

MHELO

MENTAL HEALTH EXPERIENCE LED OPPORTUNITIES



Autumn Newsletter 2025



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What is MHELO?

MHELO - Mental Health Experience Led Opportunities is a community of people with lived experience who strive to improve the mental health system by sharing a collective voice.

Your voice is important to shape changes to new and existing services for mental health within Gloucestershire.

This is done through online groups and face-to-face engagement and collaborating with other agencies - what is called coproduction - working with the help of people with lived experience in their own journey to make services fit them better.

To join MHELO and read more go to:

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

**INCLUSION
GLOUCESTERSHIRE**

BIGGER DREAMS ► BETTER LIVES ► BRIGHTER FUTURES

HELP US, HELP ALL

Connect & Offload (CandO) - Rethink



Gloucestershire Connect and Offload will provide support to any adult living in Gloucestershire struggling with their mental well-being, whether mild to moderate. Support for friends and family, carers and professionals can also be provided.

Working alongside Rethink, Inclusion Gloucestershire have worked on a survey with its volunteers to ask for feedback on using CandO's phone line by following the link above. Any feedback would be extremely helpful and appreciated, and is totally anonymous and confidential.

Whether you have previously heard/not heard of the CandO helpline, have used/never used it, we want to hear from everyone, so please help our research! We cannot do it without you. Survey available until **November the 3rd, 12 pm.**

Jackie's Tips on Handling Dark Evenings

Now that autumn is here, it is a time for being cosy and wrapping up warm and enjoying the colour changes in nature, but it also brings the darker evenings.

If you feel less safe in the dark, here are some tips from Jackie:

When you are out

- 1) Be alert and aware of your surroundings.
- 2) Use well-lit areas when walking.
- 3) You could wear reflective clothing to help car drivers see you easily.
- 4) Let someone know of your plans.
- 5) Make sure your phone is charged.
- 6) You could carry a personal safety alarm.
(These can be bought cheaply on Amazon)
- 7) If you are feeling vulnerable, make use of the safe spaces – how to locate safe spaces is in Kate's article in this newsletter.

When you are at home

- 1) Make sure you have good lighting, especially if you are at risk of falls.
- 2) At Halloween if you do not want trick-or-treaters calling, you can download and print a poster from the police website, asking them not to knock.
- 3) Consider having timers that can turn lights on if you are away from home.

MHELO Matters...

Why do you volunteer?

I started volunteering with Inclusion Gloucestershire in January 2023 with the Advocacy Project. It was eye opening to see how important the work was and what Inclusion Gloucestershire did for the community.

I branched out by volunteering with the Community Mental Health Transformation Team (CMHT) until January 2025. This allowed me to design questionnaires that would have impact in the community, NHS and Council, and to collate data into spreadsheets and power point presentations. I also took minutes at various meetings.

In recent times I have helped edit the newsletter for the Volunteer and Advocacy project alongside writing and researching articles. Alongside this, I have started volunteering with Mental Health Led Opportunities (MHELO) to help with their social media posts.



What are your hopes for the future?

In an ideal world, I would like to take what I have learnt with Inclusion Gloucestershire into paid work within reason of my health. Meanwhile, I am learning new skills with social media through MHELO and how a newsletter is formed across the two different projects I am involved with – including this one!

Would you encourage others to volunteer?

There's always scope for others to volunteer in any of the projects that Inclusion Gloucestershire undertakes. Volunteering helps fill in gaps in employment and gives a sense of accomplishment that they've helped people to maintain or enhance their day-to-day lives in some form, small or large!!



What is your MHELO animal?

My MHELO animal would be three as I have three guinea pigs – Mercurius, Hector and Isaac. I had two guinea pigs before these three, and they had the names of Orion and Ursa.

What else do you do in your free time?

I do a lot of artwork – from cross stitch to sewing projects to local exhibitions – my last piece was in Gloucester Cathedral over the summer! I also enjoy card making in any form – from traditional to using a Brother Scan N Cut and, in more recent times, a 3D printer. I attend three different art groups between Gloucester and Cheltenham weekly.

How does volunteering for IG make you feel?

Volunteering with Inclusion Gloucestershire has opened my eyes to the valuable work carried out by the charity: from working with CMHT and the NHS to make sure what is produced is user-friendly and led, to working on a newsletter for Volunteer and Advocacy. Through MHELO, I have learnt how to use social media to help get their message out to the community.

An Interview with Elisabeth Wall

Introducing Our New Project Manager - Sam



Hi everyone! I'm Sam, and I am the new manager for MHELO. I have worked within Inclusion Gloucestershire for around 8 years as a Quality Checking Coordinator and now as the Quality Checking Deputy Manager. I was originally recruited to introduce the mental health side of the Quality Checking framework; to do so, I actually worked with MHELO to co-produce and review that work. It was a success and is something the Quality Checking team still work on today! I am really happy to be working within MHELO again and making sure that people with lived experience continue to be heard.

We have lots going on, and I'm glad to be getting stuck in! Don't forget we're always looking for members and volunteers to help us achieve change.

When I'm not working, I have quite a few varied hobbies, one of which is my garden!

Here are some photos from my garden this year, I am still a novice, though!





Denise's Autumn Cookie Recipe

I have always struggled with food issues. Pre-COVID, I lost 6 stone, but during COVID, I found it more difficult to have a good relationship with food. I tried Slimming World with little success. I'd come across a programme that was within my budget, included exercise videos & a monthly check-in and a chance to speak to others in the same situation. The recently added AI food assistant has really helped, as it provides healthy, achievable recipes. They are local to Gloucestershire and include prayer as well as fitness, together with healthy eating:

www.fit-fish.co.uk

Dark Chocolate Oat Cookies

- 120 g oats (rolled or porridge)
- 1 egg
- 2 tbsp Greek yogurt
- 2 tbsp honey or maple syrup
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ½ tsp cinnamon (optional)
- 2 tbsp flour (wholemeal or plain)
- Pinch of salt
- 50 g dark chocolate chips

Storage:

- Fridge: 4–5 days
- Freeze: up to 1 month

1. Preheat oven to 180°C.
2. Line a baking tray with parchment paper.
3. Whisk together the egg, yogurt, honey (or maple syrup), vanilla, salt, and cinnamon.
4. Stir in the oats and flour.
5. Fold in the chocolate chips.
6. Rest mixture for 5–10 minutes.
7. Shape into cookies on the tray and flatten slightly.
8. Bake for 10–12 minutes, until golden at the edges.
9. ENJOY!

CRISIS Text Support

Shout is a text service offering support through texting, this is especially useful to anyone who struggles making phone calls. Their website also provides useful tips, other support networks and advice on how to help yourself or seek the services you need.

"Shout has been so useful to me, its confidential and I don't have to speak on the phone. I loved the fact that I felt like I was being supported fully by text and I was able to keep myself comfortable at home while doing so. I felt so much better after talking to them and even found some of their links

Text "shout" to 85258 24/7.

Rethink Mental Illness.

As experts in mental illness, we know that with the right support and information people severely affected by mental illness can have a good quality of life.

Advice service: 0808 801 0525
(or Google Rethink mental illness)



Cando (connect and offload)

Our helpline is here to support adults living in Gloucestershire who are experiencing mild to moderate wellbeing difficulties, such as anxiety, low mood or depression, including support for self-harm. We can also provide support and information to friends, family, carers and professionals.

Telephone: 0808 801 0606

Text: 07537 410 022

Email: cando@rethink.org

Here to help



Self-Care Toolkit (Inclusion Gloucestershire)

MHELO is a project within Inclusion Gloucestershire. It is an independent network for people in Gloucestershire to have a collective voice. We exist to ensure that the voice of our experts by experience is heard. We are a user-led network of individuals who want to speak about their experiences of mental ill health, and services, within Gloucestershire to bring about change. Your experience and views are what



empowers the VOICE of the present, and the future, of Mental Health in Gloucestershire. This self-care toolkit was made with members of MHELO and the wider community to share what has worked for them, and to empower the people of Gloucestershire. It is to aid you in creating your own personal plan for your self-care journey.

You can find this self-help toolkit by searching "self-help toolkit Inclusion Gloucestershire" on Google.



Kingsway and Quedgeley Men's Shed:

This group welcomes all men from Gloucester to join them, focusing on healthy minds and bodies.

Men in Sheds Cheltenham & Gloucester: This is a broader initiative that has received funding and helps build community connections, improving physical and mental well-being.

<https://menssheds.org.uk/find-a-shed/>

All About Safe Spaces in Gloucestershire

Have you heard about the remarkable evolution of the Ask for ANI scheme? It's a truly inspiring story that deserves to be shared! Since its launch in 2024, this initiative has transformed into a fantastic network of Safe Spaces located within banks and pharmacies across the UK. These dedicated areas are more than just private spots; they create a secure environment where individuals can make confidential phone calls, reflect on their situation, or decide on their next steps. Importantly, these safe spaces are available to anyone experiencing domestic abuse, serving as a crucial lifeline during difficult times.

Finding a Safe Space is incredibly straightforward. Visit the website and enter your location. For example, when I looked up GL1, I was pleasantly surprised to find five accessible safe spaces all within just a mile.

<https://uksaysnomore.org/safespaces/>

Many local shops and libraries across the country also offer supportive environments. Look for the special stickers displayed in their windows, which signify their commitment to fostering a welcoming atmosphere for those who may be facing bullying or abuse. This includes individuals with learning difficulties and those in the LGBTQIA+ community. You'll often spot these friendly symbols, such as the rainbow flag, proudly showcased.

For a comprehensive list of safe spaces in Gloucestershire, please visit the Safe Spaces Scheme website at <https://www.safespacescheme.org/>.



Have you heard of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Lanyard? If you sometimes need support but have a hidden disability, this lanyard is a great way to signal that you may require a little extra assistance.

Additionally, we are fortunate to have compassionate street pastors, night angels, and community guardians actively patrolling urban areas at night. These dedicated individuals focus on faith-based interventions, ensuring that our communities feel safe and supported. They often patrol until 4 am and wear uniforms to help you easily identify them.

In Gloucestershire, we are proud to host Inclusion Hubs, which are led by and for people with disabilities. These hubs are welcoming spaces where everyone can feel at home. Weekly, they provide diverse opportunities for socialising, engaging in new activities, and acquiring valuable information.

Whether you are navigating physical disabilities, learning challenges, mental health issues, or autism spectrum conditions—or you're supporting someone who is—our hubs are here to help you every step of the way.

Interested in learning more about these incredible Inclusion Hubs? Check out the website for further details! <https://www.inclusiongloucestershire.co.uk/engagement/community-hubs/>. Together, let's build a more inclusive and supportive community for everyone!

More About MHELO...



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

FREE Self-Care Toolkit

We work together, sharing our voices and experiences to support others in similar situations. Our Self-Care Toolkit was developed in this way by pooling our collective knowledge. Download a copy, complete the prompts, and create a plan that's right for you. Then pick it up every time you need it!

Newsflash...

- We are working together with Rethink to find out more about the use and advertising effectiveness of the CandO Helpline - **our survey is available until November 3rd**, please give us your feedback at: <https://tinyurl.com/MHELOQQ1>
- We are updating our Self-Care Toolkit with a new section called Accessing Services Safely - watch this space.

Read more, sign up for our next newsletter, or download a free copy of the toolkit here...

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

