



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

26th September, 2008

Well-being Festival set to be unveiled

An unprecedented collaboration of voluntary, statutory and academic organisations have joined forces to create Bedfordshire and Luton's first ever Mental Health and Social Care Well-being Festival.

The Festival – which will take place in Luton, Bedford and Dunstable from the 3rd-6th November – will promote the positive impact that can be gained from an individual, but integrated approach to recovery in mental health and social care.

Events will provide an introduction to a range of options for general well-being – exercise and sport, holistic therapy, healthy eating, creative activities, humour and music – while offering hope and inspiration through service users' personal stories of recovery.

There will also be practical advice on the likes of employment and further education, housing, welfare and finance issues, rights and advocacy, and information on how to access services.

The Festival also aims to foster stronger community cohesion and involvement, and at the same time tackle the stigma and misconceptions towards mental health and social care, by creating an inclusive event that provides an opportunity for service users and the wider community to interact.

Individuals and organisations have come together under the banner of the Bedfordshire and Luton Recovery and Social Inclusion Steering Group to launch and run the Festival. They include Mental Health professionals and practitioners from the likes of Bedfordshire and Luton Mind, Impact, CAN, Rethink Carers, and Bedfordshire and Luton Mental Health and Social Care Partnership NHS Trust, and current and former service users.

Also part of the steering group are Time Banks of the Ouse, the University of Bedfordshire and the University of Bedfordshire Students' Union (UBSU) –

with other organisations such as Bedford College and the Luton & District branch of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Association set to join.

A series of high profile stalls across the county will see the official unveiling of the Well-being Festival, with displays at The Mall Arndale in Luton (6th October), Bedford Market (9th October), Dunstable ASDA and Flitwick Market (both on 10th October) and at Luton Town's home match with Darlington on Saturday 11th October.

Well-being Festival members Bedfordshire and Luton Mind and the UBSU will also be promoting the Festival at their own stalls and events during that week. Mind will be in Leighton Buzzard on the 7th of October and at Marsh Farm Market on 9th October, while they also hold their AGM on 10th October.

The UBSU in Luton meanwhile, will be out in force during the University's Diversity Week and at a Students' Union Film Event on World Mental Health Day on 10th October, which is in conjunction with the Bedfordshire and Luton Mental Health and Social Care Partnership NHS Trust.

Daisy Bogg, Chair of the Steering Group, reflected: "The Well-being Festival will be a truly unique event – an event which will engage and empower people from across Bedfordshire and Luton. The collaboration of so many groups, across the sphere of mental health and social care services and outside agencies, is simply unheralded and the dynamism and co-operation of the organisations involved has been particularly impressive.

"The efforts of current and former service users have been vitally important to the work of the Steering Group and the development of the Festival programme, and the group has also been overwhelmed, and at times humbled, by the support and encouragement from a wealth of businesses and community organisations.

"We're counting down the days to the official launch – and we're confident that the Well-being Festival will be both informative and imaginative for those with very personal experiences of mental health and the wider public at large."

Time Banks of the Ouse, who are lottery funded through the Big Lottery Fund, are one of the members of the Well-being Festival Steering Group, and David Clarke, Project Worker, added:

"Community involvement, social inclusion and volunteering are all at the heart of the Well-being Festival and they are also part of the core values of Time Banks, in that people can turn their spare time into shared time and help themselves by helping others with Time Banks of the Ouse.

"The Well-being Festival is a great opportunity for everyone to gain new interests and skills and develop existing ones too, and interact with neighbours, groups and communities for the betterment of themselves and each other. Time Banks of the Ouse are delighted to play its part in helping to

organise the Well-being Festival and we're sure that this year will be the first of many."

Another of organisations on the Wellbeing Festival Steering Group are Rethink Carers, a charity who provide a free, confidential and independent service for people caring for someone of working age within Bedfordshire who is suffering from a mental illness.

Rethink Carers Sue Mannix added: "We are attending and supporting the Well-being Festival to highlight our service and inform carers of the support available to them. This includes individual and telephone support, our carer representatives ensuring that the carers voice is heard at all types of meetings, local support groups, and various social and information events.

"The Well-being Festival is a fantastic opportunity for carers to share their experiences and build-up their own personal network of contacts, knowledge and assistance. Rethink are sure that the first ever Well-being Festival will be a huge success and we're excited about playing our part."

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MEDIA ENQUIRIES: For further information contact, John Wailes, 01582 708919 or 07999 153 995 (out of hours).