



**Brighter Berkshire** is a community-led initiative from volunteers across public and private sectors who have come together to mobilise and excite the community to improve the mental health of people in Berkshire and increase the opportunities and choice that are available to us.

We are people who have worked in mental health services, experienced mental health issues, know people or cared for people with mental health issues.

- Mental health issues affect 1 in 4 people at any one time.
- Suicide is the biggest killer of men over 25
- It's the biggest killer of women in the first year after birth
- Over 50% of people with an adult diagnosis of mental health issue were known before age of 14.

68 people killed themselves in Berkshire last year, 2/3 of them were not in touch with services leading up to their decision to take their life. Many feel like this now. This demonstrates the impact of stigma for many people still in accessing help. This issue is getting worse. We also have reductions in public service spending. But there is not a reduction in money in the local system with parts of Berkshire for example being the fastest growing economy outside of London.

By bringing together a range of people across the county we could facilitate the growth of networks of support and in so doing we hope to

- raise awareness and understanding of mental wellbeing, mental illness and recovery, by increasing the conversation on mental health in all aspects of life
- reduce the stigma attached to mental health
- increase the awareness of the local opportunities for people who have challenges linked to mental health

Our primary aims for the next year are:

As a group of volunteers, we have already engaged the community in a very different way, growing our volunteer base all the time. We are reaching out to our own networks to get involved and we are actively using social media to promote our cause and engage the Berkshire community.

We have received support from all Berkshire councils, BHFT and CCGs as well as support from Newbury College, Reading College and Reading University. Businesses such as Cisco, Reading Football Club, and Watermill Theatre are getting involved too.

We are launching our partnership with Berkshire Community Foundation on 16<sup>th</sup> March. Following the release of the Foundation's recent Vital Signs report, BCF announced that mental health is their main focus for 2017 so are joining forces with Brighter Berkshire to make a lasting difference. Together we raise funds for mental health causes and deliver a legacy fund for local mental health charities.

We are encouraging people, teams and organisations to pledge to do just one thing that might help make a difference. These include offering free venues, providing mental health first aid training and simply pledging to talk openly about mental health within networks.



## Brighter Berkshire

### 2017 Year of Mental Health

Below are a few examples of how this is already happening across Berkshire:

- We are launching a song writing competition in partnership with Pete Doyle, founder of Rock Academy Foundation, across Berkshire secondary schools to encourage discussion and awareness of mental health with 11-18 year olds
- Reading Spaces have offered to run a public art exhibition on mental health
- We are working to create a Berkshire wide bike ride – where participants wear the same BB tee-shirts with mental health messages, stopping in key town areas for photo opportunities
- Working with Reading College and their students to involve them in Brighter Berkshire. They have been researching mental health and have been set projects to evaluate our branding, and create information leaflets to be circulated around town centres.
- We have partnered with BBC Radio Berkshire and have a monthly show called Talking Heads - hosted entirely by people with lived experience of mental health challenges. They share their own stories, interview callers and other related guests.
- We are connecting people and resources from different networks to create their own opportunities and awareness independently
- Book review organisation will share and review books on mental health and organizing a book signing event
- As part of our work to increase awareness of opportunities that are already available but perhaps aren't that well known, we are creating an 'Asset Map' for all community run mental wellbeing services available in the Berkshire area
- We are hoping to host an award ceremony towards the end of the year to celebrate the amazing work that is going on, and to incentivise businesses, clubs and individuals to get involved and do something positive for mental health in Berkshire
- We have a £1 per employee scheme running. The costs of mental health related issues to businesses are estimated to cost businesses £1,000 per employee per year. We are calling on businesses to donate £1 per employee and collectively make a big impact locally
- Walking groups will bring people together using physical exercise and socialising while we also spread the word about it being a year of mental health. We hope people gather at one end of a busy town centre street, pair up and visit the town's shops, cafes and restaurants with postcards and ask they sign up to get involved with our year of mental health. We hope this will be a fun, healthy and social experience.