Newsletter Spring 2026

MHELO

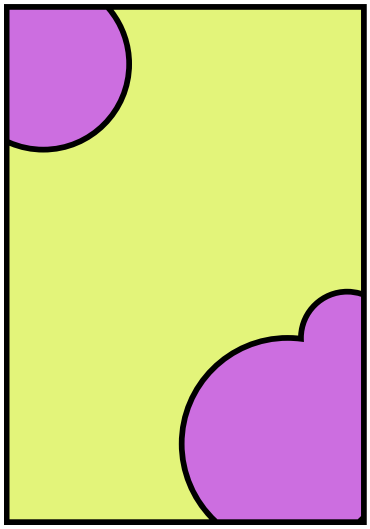
MENTAL HEALTH EXPERIENCE LED OPPORTUNITIES

MHELO News

Spotlight on Innovation in Policing: Andrew Miller Visits MHELO

We were delighted to welcome Police Officer Andrew Miller to speak with the MHELO team about the award-winning work he has been leading at Gloucestershire Constabulary in the areas of autism, mental health, and police custody.

Andrew shared how practical changes he has introduced are helping Gloucestershire Police lead the way nationally in supporting people experiencing mental health challenges.



His work is now attracting attention from other police forces across the country, who are seeking his expertise and learning from Gloucestershire's approach.It was an inspiring and informative session, and we are extremely grateful to Andrew for his time, insight, and ongoing commitment to improving outcomes for some of the most vulnerable people in our community.

INCLUSION GLOUCESTERSHIRE

BIGGER DREAMS ▶ BETTER LIVES ▶ BRIGHTER FUTURES

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MHELOs engagement and feedback

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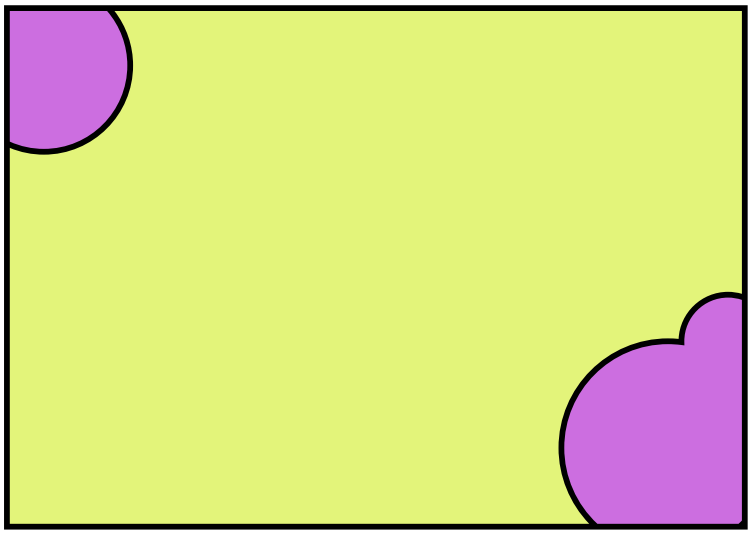
Joanna our new staff member

Nature and Mental Health



MHELO Engages in Tewkesbury Borough Council's Homelessness Policy Review

MHELO recently took part in a housing and homelessness meeting hosted by Tewkesbury Borough Council, bringing together local partners, council officers, and national government representatives. The session explored upcoming policy developments and included a presentation from a national housing officer outlining the direction of future homelessness support.

As part of the workshop discussions, we were able to share our lived-experience insights into the mental-health challenges that often underpin housing instability. These conversations highlighted the importance of designing services that recognise the realities people face when navigating both mental-health difficulties and the housing system.

We also delivered a short presentation on MHELO's work, which was warmly received by attendees. It was encouraging to see such strong interest in the lived-experience perspective, and we look forward to continuing to contribute to this important area of local policy development.

MHELO at Gloucester Job Centre Disability Fair

Kate represented MHELO at the Gloucester Job Centre's Disability Fair, connecting with job seekers and disability employment coaches. The event supports people with disabilities returning to work — a goal that aligns closely with MHELO's mission. We showcased how volunteering with MHELO can build confidence, develop skills, and support future employment. Encouraging conversations were had, and we're excited about the new connections made.

Positive feedback from Connect and Offload

Connect and Offload has taken swift action following our survey on awareness and experiences of the helpline. New, clearer trifold leaflets and GP-screen adverts are boosting visibility in trusted places. Communication has been strengthened with improved wording, fuller explanations of what callers can expect, and a new online video. The service now consistently uses the full name Connect and Offload or CANDO, and eligibility wording has been simplified to reassure people they can get in touch without a diagnosis or crisis.

Denise, MHELO AND our time with the Clinical Programming Group (CPG)

Our time within the CPG has shown how powerful it is when people with lived experience are truly heard. Having the confidence to speak openly, and being given space to share honest feedback, has shaped better understanding across the group.

Our contributions included:

- Crisis engagement – highlighting what compassionate, timely support should look like.
- Coming off antidepressants – sharing the realities of withdrawal and the need for clearer guidance.
- Mental health and neurodivergence
- Eating disorders – offering insight into barriers to early intervention and the impact of delays.

We also recognised and reflected on challenges such as lengthy timeframes to implement changes across systems. Language and acronyms can create barriers which we highlighted.

There is much to celebrate. Lived experience was embedded from the start of the CPG, and we consistently felt valued, respected, and included. Working in a co-productive way strengthened relationships and trust and we have since received thanks for our valued input.

PHOTOS BY OUR VOLUNTEER ANDY

What Spring Means To Me by Jackie

It’s finally spring, although today you would think it was winter again. However, even though it’s cold today, signs of spring are all around.

Spring really helps lift my mood and helps my mental health.

The joy of seeing new growth all around is lovely to see. Daffodils in colourful bloom, new buds sprouting on the trees, and colourful cherry blossom, which, when the wind blows, drops like confetti.

The smell of freshly cut grass.

During spring, I notice the lovely bird song, and I often sit and watch different birds busy nesting.

The best thing for me about spring is the longer days and lighter evenings, which boost my mood and give me hope.

All of this is what spring means to me.

HELLO :-)

I'm Joanna, and I'm really excited to be joining MHELO as an Expert by Experience and Project Worker.

I come to this role with both professional and lived experience of mental health challenges. Being an Expert by Experience means that my voice – and the voices of others with lived experience – are not just heard, but genuinely valued, respected, and used to shape real and meaningful change.

Art is a huge part of my wellbeing. Alongside this role, I'm also an illustrator. As my major project at University, I wrote, illustrated and published a children's picture book called The Fixby Giant. I love anything creative, and at the moment I'm enjoying punch needle stitching, watercolour and wood cut printing.

I have also worked with children in schools and festivals, using storytelling, books, and art to have fun while learning about how art can inspire imagination and creativity.

MHELO feels like a very special space to be part of – a space where lived experience is at the heart of everything we do, ensuring people feel empowered to share their experiences safely and confidently, knowing their contributions can make a real difference.

I'm really excited to be part of the MHELO community and to work alongside such passionate and inspiring people. I look forward to learning, collaborating, and helping ensure that our work continues to lead the way in everything we do.

Overall, I work best in environments where kindness, openness, and mutual respect are valued, and where lived experience is seen as a strength, and I can be myself. I enjoy working collaboratively, learning from others, and being part of a team where everyone's voice matters.

How Nature Photography Can Lift Your Spirits...

Interview with Andy about nature and mental health

We asked our volunteer Andy some questions. Here's what he said.

What do you enjoy most about being in nature?

Lots of things. Nature is mostly free to access. It is peaceful, and you can get away from the hustle and bustle of cars and lorries. I really enjoy seeing the seasons change – from when you first notice the buds on the trees in the winter to the early blossom of cherry plum, then hazel, blackthorn and hawthorn in late winter and early spring. I find it really relaxing, and it's also an experience of being alive and being around living things.

How does taking photos outdoors make you feel?

It is a great way of making positive memories – I look back through them a lot, and sometimes I flag my favourites on my phone so they are easier to go back through. It is also a skill that develops over time. It gives me a buzz when I can do something better than before. For example, zooming in a little bit and tapping on the object can make it stand out and blur the background just enough to get depth of field.

Is there any other reason you take photos in nature?

Another reason is to submit records to apps or directly to the county environmental records centre.

Is there a place in nature where you feel especially calm or happy?

Yes, in woodland or by the sea. I grew up near the sea, and it was a big part of my childhood. Secondly, I love trees because it's like being immersed in nature with things growing at your feet, to your side and above you. There's a lot of research that shows being in woodland is good for your health

How does spending time outside help your wellbeing day-to-day?

It is a great way to unwind, decompress and focus on the present moment.

PHOTOS BY OUR VOLUNTEER ANDY

Kate's Super Healthy Warldorf Salad

Easy salad recipe

- Shred the red cabbage into fine slices with a potato peeler
- Core the apple, chop into thin slices and then into sticks
- Chop the walnuts into bite-sized pieces
- Slice the onion
- Add one teaspoon of Dijon mustard
- Add mayonnaise to taste - some like a little, some like a lot
- Mix thoroughly and enjoy with a baked potato and some chicken slices or hummus.

½ small red cabbage
1 green or red apple
10 walnut halves
Mayonnaise
1 teaspooon Dijon Mustard
½ small onion (optional)

More About MHELO...

If you are interested in joining our friendly team, please contact MHELO on mhelo@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 currently working on a new version of our Self-Care Toolkit for people whose first language is not English.
- We will simplify the language and make it more accessible
- We will change a few things which currently make it less accessible to people of other faiths
- We are also currently seeking funding to translate the toolkit into Polish

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/