

## Mental Health Awareness

World Mental Health Day was observed for the first time on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1992. It was started as an annual activity of the World Federation for Mental Health by the then Deputy Secretary General Richard Hunter. The day is officially commemorated every year on October 10th.

The objective of the day is to raise awareness of mental health issues around the World and to unite and join our efforts in support of mental health.

This year's theme set by the World Federation for Mental Health is 'mental health for all'.

World Mental Health Day, on 10<sup>th</sup> October, comes at a time when our daily lives have changed completely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The months since early March have brought challenges for us all as the World we have known has changed.

There has been no area of the World that has been unaffected by the Pandemic. Workers have worked from home as their new norm, people have been furloughed and many have lost their jobs altogether. Health workers have faced many challenges and difficulties in terms of nursing COVID-19 patients, to the wearing of full PPE, to being isolated from their own families and much, much more.

For those living with poor mental health or living with a diagnosed mental illness, many have experienced times of isolation, loneliness and despair often struggling to manage in this "new World".

The economic consequences of the pandemic are already being felt, with many organisations having to let their staff go and in many cases, have lost their business completely.

Given our past experiences of global emergencies we can expect the need for mental health provision to expand. Sadly, after many years of underfunding for Mental Health services that are accessible to all, the current provisions are stretched to breaking point despite the urgent and growing need for such services.

We all deserve to feel safe and supported when talking about our mental health. However, mental health stigma leaves people feeling isolated and ashamed. People feel that they will be treated differently if they are known to be living with a mental illness and, as a result, many keep themselves to themselves because of the fear and at worst, this fear often prevents people getting support, finding employment or having open conversations. One person in every four people will be affected by a mental disorder at some stage of their lives and this is only on reported and diagnosed cases which means, the actual numbers could be so much higher.

It can be beneficial to help understand the term “mental health” to consider the following questions:

- What is mental health?
- What are “mental health problems?”
- What is good mental health?

It is important to take care of ourselves and keep both our bodies and our minds well and healthy and be able to function well especially during all the concerns surrounding the Pandemic.

Making simple changes can help you manage more effectively, but like anything else, we need to practice so think of some simple steps which would help and support your mental health, we have outlined some below to consider -

- Talk about your feelings
- Keep active
- Eat well
- Drink sensibly
- Keep in touch
- Ask for help
- Take a break
- Do something you're good at
- Accept who you are
- Care for others

How many of the things in the list do you do? Remember that it is good to talk about our mental health and World Mental Health Day is there to encourage open and honest dialogue. For more information on World Mental Health Day 2020 visit:

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/world-mental-health-day>

If you feel you may need some support, you can contact Care first. Care first is a leading provider of confidential, professional counselling, information and advice services. All employees are eligible to use Care first, our services include; telephone counselling, information services and online support. Call Care first on the Freephone number provided by your organisation and you can speak to a professional in confidence.

If you would like to join the Webinar on ‘**Mental Health Awareness**’ this is being delivered live on **Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October at 12pm**, please use the below link to register for this session -

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2181110421957754124>

If you are unable to join the webinar live, a recording of the session can be accessed using the same link above after the webinar has taken place.