in eight children and young people

Vital improvements to treatments for mental health conditions amongst teenagers and young adults could be on the horizon thanks to new government-backed research.

In the UK, one in eight children or young people are affected by mental health problems. Approximately three-quarters of children or young people who experience mental health problems will do so before the age of 24.

A new £35 million government-backed research programme launched today (Monday 7 October) aims to give more support to teenagers battling with mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, self-harm and eating disorders. Academics will look at external tensions and genetics to ensure mental health problems are being treated as effectively as possible at this crucial age, while the brain is still developing.

Adolescence is often a poorly understood period in our lives, when the brain is particularly sensitive to external influences – while youngsters' social and cultural interactions are rapidly changing. Early intervention has a crucial role to play in ensuring young people have quicker, better access to support and treatments.

Business Secretary Andrea Leadsom said:

Our teenage years can be the most fantastic of our life. But there are those for whom the teenage years are the most difficult. We know that in the UK, three quarters of those that will experience mental health problems will do so before they turn 24.

The £35 million government-backed research programme we are announcing today will look to better understand why so many teenagers face mental health problems, and how we can better support, detect and treat them.

Promoting healthy behaviours, the new programme will benefit from £35 million over its five-year duration and will look at how youngsters interact with the world, their biological background, their social relationships and achievements at school. It is open to Higher Education Institutes, businesses and Public Sector Research Schemes for involvement – building a national capability across the UK.

The project could lead to early identification of vulnerable young people in schools and health services and better diagnosis, while exploring what makes some teenagers more susceptible to conditions than others. The findings from this research could potentially reduce instances of anti-social behaviour, substance abuse or low educational attainment.

Emma Thomas, Chief Executive of YoungMinds:

This investment in research is hugely welcome. We know from young people we work with that the factors that can lead to poor mental health are often complex, but that difficult experiences at a young age – like bereavement, bullying or abuse – can have a huge impact. It's really important that we have clear evidence about how the circumstances children grow up in affect their mental health, and about what forms of support make the most difference.

While we undoubtedly need investment in NHS mental health services, we would also hope that this research would lead to further action across government and across society to address the crisis and make early support a priority.

The investment is the latest move by the government to improve mental health support for youngsters – with the NHS Long Term Plan being backed by an extra £2.3 billion a year, so 345,000 more children and young people have better access to mental health support by 2023-24. It also builds on the government's new health education curriculum, which will become mandatory in all schools from September 2020.

The funding forms part of the government's Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF), led by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) – and comes after the government reaffirming its commitment to invest at least 2.4% of GDP in R&D by 2027.

UK Research and Innovation Executive Chair for the Medical Research Council, Professor Fiona Watt, said:

It's clear that events in our teenage years have a major impact on lifelong mental health and wellbeing. The current statistics are stark – 75 per cent of mental health problems emerge by the age of 24. Mental health problems are on the rise and suicide is a leading cause of death in young people.

UK Research and Innovation is one of the top three funders of mental health research in the UK, and our researchers are making huge strides towards improving our understanding of mental health. This significant new investment will play a key role in unlocking the mysteries that surround how and why we develop mental health problems.

1. About the Strategic Priorities Fund: The Strategic Priorities Fund supports high quality multidisciplinary research and development priorities. This is the second wave of funding. The SPF Wave 2 total programme funding allocation is £496.8m.

2. About the Project: Adolescence, Mental Health and the Developing Mind – MRC with AHRC and ESRC Funding requested: £35 million over 5 years
Location(s): The intention is to build a national capability through calls which are open to HEIs, Institutes, PSREs and/or businesses across the UK, and therefore provide a variety of announcement opportunities in terms of place. This multidisciplinary, cross-sectoral programme aims to better understand the developing adolescent mind and the genetic, physiological, social and cultural factors that shape it, and how they interact to influence, both positively and negatively, lifelong mental health, educational attainment, identity, social relationships and behaviour. This integrated approach will: generate better interventions to promote good mental health; accelerate translation of research into policy and practice in education, healthcare and other public services; promote young people's life chances; and strengthen their involvement in research and innovation.

3. How else the government is supporting mental health for children and young people:
 - The new Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) are a new resource, funded and accountable through the NHS which will be established in 20% to 25% of the country by 2023 and will intervene in cases of mild to moderate mental health issues. These teams will employ new staff who are being recruited and trained specifically for the programme and will work with schools and colleges to improve join up between schools, colleges and mental health services/professionals and support them with mental health and wellbeing issues. The first 25 trailblazer sites, delivering 59 MHSTs will be up and running by the end of the year. A further 123 Mental Health Support Teams will be introduced in 57 sites around the country during 19-20, 48 of these sites are new, bringing the total number of sites to 73 to date.

 - The government is already on track to ensure 70,000 more children and young people get access to specialist mental health care by 2020/21 and are piloting a four-week waiting time in some areas so we can better understand how to reduce waiting times.

 - Through our new compulsory health education all children will be taught how to look after their mental wellbeing and recognise when classmates are struggling.

- We recognise that school-based counselling by well-qualified practitioners can play an important role in supporting pupils' mental health. To support schools to provide counselling, the government has provided advice to schools on how to deliver high quality [school-based counselling](#).
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UK aid-funded mine clearance success in Angola to be repeated in Zimbabwe

Thousands of people will be safe from the threat of landmines in Zimbabwe, thanks to fresh UK support for demining charity The HALO Trust.

UK aid will match public donations to the charity's Zimbabwe appeal, International Development Secretary Alok Sharma announced today (Sunday 6th October).

Zimbabwe is still one of the worst affected countries in the world as more than 75,000 people live near mines. Every day people cross dangerous land to reach schools, clinics and homes. Tragically more than 1,600 have lost their lives since the war in the region ended in the 1980s.

This is a widespread problem that is also felt in Angola. Last week HRH The Duke of Sussex retraced his mother's footsteps in Huambo, Angola, and saw that what was once a dangerous, landmine-littered field is now home to a thriving community.

UK aid, in partnership with demining charities, has helped clear 15 million square metres of landmines in Angola to make it safe again and educated more than 35,000 people about the dangers of mines.

The new UK aid support for The HALO Trust's Breaking Boundaries appeal aims to repeat the successes of demining in Angola in Zimbabwe.

International Development Secretary Alok Sharma said:

Landmines are indiscriminate weapons of war that maim and kill innocent men, women and children. Their devastation lasts long after conflict has ended.

I am proud to announce that, through UK Aid Match, we will double generous donations from the British public to help rid Zimbabwe of these deadly explosives.

The UK is deeply committed to clearing landmines in Zimbabwe and across the world, so no one has to live in fear of one wrong step.

James Cowan, HALO's CEO said:

The UK's support to HALO has freed hundreds of thousands of people from the fear of landmines and helped them rebuild after conflict.

Now the British public can donate to the Breaking Boundaries appeal knowing that every pound they give will be doubled by the UK Government. We will clear twice as many minefields and help twice as many people thanks to this new support.

Clearing landmines is a painstaking process and so often this is done by hand. The UK Aid Match appeal will give communities access to the 'mine muncher', a pioneering innovative machine, developed by British company MMD in Derbyshire. This chews up tough ground and has the potential to dramatically speed up the process of clearing mines.

With donations from the British public and the Breaking Boundaries appeal, The HALO Trust hope to clear 105,600 square metres of land in Zimbabwe over 12-months, helping more than 3,000 people get access to safe land which is vital for producing food and creating jobs.

Notes to editors

1. At the time of its independence in 1980, Zimbabwe was left with seven major mine areas along its borders with Mozambique and Zimbabwe. By the end of 2017, there were five remaining major minefields.
2. Since 2018, UK backed mine action has cleared 3.6 million square metres of contaminated or thought to be contaminated land in Zimbabwe.
3. Cleared areas will help rebuild those parts of Zimbabwe that have suffered from the threat of landmines. It will help generate opportunities for local farmers, commercial agriculture, and business, allow for the construction of schools and clinics, and enable the safe return of those displaced.
4. UK aid has provided mine risk education to over 12,000 adults and children in Zimbabwe.
5. The UK government will match up to £2 million of public donations to The HALO Trust's Breaking Boundaries appeal until 22 December.
6. For every £1 donated to a UK Aid Match charity appeal by a member of the British public, the UK government will also contribute £1 of UK aid, up to a set limit – in this case of £2 million – to help these projects go further in changing and saving lives.
7. All UK Aid Match funding announced today will go to The HALO Trust's project in Zimbabwe but the charity works in 25 countries and territories around the world to clear mines.
8. The UK Aid Match appeal for The HALO Trust builds on a £100 million UK Aid package announced in 2017 which aims to clear and make safe 150 million square metres of land and help 800,000 people live their lives free from the threat of mines by 2020 across Asia and Africa.
9. UK Aid Match is designed to provide opportunities for the UK public to engage with international development issues and to have a say in how UK

aid is spent, whilst boosting the impact of the best projects to reach the poorest people in developing countries.

10. Over the last six years, 61 organisations from across the UK have run UK Aid Match projects in 37 countries, helping around 23.4 million people.

ENDS

Chilterns Chalk Streams Conference – Position Statement

English chalk streams are one of the most precious things in the natural world. They are known for their clear waters, rich wildlife and for providing a beautiful place for people to enjoy.

As a child I spent many happy hours fishing in our chalk streams, not that I was ever very effective! The number of fish I caught might not have been very impressive but I grew to love the timeless beauty of our chalk streams.

Recently I have walked along the River Mimram and seen for myself the low flows and Environment Agency fish rescues that have taken place as a result. This is devastating to see. I care passionately about our chalk streams and am committed to doing everything possible to help them return to their former glory. That's why I am here today.

As many of you know, chalk streams flow from chalk aquifers. Both the streams and aquifers provide essential drinking water for people across the South East and East Anglia. Some water companies such as Cambridge Water are 100% dependent on the aquifers that support the chalk streams. Without this water taps would run dry.

Businesses and farms also rely on chalk streams. Without water they would not be able to operate. This would significantly affect the economy, the livelihoods of the people that they employ and the availability of food to eat.

Despite the recent wet weather, if we look back over the last three years we have seen about 50% less recharge to aquifers than we would normally expect in this part of the country. Some groundwater levels are currently the lowest ever recorded.

This is an environmental drought and we all have a responsibility to play a constructive part in tackling its causes and effects. There is a wider context which also requires all of us to work together; people at this conference and people across the nation. It is the climate emergency, which makes drought and floods more likely. For many years we have been able to use water stored in the chalk aquifer in a sustainable way but recent weather patterns require

new approaches that make us more resilient to prolonged dry periods. We face having to invest more money in alternative and more costly supplies of clean water. We will be faced with tough choices as we balance the various needs I have mentioned. We want to face this future together, with you helping us, so that we properly reflect your needs just as we will reflect others.

At the Environment Agency we are working flat out to limit the damage the low groundwater is having and ensure that water supplies are sustainable for the future. This includes taking immediate action to restrict the amount of water taken, developing long term plans to reduce our reliance on chalk streams, working with partners on projects to improve water quality wherever possible and stepping in to limit damage to wildlife and the environment when river levels are too low.

Whilst we have to take water from the environment to live, we have got to make sure that this abstraction is sustainable.

We regulate water abstraction through our licensing system and we are tough with water companies, farmers and businesses that take water from the environment unsustainably or who pollute water. By reviewing licences and reducing the amount of water people can take we have returned 16 billion litres of water back to chalk streams since 2008 and removed the risk of another 14.9 billion litres being taken. This is equivalent to the average annual domestic water use of approximately 300,000 people – similar to the population of Nottingham.

But abstraction regulation can only go so far. Earlier this year, our Chief Executive Sir James Bevan described that we face 'The Jaws of Death', when demand for water outstrips supply. We need to find alternative water supplies and reduce demand across the south east. This will mean extensive and costly infrastructure such as new reservoirs and pipes to transfer water from other parts of the country. But it also means each and every one of us using less water.

At the Environment Agency we play a leading role in ensuring resilient water resources for the future. We have instigated planning at a national and regional scale, requiring water companies and other water users to cooperate to make the most of the water we have. Many water company plans contain strategic options for infrastructure developments and Ofwat has allocated up to £450m to companies to fully explore these options. We are supporting and contributing staff to the regulator's alliance for progressing this infrastructure development

At the same time we are working with numerous partners on a wide range of innovative projects that are improving water quality in our chalk streams.

Since 2011 our partnership work on over 60 projects has been instrumental in achieving improvements to more than 70km of chalk streams at a cost of £4.3 million. We are also working closely with farmers to help them reduce the impact of farming on river quality and with water companies to reduce the amount of phosphates that enter our rivers. By 2020, phosphorous levels will have reduced by 66% since 1995 and by 2027 we will have seen an 85%

reduction.

Every drop of water that is wasted is water that could be sustaining our rivers, streams and lakes. People are starting to use less water, down from 155 litres a day in 2002 to 142 litres per person today but this is still way too high. In Denmark people use just 80 litres a day. There is no justification for the difference. People across the UK use a lot more water than they need to and it has to stop. Planners and developers need to ensure that all new developments are water efficient.

We are taking action to encourage water companies to promote the importance of saving water to their customers and have recently joined forces with over 40 partners to launch the Love Water campaign. This is aimed at encouraging people to use less water and look after the water we have by preventing pollution. We need the campaign to grow so that everyone knows that water is precious and wants to take action to protect it.

We need more action and more pace. By using less and looking after what we have we will be able to ensure that we have clean and plentiful water for generations to come for us and for the environment including our wonderful chalk streams. But we will only achieve this if we work together to take action now.

Which brings me back to the task in hand today. We are committed to doing whatever we can to ensuring that there are still chalk streams in a good condition for future generations to enjoy and benefit from. I am delighted to be here today to join forces with you all to make that happen.

Minister for Europe makes first official visit to Cyprus

Minister for Europe and Americas at the Foreign Office, Christopher Pincher, is in Cyprus today (Friday 4 October) to meet Cypriot leaders.

The Minister will meet President Nicos Anastasiades to discuss Brexit and will welcome the Cypriot Government's offer guaranteeing the rights of UK nationals living in Cyprus.

Minister Pincher will also meet Foreign Minister Nikos Christodoulides and Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci. The Minister will reiterate the UK Government's support for achieving a long lasting peace settlement between Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

The Minister will visit British Sovereign Base Areas and meet with British military serving in Cyprus, including as peacekeepers with the UN Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP).

Minister for Europe Christopher Pincher said:

The United Kingdom has a unique and important relationship with Cyprus and we want that relationship to continue to grow, regardless of Brexit.

We welcome the announcement made by the Cypriot Government to protect the rights of UK nationals in Cyprus, as we have guaranteed the rights of Cypriot citizens in the United Kingdom.