

# December Newsletter 2025



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## MHELO

MENTAL HEALTH EXPERIENCE LED OPPORTUNITIES

## 12 Days of Christmas



"No heart is so heavy and no soul is so bleak that they can't be lifted by the wings of an angel."

Unknown



"Christmas is a box of tree ornaments that have become part of the family."

Charles M. Schulz



"What if I fall? Oh, but my darling, what if you fly?"

Erin Hanson

## INCLUSION GLOUCESTERSHIRE

BIGGER DREAMS ► BETTER LIVES ► BRIGHTER FUTURES



"Yesterday is history,  
tomorrow is a mystery,  
but today is a gift. That's  
why we call it The  
Present." – Alice Morse  
Earle.



"Believe you can and  
you're halfway there."  
Theodore Roosevelt



"Setting goals is the  
first step in turning the  
invisible into the  
visible."  
Tony Robbins

"No act of kindness,  
no matter how small,  
is ever wasted."  
Aesop (commonly  
attributed)



"Light a candle in the  
window; let the night  
know you care."  
Author uncertain (often  
linked to a hymn)

"Fear has two  
meanings: forget it  
and run, or face it and  
rise."  
Anonymous



"Nothing is  
impossible; the  
word itself says  
'I'm possible'.  
Audrey  
Hepburn

"Where there is  
ruin, there is  
hope for a  
treasure."  
Rumi



"Maybe Christmas," he thought, "doesn't come from a store.  
Maybe Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more!"  
How the Grinch Stole Christmas, Dr. Seuss

# MHELO Making a Difference!

## Report for Denise our Chair



It has been quite a busy couple of months since the last newsletter.

We have a new manager as we said goodbye to Bee Barker. Thanks to Bee for the brilliant work as MHELO Manager. We now welcome Sam Mayers, who has worked for Inclusion Gloucestershire for years on the Quality Checking team. She is now also the Manager for MHELO.

I would also like to acknowledge Ailsa Lane, who has overseen MHELO for years and done a brilliant job. She has now stepped down from the post, and we are pleased that Emily Luckham has taken it up. We really value the managers.

I attended the second Community of Practice for Experts by Experience, chaired by Simon Price (formerly of Forest Voluntary Action Forum), and it was well attended. This new community shares the best professional practice for people who use lived experience in their work. It is a really bold step forward for those experts by experience who work alongside professionals in a co-productive way.

Kate and I also visited Simon Price in his previous role to discuss how we could work together, and we look forward to working with him in his new role as the Coproduction Lead within the NHS.

The subject of the recent advisory group was ADHD. While we remain very focused on mental health, the Clinical Programme Group, where we present the clinical answers from our advisory group meetings, now includes ADHD. We really value working with this addition, and we are learning a lot. We were shocked to learn the statistics of how much ADHD affects mental health.



Kate and I joined the NHS and the police on the NHS bus at Kings Square, Gloucester. Our goal was to gather data on awareness of the Connect and Offload (CandO) helpline run by Rethink. This helpline is open 365 days of the year for those wanting mental health support. It runs from 2-9 pm daily, and its phone number is 0808 801 0606. The questionnaire was open for a month, and we received a great response. Kate and Sam are currently preparing a report of recommendations for Rethink. Thanks to everyone that took part!

# Coping at Christmas

Christmas is supposed to be a time when everyone is happy.

*"The most wonderful time of the year."*

Since losing my dad on Christmas Day 2004, I have found Christmas a difficult time. However, as time has gone on, I have come to accept that I am not alone; many people struggle with Christmas, which has an impact on mental health.

Over the years, I have put in place some coping strategies to help me over the Christmas period. The first Christmas after losing my dad, I went to the cemetery and put a wreath on his and my mum's grave. In addition, we always light a candle to remember him.

I also find that going to church over Christmas really helps, especially since many churches recognise that it can be a difficult time for many.

I take time out for myself on Christmas Day to stay grounded and accept that it's just a normal day.

Finally, if things become too much over Christmas, I know there are places where I can turn to for support and to offload.

Such as:

- The Crisis Team (Call 111 option 2)
- The Samaritans (Call 116 123)
- CandO (Call: 0808 801 0606; Text: 07537 410 022)
- SANEline (Call: 0300 304 7000).





# Gloucestershire Support After Suicide Service

## Have You Been Bereaved by Suicide?

### Support Is Available in Gloucestershire

**If you or someone you know has been affected by suicide, you don't have to face it alone.**

Rethink Gloucestershire's Support After Suicide service is here for anyone who has been impacted - family members, friends, carers, colleagues, or front-line staff.

Their team can help with a wide range of support, such as:

Guidance with practical matters such as funeral arrangements, support around managing any media interest, regular counselling sessions and peer support groups where you can connect with others who understand.

You can self-refer. The team is available Monday to Friday, 9 am–5 pm, with evening support sessions available by arrangement.

**Contact details:**

**07483 375516**

**[glossupportaftersuicide@rethink.org](mailto:glossupportaftersuicide@rethink.org)**

### Helpful Resources, Training, and Factsheets

Rethink has also gathered a range of helpful materials for anyone dealing with suicide bereavement or supporting someone who is struggling. These include:

How to Cope with Suicidal Thoughts - guidance for keeping yourself safe

How to Help Someone Else - practical steps to support a person who may be feeling suicidal

Coping with Loss After Bereavement by Suicide - information and reassurance for those grieving

Help Is at Hand - a comprehensive booklet offering comfort, practical advice, and signposting

These resources are free to download and can be shared with anyone who might benefit from them.

Rethink Gloucestershire Support After Suicide:

<https://www.rethink.org/help-in-your-area/services/community-support/gloucestershire-support-after-suicide-service/>

# On the first day of Christmas, I gifted to myself...



A warm fluffy throw.

A hot chocolate and marshmallows.

A brand-new book.

A woolly, cosy jumper.

A stroll through a Christmas market.

A soothing aromatherapy massage.

A grateful thought for at least one thing.

A woolly, warm, wrapped up walk.

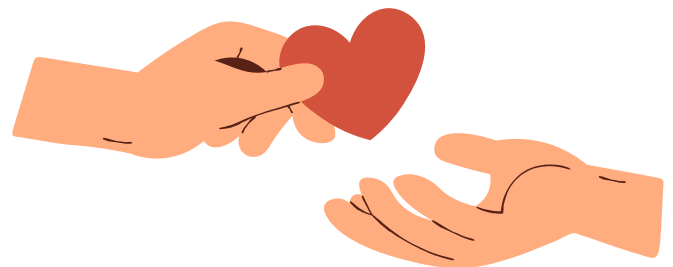
A time and place just for me.

A half hour of trying out Yoga Nida.

A comforting bath with essential oils, mineral salts and candles.

A present that I bought just for me!

For further inspiration, download our self-care toolkit, which has many good ideas, especially if you are struggling over Christmas:



<https://www.inclusiongloucestershire.co.uk/engagement/mhelo-mental-health-expert-led-opportunities/>

# What's open at Christmas?



## Organisations & Events Open on Christmas Day

### **Cheltenham Open Door:**

This charity provides free hot meals, entertainment, and a supportive environment for vulnerable or isolated people on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and Boxing Day from 9 am to 6 pm. They also offer essential services such as showers and free clothing.

### **Gloucester Feed the Hungry:**

They offer a FREE full English breakfast (sit-in or takeaway) on Christmas Day from 7:45 am to 9:15 am at the Smiles Community Coffee Shop in Gloucester.

### **Kingfisher Treasure Seekers:**

Their "The Cavern" venue offers adult and youth support every evening, including Christmas Day, from 6 pm to 11 pm for adults and 5 pm to 10 pm for youth, providing a safe social space.

### **Stroud Christmas Day Community Lunch:**

The Trinity Rooms Community Hub in Stroud welcomes everyone who would otherwise be alone to a Christmas Day lunch with good company and entertainment. More details can be found on the Trinity Rooms Community Hub Facebook page.

### **The Churn Project (Cirencester):**

A weekly walking group for adults with additional support needs or mental health needs is scheduled for Christmas Day at 11:30 am, focusing on wellbeing and social connection.

### **Gloucester Cathedral:**

Their Breakfast Club runs on Thursday and Saturday mornings (including the Christmas period) from 8 am to 9 am in the Parliament Rooms.





# Christmas Breakfast Ideas

Eggs Benedict! And Bucks Fizz! – Samantha

I recommend Croissants and your favourite topping: Bananas and peanut butter are my favourites. With coffee, of course – Denise

Organic yoghurt, freshly cracked walnuts, Brazil nuts and hazelnuts, Jostaberries from my garden, which I picked and froze in August, topped with a scattering of Ceylon Cinnamon. – Kate

I'm not eating breakfast, I'm saving space for my Christmas dinner – Jackie.

I like change, but I also hold dear things that have happy memories. Every Christmas, since I can remember, we've had – small squares of toast topped with boiled egg slices and 'caviar' (or should I say imitation fish roe 'caviar'). Alongside smoked salmon sandwiches, mini sausage rolls and sour cream and chive dip with veggies. Fortunately, not having small children, I don't have to get up early, so this is brunch and almost my favourite food of the day. – Karen



We are looking for your views on our **social media** - do you like what we post, are there things you would like to see?

To give your view,  
comment on any of our posts,  
or email us at  
[mhelo@inclusion-glos.org](mailto:mhelo@inclusion-glos.org)



# More About MHELO...



**Ding Dong Merrily on High...  
MHELO CHIMES Throughout the Year**



**C: CONNECTIONS;** We connect as a team in mutuality and reciprocity. We share kindness, collaboration and a common bond. We co-produce with professionals. We strive together to make a better future for mental health support.

**H: HOPE;** We hold Hope that by working together, we can instigate Change. Change that works for people, change that helps and change that makes a difference!

**I: IDENTITY;** We identify as a team. Through our Lived Experience, we know what helps and what doesn't.

**M: MEANING;** Improving Mental Health support means a lot to us. We want a better understanding, better help and better facilities. We want what works for us.

**E: EMPOWERMENT** Together we are stronger to create change. We are passionate, powerful and persuasive.

**Read more about MHELO, sign up for  
our next newsletter, or download a free  
copy of the Self-Care Toolkit here...**

**If you are interested in joining our  
friendly team, please contact Kate  
Keating at Inclusion Gloucestershire on  
katek@inclusion-glos.org**

[https://www.inclusiongloucestershire.co.uk/  
engagement/mhelo-mental-health-expert-  
led-opportunities/](https://www.inclusiongloucestershire.co.uk/engagement/mhelo-mental-health-expert-led-opportunities/)