



mind your head

Community Survey 2011 - Executive Summary

It means to me getting outside and keeping your head wide and open. Also to me 'MENTAL HEALTH' means that you need to listen and always keep your mind awake. Some people have difficulties doing this so I would hope people would help them.

AHS Pupil, aged 14

Mind Your Head (MYH) agreed that it was important to find out the views of the local community to assist with future planning and to gather feedback on local mental health services. We circulated a survey throughout the Shetland community in the spring of 2011.

A total of 1,080 people started the survey and 979 completed. This represented a 91% completion rate.

30% of respondents
were male

36% have in the past
or currently experience
mental ill health

87% know someone who
has experienced mental
ill health

25% of those who have
experienced mental ill
health have accessed
services of an NHS
counsellor

It is important to remember that people would have completed our survey because they had an interest in the work of MYH or mental health wellbeing. These statistics do not necessarily indicate a higher rate of mental ill health than elsewhere.

We did not ask respondents for information on their own personal experiences of mental ill health. This information provides valuable data for MYH to communicate with partner agencies and service providers. In the future, we will be in a position to deliver targeted campaigns within the community.

MYH will provide information and raise awareness so that our community has greater understanding of an illness which touches so many lives.

The survey has shown that MYH has a high profile within Shetland yet we know there is more work to do.

We were delighted to see that awareness of our Annual Fun Run scored highly, reflecting the increased awareness and popularity of that event. Our other awareness raising work including educational work and the self-help facilitator post (which has been co-funded with the local NHS) also scored highly.

92% of respondents had heard of MYH

809 respondents had heard of Annual Spiggie Fun Run

37% of respondents had previously visited our website

60% (approx) felt our website had good navigation, accessibility, information and up to date news

The survey has made it clear that we have to continue in promoting our website and ensuring that we have a good profile within the Shetland Community.

We will continue to promote a positive message and be non judgemental in our approach.

We wanted to find out how much people knew about services that were available locally and nationally. Through this process we also obtained feedback on what users thought of local mental health services.

Local services such as Shetland Bereavement Support, Family Mediation and CADSS scored very highly alongside national organisations such as the Samaritans and Breathing Space. Local services accessed showed that 25% had accessed NHS counselling services with other NHS services being the most used or accessed. Comments relating to mental health services included:

“Very long waiting lists”

“It took OVER A YEAR to get an appointment with an NHS counsellor”

“The waiting list is longer now. A down side of its success”

“Services for children are abysmal”

“I would not know where to go”

“CPN service was excellent”

“Shetland services are excellent, we are very lucky”

Respondents raised many concerns especially with regards to counselling services. However, it is important to acknowledge that there are other support services available and that MYH is in a position to raise the profile of these.

We want to campaign on our community’s behalf for improvements to support services and ensure that our community is aware of services available.

MYH felt that it was crucial to obtain feedback on support services for those who care for, or who are involved with supporting a person who experiences mental ill health.

A common thread in responses was that carers felt that better understanding was required both generally within the community and also for carers themselves. A means by which to easily learn and understand, know what action to take, etc was often highlighted as being important.

“There is not even enough service support for those with mental health problems let alone their families and carers”

“There is a point where patient confidentiality is not in the best interests of the patient and family”

“There are some excellent support services available, but people need to be made more aware of them”

“Seems to be little help for those caring for older patients recently diagnosed with the likes of Alzheimers or Depression related illness”

“The carer can become isolated because of the ill person”

“Not enough information given to help public understand and be able to help people who suffer from mental health problems”

We want to create a community where people do not feel isolated or unsure of where or how to get help.

10% of respondents feel that stigma is not an issue. We are heartened that many stated that they felt MYH had impacted on this area in particular. There is clearly ongoing work which must continue.

Comments often reflected the island rural nature of our community along with 'word of mouth' and feelings of being 'talked about'. Respondents also communicated their strong desire to see MYH continue in tackling stigma within the community as well as raising awareness of mental ill health.

59% of respondents felt stigma was an issue

60% felt the community were more accepting of mental health than it was 5 years ago

Attitude and stigma were felt to be the most challenging aspects of coping with mental ill health in Shetland

The top 3 priority areas were selected as awareness raising (specifically with teenagers), stigma reducing campaigns and increasing access to self help

It was not the direct intention of MYH to receive feedback on our achievements, but within the last section we were delighted to see such positive comments and words of encouragement for work we have done to date.

We want to work hard on tackling negative attitudes within our community and encourage a greater understanding and acceptance.

The survey has provided an invaluable opportunity to look closely at the needs of our community specifically in terms of mental health wellbeing.

Through this research we have been able to show that MYH has made a difference and an important one. But there is more work to do. The Shetland Community has communicated a very strong message of support but also helped us in focussing attention on the way ahead.

A 26-35 year old male wrote the following short statement in the final section of our survey. His words often echo feelings expressed by other respondents whilst providing a thread of positivity and reflection on what is effectively an ongoing personal journey of recovery. In concluding the findings of our survey it is perhaps worth thinking of the work that MYH has done to date and will continue to do as being akin to that of a journey of recovery.

“Mental illness is such a difficult illness. I question if there is, or will ever be, any magic wand for it but I guess we’ve got to try. I just wish that I could have sat down with someone who had answers for me. Even if they’d been able to tell me that, for example, what I have is going to be with me for life and explain to me that perhaps I will have to adjust my life and then teach me what that means would have been a big help. As it is, I’ve had to figure all this out for myself but I’m still not there yet. I’m still trying to figure out what helps my mental health and what hinders it, or in other words what I’m able for and what I’m not able for. Looking back, in particular at my school days, it is obvious that I had an illness in me and it would’ve been nice if it could have been detected and some steps taken to help me. Whether this is possible or not I don’t know. On a closing note I’d like to thank you for setting up Mind Your Head (an ingenious title!) and would encourage you to keep going. I suppose the learning curve is as steep for you as it is for me. Please don’t judge those who take their own lives. I don’t want to see people taking their own lives but I now understand the living hell that is depression and mental illness. It is a detached world of hell that few see.”

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