

Service User News Letter

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Contents

P.2 ,3, **4** Stronger Families Service

P. 5 Recipe: Vegetable Pakoras

P.6,7 Menopause

P.8,9 Interview with Jim Leyland

P. 10,11 Press Release

Hello from the Stronger Families Service!

Hello! Stronger Families have just celebrated a successful first year of the project so we thought we would take the opportunity to introduce ourselves to those of you who may be new to Touchstone and update everyone about what we have been up to and our upcoming plans.



Meet our team

We are a small but friendly team based at the Carlisle Business Centre in Bradford. If you are ever in the area we would love to see you.....the kettle is always on!

Lesley Sharp



I manage the Stronger Families project as well as carrying a small caseload. Stronger Families is Touchstone's first service to operate in Bradford, so it's important we get Touchstone's good name across the city and work collaboratively with all our partners. We've had great feedback in our first year and more importantly, supported many of our participants to manage their mental health and to help them in their journey towards gaining access to education and employment.

Katie Hammond



I am a part-time mental health worker on the Stronger Families Team and also provide admin support. I am new to Touchstone and think it's a wonderful place to work. As a mum of two boys (my other part-time job!!), I am really passionate about the Stronger Families project and the positive difference it is making to families in Bradford.

Tabassum Hussein



Tabassum has just joined the Stronger Families team as a mental health support worker and has made a great start getting to grips with the project and working with participants.

What is Stronger Families?

The Stronger Families programme was launched in July 2017 across Leeds and Bradford and is joint funded for two years by Big Lottery Fund and European Social Fund. Stronger Families provides early intervention to families who may have a range of barriers that can impact on social inclusion and aims to provide them with opportunities to move towards employment.

Stronger Families offers individual support through a dedicated keyworker and adopting 'think family' and restorative approaches. There are a total of 21 different partner organizations across the programme, each delivering specialist services to compliment employability goals.

What does Touchstone offer in the Stronger Families Programme?

Mental Health and Wellbeing Support one to one support

Touchstone is the specialist partner delivering Mental Health and Wellbeing intervention to families in Bradford. Our aim is to move participants towards engaging in employability programmes. Mental health workers deliver one to one tailored support and can offer up to 12 individual outreach sessions. We have now had over 70 referrals for one to one support, with the majority of these participants having anxiety and depression.

Mental Health and Wellbeing workshops

We also run small group wellbeing workshops at different locations across the city, some of our most popular workshops have been confidence building, mindfulness and maintaining healthy lifestyles.

Due to feedback from the families we are supporting we have decided to trial a more creative approach for our next workshop. The 'Time for Me' Workshop, to be held next month, will invite participants to take part in various crafts such as making Christmas decorations, painting and mindful colouring. We will also invite participants to bring along any projects they are currently working on, or just haven't had the chance to start yet, with the aim of enjoying these in a welcoming environment while socialising with others.

Mental Health and Wellbeing training and support for Stronger Families staff

We have also delivered basic mental health training to keyworkers and other staff on the Stronger Families Project. Last week we even enlisted the help of Hayley Gillard (Eco therapist) to run a Forest Bathing session in Otley for staff. This was a hugely enjoyable wellbeing afternoon for all that attended and if funding allows we hope to run a similar session for participants in the New Year....watch this space!



Thank you for reading!

The Stronger Families Team J

How to make Vegetable Pakoras

Ingredients

1-Onions-thinly sliced

1-Potatoe-cut in thin cubes

1tsp Red crushed chillies-add more for spiciness

Salt-according to taste

Handful Fresh coriander

1 tsp Ground dry coriander

Besan (chickpea flour)

1tbls plain yogurt

Mix all ingredients together with the corn flour into a thick-ish paste and leave to stand for half hour, take small spoonful and deep fry on medium heat until golden brown.



Menopause – Mental Health and Wellbeing

How much do you really know?

'The Change', 'Women of a Certain Age', 'The M Word'; no matter how you try to disguise it, the Menopause is a significant time in most women's lives. In fact, on average, most women spend nearly a quarter of their adult lives in this time of transition. For me, as the years ticked by, I'd always thought of it's approach as something to be welcomed. It struck me that a few hot flushes were a fair exchange for the ending of, sometimes uncomfortable and mildly troublesome monthly cycles. 'Bring it on', I'd always thought. So when I first began to notice the onset of changes, I thought I was informed and I was ready for it; I soon realised that Mother Nature had a few surprises in store.

If I could sum up my experience of going through the Menopause using just one word, I'd choose 'intense'. I began to notice how much more intensely I was experiencing my feelings and thoughts. Minor setbacks felt like a calamity, bigger setbacks took me months to recover from, my confidence felt shaky and internally I was constantly battling self doubt and judgement. Gradually, over time, that nagging self doubt began to morph into anxiety. One morning, in the first few moments of waking, I became aware that my whole body was trembling, I wasn't cold or unwell, so why was this happening and what was this physical reaction about? Ten minutes later I had my first panic attack – it came from nowhere, with no trigger and it was absolutely terrifying. Gripping a door handle tightly and with a lot of self talk and deep breathing, I managed to bring the sensation under control. It lasted just a few minutes, but the experience left me feeling very unsettled and fearful that it might happen again.

I realised that I needed to understand what was happening and to explore some options that could help, so I discussed trying HRT with my GP. I was prescribed some patches and felt hopeful that this was the answer to feeling more stable and calm. Unfortunately, I only managed a day and a half. The side effects of the patches felt just as bad if not worse than the symptoms I was looking to treat, so I returned to the Drs and opted to take anti depressants instead. They have certainly helped but they don't address all of the symptoms of hormonal changes, so I do still feel I'm navigating my way through uncharted territory.

I still get the energy slumps, I liken it to the inner engine going out. I can be walking along quite normally when suddenly, the engine conks and it can feel like I'm walking through treacle. It's often just for a few moments but it's quite a strange sensation. I still occasionally get the unexpected trembles too, usually on waking, but I know what they are now. Some female hormones have a calmativie effect on normal levels of adrenaline. As they gradually deplete, the daily adrenal fluctuations we'd normally be unaware of, can be felt both physically and emotionally. Mild adrenaline surges are a normal part of the waking process, hence the trembles and feeling jittery in the morning. That little bit of knowledge has helped me to rationalise the sensations and manage them. I don't allow the feelings to escalate and thankfully, I haven't had a panic attack since!

So, I continue to be learning as I go along, trying different approaches to managing these unexpected and unknown symptoms and I've been talking about what I've been going through, quite openly. And here's where I really had my eyes opened. I began to notice it more and more frequently; the wry smiles, the slight awkwardness and almost hushed tones of the people I spoke to – and that included some Drs! Not everyone of course, sometimes people would laugh along with me, when I found myself in a hot sweat and in desperate need of a fan.

I never minded, in fact using humour helped me to feel *less* self conscious about it, but I did recognise that not every woman would want to be so candid and I wondered how they might feel. Does keeping these moments to themselves make them feel even more self conscious, and maybe even isolated? The reactions I noticed in people were subtle and I always knew that they came from a place of kindness and not derision. Yet it was there nonetheless, and I couldn't help but wonder why? Surely in 2018 - 100 years after women won the right to vote, I might add – you'd think we'd all be grown up enough to be a bit more aware of some of the effects, or at least have a willingness to learn.

So that's why I'm passionate about raising some awareness. The Menopause is natural and normal, it is not a disability or an illness and every woman experiences it differently. Yet, no matter how natural it is, the fact remains that hormones are powerful chemicals and fluctuations are bound to have some effects.

Women now make up a large portion of the workplace and more are in senior positions than ever before. It's estimated that there are approximately 3.5 million women of menopausal age working full or part time, plus we have an ageing population. I think it's time we started to be a bit more open, look at support mechanisms, gain some knowledge and help everyone to feel comfortable talking about it – and where better to start than at Touchstone!

We have had a fantastic response to World Menopause Day email sent out across the organisation recently, with many coming forward sharing their own experiences and wanting to get involved in the steering group – thank you! That initial response tells me that this is needed and we're ready for it, so it's hugely encouraging to see this. I'd like to follow up with a short survey monkey questionnaire over the next few weeks to get more of a picture of attitudes and knowledge. I'm particularly interested in getting as many responses from men and women of all ages as possible. We also want to put on some awareness workshops, hopefully over summer next year and from there we hope to be able to inform some support strategies across the organisation.

I'd like to end on some positives. It's not all weird symptoms, anxiety and brain fog. In many respects transition is an exciting time, full of possibilities and an opportunity to reappraise your outlook on life and identity. I'm discovering aspects of myself I never knew were there. I've felt a growth in personal expression, I'm learning to paint and explore art and I'm finding it hugely absorbing and satisfying. My younger self would never have had the patience, so this feels very much a new discovery and a bit of a gift.

Thank you for taking the time to read. I really hope that this article will pique more interest and motivate people to be more confident to open up conversations, to get involved with the steering group or to be open to learning more. Let's keep talking and help to break what is still considered to be something of a taboo!

Interview with Jim Leyland, Operations Director at Touchstone

Jim was born in Bradford and brought up in Oldham. He turns 50 this year, but doesn't look it! He enjoyed school and liked going to football matches with his grandfather. He also liked travelling on holiday. He went to Paris with his mum aged 7, but despite getting lost, he found his way around.

He studied Geography at Huddersfield University. He also did a Town Planning qualification in Edinburgh. He did an Masters in Social work at Glasgow University.

He did weekend work with disabled people. He also did two placements while at University. The first placement was supporting people with learning disabilities into the community from institutional hospitals, some of whom should not been admitted to hospital in the first place. He was also involved with an emergency duty team. He worked in social work teams in the community and also in a Housing Association. His first job was dealing with people with learning disabilities in Grangemouth in Scotland.

After this he met his partner and came back to Yorkshire, but worked in Rochdale. In 2003, he became an Inspector of Care Homes, some of which were not very good. He became a Team Manager for the learning disability team in Wakefield and then a Service Manager, in 2008. He worked on the Mental Capacity Act and introduced Self Directed Support. In 2014, he was Head of Learning Disabilities and Mental Health in Cheshire East. However he then decided to look for jobs back in Yorkshire.

At Touchstone, as Operations Director Inclusion, he manages different teams, Kirklees, Barnsley and SHAFA etc. He has responsibilities across the Organisation, for Co-Production, Safeguarding, QAF (Quality Assurance Framework). In Safeguarding, he manages risk, or incidents to be reported. He understands policies and procedures, abuse and neglect. New policies for the Safeguarding Act, and children have been written. Every six months, he writes a Safeguarding Report. He also is working on a Safeguarding Dashboard, dealing with training, DBS checks and recording so that everyone contributes and understands their role. He set up a Service User Safeguarding Group and a video was also completed with service users for the Leeds Safeguarding Adults Board.

He deals with Co-Production, especially service user involvement. This, he believes, is only as good as the people we work for. He also works with the 3rd Sector, in Social Care. He uses standards to train service users to know what we are doing right.

With the Quality Assessment Framework he makes sure that all services work. To make sure that people are safe and that the service is of a good standard. It includes service users through Equality and Diversity. He manages risk and promotes Health and Safety, for example, tripping hazards, lone workers etc., and he is the manager on call. He has a Diversity Action Group, looking at the work place. He devised an Inclusion and Diversity Hand Book, for staff and volunteers; how they should look for Health, as they all come from different backgrounds.

He is very passionate about what he is doing and there are always challenges to be met. He is helped by a very supportive and caring team; his post is not just a job. He has a good friends and family network. There is plenty of job satisfaction in this job and it can make a difference. He feels that there is too much bureaucracy in Local Authority work.

For the future, he feels that we all are learning and growing. He has had a vast experience in life, and is supported by Touchstone in all wellbeing. He has achieved a coaching qualification. He would like to build on these opportunities, to continue to ensure that Touchstone continues to be a great place to work, because it supports everyone, irrespective of their story. He would like to travel more. He is getting better at weight training and supports Oldham Athletic to turn around their misfortunes. He has been to South America, (Argentina and Chile), and travelled widely in Europe. He likes getting out and about. He has done the London Marathon four times. He is a qualified fitness instructor and believes that sport aids recovery, especially in mental health. He praises Touchstone for providing good quality food, which he feels is the catalyst to good conversation.



Press Release

Leeds launches guides for living in the city

WHERE do you go if you have moved to Leeds from another country, and need help or support with housing, money, finding work or your health? If you have fled war or persecution, who can support your crucial first steps as a refugee? Who can help you understand unfamiliar services and systems?

Two new websites have been launched in Leeds to help answer these questions, and more, for people making a new life in one of the UK's most diverse cities.

The *Transition Guide* is thought to be the first local guide in the country to support people gaining refugee status (also known as Leave to Remain), providing detailed information on official documents such as Home Office letters, Biometric Residence Card, National Insurance alongside how to find permanent accommodation and how to apply to bring family members to join you.

The *Transition Guide* for refugees has been produced alongside another website called *New to Leeds* which is for a guide for anyone who is new to Leeds, including migrants from across the world.

Both websites have been developed by Leeds charities Leeds Asylum Seekers Support Network (LASSN) and Touchstone, and are commissioned by Leeds City Council.

The websites both feature a wide range of topics to help people settle into life in Leeds translation options for over 20 community languages.

This includes guidance about key services and how to use them, for example how to open a bank account, support in looking for work, how the school system works and how to register for a GP. They also include links to community groups and activities that can benefit people who are new to the area and may feel socially isolated. The guides offer translation options for over 20 community languages.

The experiences of refugees and migrants in Leeds have been key to the development of the two websites, from inputting into the content, right through to some of the photography which was provided by the Tales of a City Photography Club, a Leeds photography group for refugees.

Getachew Obse from Leeds is one of the migrants who helped with the development of *New to Leeds*. He says: "The website has a lot of information and is attractive to use. It has a lot of information and the translation option makes it useful for people who don't speak English. like this when I moved to Leeds.

"I would have definitely used something." Jon Beech at LASSN said.

The websites are part of MAP+ (Migrant Access Project Plus), which is commissioned by Leeds City Council, led by Touchstone, and runs until July 2019. MAP+ aims to bring new migrant and settled communities to work together in a way that benefits people in their local area. The project forms part of Leeds City Council's Migration Strategy to ensure a strategic, co-ordinated and inclusive approach to migration in the city.

Transition Guide, for refugees in Leeds: www.transitionguide.org

New to Leeds, a guide for migrants: www.newtoleeds.org

My passport to Poland-in-Garforth

Anonymous

I've visited lots of countries, including living in Thailand, where after a motorbike accident I had to return to the UK for rehabilitation. I'm not up to going so far now, and was a bit apprehensive when my Touchstone SDS worker suggested going to an event at my local library one Saturday. However I decided to give it a go, as he knows how to respond when I'm feeling anxious around crowds of people. It was reassuring also to meet a library worker there, who knew me from an IT course I've done

We went together, before it got busy, and I was able to sample some new food such as Pierogi (dumplings), Borscht (beetroot soup) and loads of cake ! It turns out that the people doing the catering have a restaurant just along the road from Touchstone House! I learned lots of new facts about a country I've never even visited...

So while I won't be renewing my own passport, I'm going to settle instead for enjoying hearing tales from my recently-graduated daughter about her world travels, encouraged around the globe from Garforth by my support team



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Barnsley Futures

Touchstone is excited to announce the launch of “Barnsley Futures” – a new service providing support for individuals experiencing complex needs in Barnsley. The new service will be delivered in partnership with West Yorkshire CRC (managing the service) and Foundation, and is funded by Barnsley Council.

Barnsley Futures will work with individuals over 25 who are experiencing complex needs, including mental health, reoffending, substance misuse, homelessness and family breakdown. The service will deliver holistic, person-centred, flexible support based around finding and sustaining suitable independent living. Barnsley Futures will support individuals to be leaders in their recovery journeys, empowering Individuals to make changes and build on their own strengths, interests and assets.

www.touchstonesupport.org.uk

Organisations			
		NHS Direct	111
Connect Helpline	0808 800 1212	Samaritans	0845 790 9090
Social Services (out of hours)	0113 398 4702 0113 240 9536	Non emergency Police	101
DIAL House	0113 260 9328		