

Covid 19 : The impact on mental
health & wellbeing
Response from the third sector
with an interest in mental health

Mental Health Forum (MHF) Vale members Group

The impact of the covid pandemic on people with mental health needs

- **MHF has identified increased levels of:**

- anxiety,
- stress
- emotional distress,
- suicidal ideation;
- grief

Following the impact of:

- uncertainty /fear /loss
- lack of human contact, isolation, loneliness
- change of circumstances - unemployment, income loss, debt, change of working patterns

Double Impact of Disadvantage

'Double whammy' for those more disadvantaged, including

- BAME communities,
- those in care/leaving care,
- domestic and sexual abuse,
- low income, debt,
- homeless or in supported housing
- physical and mental health
- in caring roles

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Across all ages

Impact across all ages including

- Older people with mental health needs or those with dementia,
- Adults
- Young people.

Impact - Young People

Young People

- Effects of isolation, reduced social opportunities, lack of structure, sleep deprivation etc,
- Additional impact if disadvantaged / 16+ .
- For a segment the break from school and school trauma and /or bullying has been a relief- (eg for some young trans people, with autism),

Adults

- Negative impact on mental health - all levels- - emotional / severe
- Some people have coped with the restrictions better than anticipated.

Older People

- **People with dementia**

Quicker deterioration - 'a massive effect'
(Alzheimer's Society)

- **Additional stress to carers**

Lack of respite care - day services and respite beds

Future Impact

- Extending Lockdowns and winter
- The longer covid restrictions continue, the greater the impact and depth of impact on people's mental health.
- The effect of cold, dark, wet, winter months and the reduced opportunity for external activity/hospital/homecare visits - increase isolation, loneliness, stress and distress.

Future Impact

- Combined with more redundancies, loss of income, debt, threats to housing etc
- **Monitor Changes to Services, ie**
 - Telephone Access to Crisis Services,
(e.g. EU- impact on young people suicidal/self harming);
 - More on line compared to face to face support

Lockdown experiences

Young People- Promo Cymru (up to age 25)

- *'i don't know what's wrong with me and don't know who to talk to'*
- *'I just feel sad, and empty. Like my whole body just feels out of energy and sad, I'm eating well, exercising, getting good sleep but I feel unmotivated'*
- *'I'm having panic attacks'*
- *'i have had these voices for a while now, but being in lockdown has only made them worse'*
- *'I struggled previously with depression. And with this lockdown. I feel like I'm struggling with it again I feel like I'm going down hill and i don't know how to stop it'*

Lockdown experiences

Older People- Carers and people living with Dementia

- Nexus

- *'lonely but managing, worried for his physical health as hasn't been able to exercise until this last week'*
- *'appreciating being in a small flat with a community of help around him but worrying about the future'*
- *'worrying about their respective mothers in care homes - worried for them getting Covid, sad that they can't see them or hug them, worried about the future impact on medical diagnoses and conditions - eg waited for scans in one case for three months for possible dementia diagnosis'*
- *'well and healthy and enjoying themselves but missing seeing other people'*

Lockdown experiences

- *My mental health has been very low and feeling very down, anxious, depressed, dealing with grief, unable to cope.'*
- *'It's not been easy but there is nothing I can do'*
- *"Difficult, worry a lot, anxiety and depression is already very high but worst since it started.'*
- *'At the beginning of the self-isolation and social distancing period, my partners mother showed to need more support. Trying to support her and keep her safe became challenging. I became stressed, couldn't switch off my ruminating thoughts before trying to sleep and at times my anxiety was high. I then became concerned about my own mental health, as I felt exhausted*
- *'I have been able to concentrate more on myself during this time, due to appointments and social events being cancelled.'*

Voluntary Sector Responses

- Agencies have noted:
- the expanding numbers of contacts, reflecting the rising levels of anxiety.
- the change in levels of support- time and complexity required
- The value in supporting people as a preventative approach
- At a time of reducing income for some

Voluntary Sector Responses

- Reduced face to face services
- More one to one telephone and on line support
- Resources to enable people to join online- tablets/training/data
- Development of on line wellbeing and creative groups
- On line peer led initiatives, ie peer production of videos, young people's website
- On line forums
- On line mutual support activities
- On line training
- Across the gate social distance chats or walks
- Information / links in a multitude of formats- on line, social media, hard copy, video

Barriers

- Access/ease with IT/virtual communications - all ages.
- Desire for face to face communication- emotional impact/concern for long term service change
- Potential- change in access to crisis services e.g through EU, (ie for young people suicidal or self harming).
- Numbers needing more support, more complex, for longer- all ages
- Phased return to socially distanced face to face services and groups - many now on hold.

Solutions

- New Funding bids
- Increased support -New ways to connect
- Internet links:
 - Supply of data /tablets / support to get on line
- New initiatives groups/telephone support etc
 - 'Her face lit up when she saw the others on the screen'.*
(The Alzheimer's Society)
- Send a positive message

What services- some examples

- **Riverside Advice- Welfare Rights Service for People with MH Needs/Carers**

Continuing on line/phone-Resolving income issues and eliminating debt - a positive impact on mental health and well being.

- *People say that our services reduced their suicidal thoughts, we were the light at the end of the tunnel, giving them the will to wake up and live.'*
- *'It took a lot of stress off my shoulders. I am able to pay for the 'essentials' such as obtaining help with day to day activities. Without alleviating the financial pressures I really was at the end of my tether. No medical advice or treatment could have helped me during this difficult period - only Riverside Advice!'*

What services

Platform-

- **'State of Mind'**- Young people

New on line activities- young people have set up their own website, a vimeo group- more one to one contact by phone

- **Peer Mentoring Project**- still ongoing- to gain confidence, skills, move towards employment

'Rebuild'- *GVS*- volunteer led wellbeing sessions

What services

Mind in the Vale

- Increased demand in secondary and primary care.
- Guided self help - one to one service on line
- Counselling service now on line
- Courses on zoom- managing stress and anxiety/anger management
- Welfare Calls
- Outreach- shopping, medication
- Supported 1,700+ people since March

BEAT

- New on line Groups/ Helpline- calls up 72%

What Services

CTSEW

- Re-established telephone counselling service (older people) on line
- Peer support groups through zoom
- Continuing Carers Panel
- Developing the gateway

Poble

- Continuing supporting tenants
- **New** Housing Support Drop in on Holton Road

cavamh

- Move to on line groups and networks
- Developed on line forum /social media
- Summer socially distanced one to one meets
- Free online training inc. for peer & new mutual aid groups
- Regular bi weekly info updates /service summaries
- **For more see <http://www.cavamh.org.uk/mental-health-wellbeing/cardiff-vale-mhf-services-summary-overview-in-light-of-covid-19>**

Together

- An MHF Plan for joint solutions & partnerships
- Partnerships with the local authority?

References

- MHF report to Mental Health Clinical Board June 2020
- Alzheimers' Society Report September 2020 [report](#) here
- Summary list of Mental Health Forum member covid service changes here <http://www.cavamh.org.uk/mental-health-wellbeing/cardiff-vale-mhf-services-summary-overview-in-light-of-covid-19>
- Money and Pensions Service research- Research MaPS (Money and Pensions Service) June 20 - see <https://moneyandpensionsservice.org.uk/2020/06/04/covid-19-impacts-on-financial-wellbeing/> 'Concern over financial wellbeing and personal finances is high and those impacted financially also have lower general wellbeing. Those impacted financially are struggling with redundancies, reduced working hours and pay, being furloughed, and concerns over job security About a fifth of adults are struggling to pay the bills (including essential ones). Larger proportions are worried about what might happen. A lot of people are worried about what will happen to their finances in the longer-termAnxiety and low wellbeing have increased since the outbreak, and around a fifth of people report concerns around their mental health as a result of COVID-19'.
- Centre for Mental Health '[Covid-19: Understanding inequalities in mental health during the pandemic](#)
- "the unequal impact of the virus and the lockdown are putting greater pressure on groups and communities whose mental health was already poorer and more precarious before it hit the UK. Groups of people whose mental health is at greatest risk include those with existing mental health problems, people with long-term physical conditions, women and children experiencing violence and abuse, and Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. The combination of existing structural inequalities and the unequal impacts of the pandemic mean that people whose mental health was at greatest risk prior to Covid-19 are likely to bear the brunt of the emergency longer term. Poverty and financial precariousness, racism and discrimination, and trauma and isolation have all been heightened at this time."