

INCLUSION
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

MHELO

MENTAL HEALTH EXPERIENCE LED OPPORTUNITIES



Mental Health Awareness Week

We were delighted to get involved in local events during Mental Health Awareness Week.

Our involvement included this video that features our very own MHELO Chair, Denise.

We really tried to get across how we work and that co-production is at the heart of what we do at MHELO and always has been. The voice of lived-experience is essential. No voice should ever go unheard.

by Denise Holder



Scan QR code for
Denise's Video
on Mental Health
Awareness Week



Summer Newsletter 2026

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Awareness Week**

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Conference**

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MHELO Updates

Mental Health Conference

Representatives of MHELO, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board and Rethink were invited to present on their work at a County Council Mental Health Day at the Guildhall.

The conference was during Mental Health Awareness Week and was partly to celebrate Mental Health Social Workers becoming part of Adult Social Services. We were presenting alongside some key speakers.

For many years Mental Health Social Workers were part of Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Trust and before that 2Gether.

People could only access a mental health social worker if they were being cared for by the Mental Health Teams in the Trust. For that reason, many people with mental health problems never saw a mental health social worker.

The County Council would like the service to be more widely available and believe this might prevent more serious mental illness developing. They have committed to involve us all in coproducing

what the new model of social work will look like.

by Jan Marriott



The lived experience voices at the Rethink Forums mean people like me are finally heard.

We can get our voices and experiences across in a safe and non-judgemental environment.

It's important for people to have an opportunity to say how they feel and to contribute in making systems better for the future. This is what the Forums are helping us achieve.

I have been in the system for many years and years ago we did not have a voice.

By coproducing with people with lived experience, we can



work as a team to make things better and find the gaps.

There needs to be action so we don't go around in circles, together we can produce things that are valued by us all.

"Being part of the conversation of someone with Lived Experience, gives me a voice to express how I feel about Mental Health Services in Gloucestershire, as well as being an advocate for those with no voice."

by Jackie Sallis

Big Health Day



The Big Health Day is an annual event bringing together lots of organisations, charities and stakeholders in one room.

This is a fantastic opportunity for us to network and share how we work with the general public too. The Team had some time to walk around the event and introduce themselves to other stall-holders.

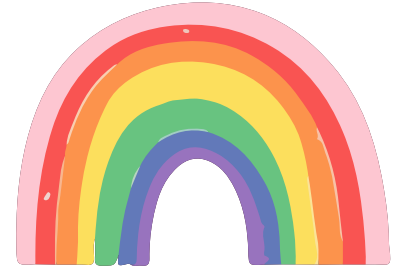


This year we were handing out our Spring Newsletter, sharing our Self-Care Toolkit as well as talking a bit about co-production and how vital this is for our work.

The event was a great success, and despite the rain we met lots of amazing people. The space allocated to us was much more person-centred this year and it was wonderful to share it with other teams from Inclusion Gloucestershire.

This annual event is definitely something worth going to, especially if you've not been before.

by Denise Holder



Introducing Amy

**Hello,
I'm Amy.
I'm
delighted
to be
joining
MHELO**



**as a Project Worker and
to be part of a project
that places lived
experience at the
heart of supporting
mental health and
wellbeing. I also work as
a Volunteer Peer
Mentor and a Project
Worker on the
Unboxed Project at
Inclusion
Gloucestershire.**



**Mental health difficulties
are something that have
touched many aspects of
my life. As a late
diagnosed
neurodivergent person,
I've experienced my own
mental health challenges
throughout life and as a
parent of teenagers I've**

**also seen first-hand the
impact that mental health
difficulties and
struggles within education
can have on
young people and their
families. These
experiences have given me a
deep appreciation of the
importance of being
listened to, understood and
supported without
judgement.**

**I hope that my experiences,
both personal and
professional, enable me to
contribute positively to the
work we do and help create
opportunities for others to
share their voices.**

**Outside of MHELO, I enjoy a
range of activities that help
me maintain my own
wellbeing. I volunteer as a
ticket inspector on the Great
Western Railway steam
trains, which combines my
love of local
history and helps me give
back to my local
community. Music is another
huge passion
of mine. Last year I started
DJing, this has given me such
a boost in confidence and a
lovely group of supportive
peers.**

**I find real
joy in selecting tracks and
creating sets
that bring people together
through music.**

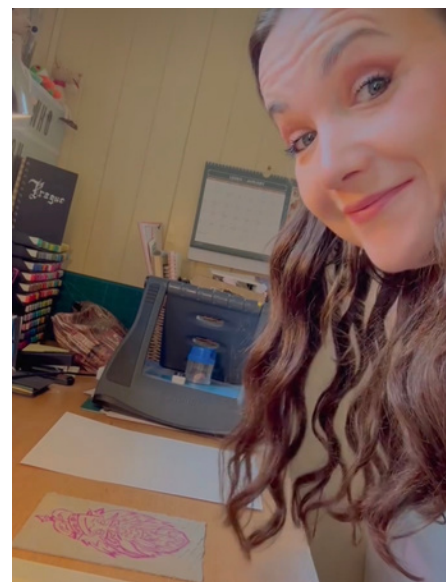
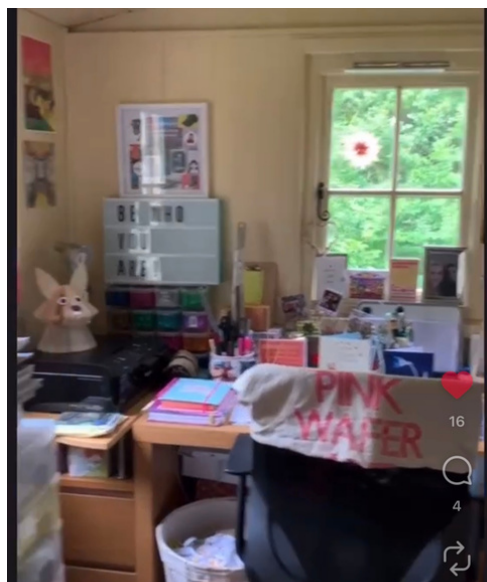


**I also love spending time
walking in the countryside
exploring woodland and
taking photos. Being
surrounded by the peace
of nature provides me with
a sense of calm
and perspective and is an
important part of
looking after my own
mental health.**

**I'm really looking forward
to being part of MHELO. I
believe that their
commitment to valuing
lived experience is really
important work that helps
to shape and strengthen
mental health support in
our area.**

by Amy Watkins

Joanna's New Role



Between the Spring Newsletter and this edition, I have stepped into a new role within the MHELO Team as MHELO Team Coordinator. I'm thoroughly enjoying the role so far and have already had some fantastic opportunities.

As part of my new position, I have attended the Mental Health Conference at the Guildhall with the MHELO Team, spoken about our Self-Care Toolkit within Community Mental Health services, and networked with a wide range of organisations and individuals at Big Health Day.

In the last newsletter, I mentioned that I am an author and illustrator with a passion for all things arts and crafts. Recently, my creative projects have taken a digital turn, and I'm really enjoying creating artwork on my iPad - especially without all the usual mess!

I'm also hoping to start work on a second The Fixby Giant book, and I already have plenty of ideas waiting to be explored. Now that the sunshine has arrived, I can spend more time in my garden art studio - my dad's shepherd's hut - where I can be surrounded by nature and fully immerse myself in a creative project.

The Shepherd's Hut Studio is my sanctuary - a place where I can create, unwind, or simply sit quietly with a cup of tea. In winter, I light the fire and enjoy the warmth and comfort it brings. In summer, I open the windows wide, immerse myself in nature, and listen to the birds singing and the gentle chatter of the creatures around me.

by Joanna Longuet-Higgins



Climbing with Bee

Bee is a Project Manager for Inclusion Hubs at Inclusion Gloucestershire. Today we met up to talk about their love of climbing and the positive benefits for mental health and wellbeing.

Amy: Can you tell us how you got into climbing?

Bee: I have always been really interested in climbing but never had the opportunity to go.

It's quite an expensive activity. When 270 (Climbing Park) opened, I kept seeing their 'Intro to Climbing' course come up on social media. I was like, I do really want to give it a go. Should I give it a go? I don't know!

Then one night at 2am I just booked it. I thought, I'm just going to do it! I just booked and paid for the 'Introduction to Climbing' course starting the next week and I went. It was something I always wanted to do, but just never had the

confidence, I needed that random burst of energy at 2am!

Amy: Can you describe a moment when climbing had a particularly strong positive effect on your mental health?

Does it help you switch off from everyday worries?

Bee: In my 'Introduction to Climbing' course, I never got to the top of the wall. I was always too scared. I'd get so far and think, no, I'm coming down now.

The first time I went on my own, I felt there was less pressure because I wasn't doing it with anyone else. It was just me on my own and I got to the top! When I came down, I could not stop smiling. I wanted to jump up and down. I was so happy. I felt so proud of myself that I did that.

I feel like that was a light bulb moment for me and just feeling pride in something was really nice.

Amy: How does climbing compare to other activities

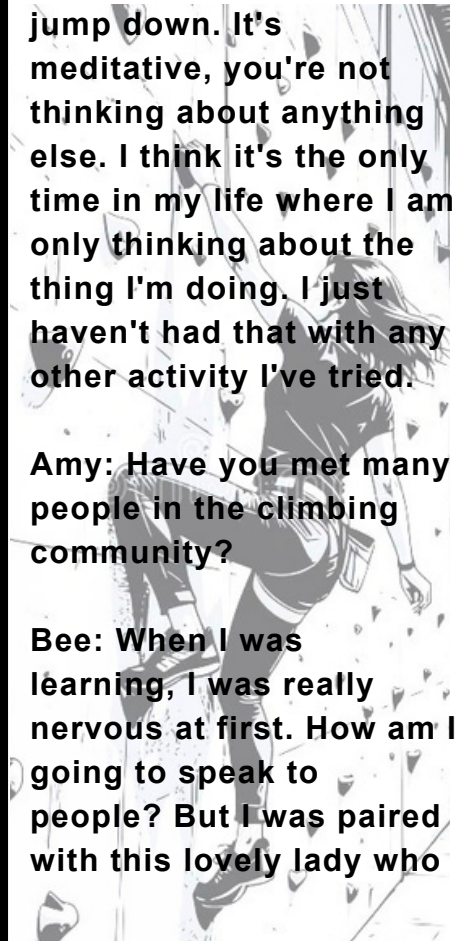
you've tried?

Bee: I really struggle with the social aspect of a lot of activities, I can't regulate my temperature very well. I feel too hot and get panicked. So, a lot of physical activities I won't do because it's a combination of the two.

But climbing engages all of your brain. You can't not think about what you're doing when you're 10 metres up a wall and it's either climb up or jump down. It's meditative, you're not thinking about anything else. I think it's the only time in my life where I am only thinking about the thing I'm doing. I just haven't had that with any other activity I've tried.

Amy: Have you met many people in the climbing community?

Bee: When I was learning, I was really nervous at first. How am I going to speak to people? But I was paired with this lovely lady who





is a sports therapist. She was so kind. With climbing, you have to trust someone really quickly. If you're asking someone to belay for you, which is where they're on the ground holding you up, you're literally trusting them with your life. I think as someone who's got a lot of anxiety and has had a lot of trauma in the past, I don't trust people very easily.

Amy: Do you think the physical aspect of climbing contributes to its mental health benefits?

Bee: I think so yes, climbing is one of the few sports where you're really engaging every single muscle down to your fingers.

You're engaging every muscle and I've never experienced this. I'm not a very strong person. I'm dyspraxic and I have some physical health problems that makes me not very strong. But when I'm climbing I'm buzzing! It feels almost primal, like

that's how our body should be moving, and again feeling pride in something is the main takeaway I get from it mentally.

Amy: Did you have any barriers when you started?

What would you recommend to someone like me, a beginner?

Bee: The main barrier I would say is it is the cost. They do have concessions if you've got a disability and I'm really lucky that my dad bought me a year's concession membership.

Another barrier was feeling like I'm not going to be able to do it and people are going to judge me - anxiety of not being good at something straight away.

I would recommend booking a course or going with someone who knows what they are doing. They will be able to answer a lot of questions for you. Remember everyone is a beginner at some point so try not to compare yourself. I love the quote "time will pass anyway" so why not use that time to give it a go.



Amy: Looking back, how significant has climbing been in your overall mental health journey?

Bee: I can't underestimate how significant it's been for my mental and physical health. I feel so much more resilient. I usually don't deal well with the heat, and we've had this horrible heat wave. I've not self-harmed, I've not had panic attacks, I've not had my depression lows as people do when they have chronic mental health concerns.

I'm just having a good time and I feel so strong when I come off the wall, that physical strength really does translate into mental strength.

It puts something very visual and tangible on something you've achieved. I'm not doing it for anyone else. I'm not trying to achieve something for someone. I'm not part of a team. It's just me. It's the only thing in life for myself. That's something that we don't have a lot of in our modern life.

by Amy Watkins

Denise's Oat Cookie Recipe

Summer Salad

A glass cookie jar with a lid, filled with several golden-brown oat cookies. The jar is sitting on a dark countertop. In the background, there is a window with a plant and a white container.

Ingredients:

- 150g plain flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 100g rolled oats
- 100g brown sugar
- 80g caster sugar
- 150g choc chips
- 1 egg
- 125g butter

Method:

1. Preheat oven to 180 degrees
2. Mix the dry ingredients
3. Add egg and butter
4. Divide into 12 portions
5. Cook for 10-12 minutes until golden at the edges

When supporting mental health, "feel good" food that balances blood sugar, uses gut-friendly ingredients, and includes plenty of mood-boosting fresh herbs and healthy fats is a go to.

This sunny ginger-lime noodle salad is a vibrant, brain-friendly recipe.

Ingredients

Base:

- 200g noodles
- Shredded red cabbage/pak choi
- 2 sliced carrots
- Handful of radishes
- Fresh herbs
- toasted sesame seeds

Dressing:

- 1 thumb grated ginger
- 1 crushed garlic clove
- 1-2 tsp sweetener
- Juice of 2 limes
- 4 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil, and sea salt

Instructions

1. **Prepare Noodles:** Cook according to package, rinse with cold water, and toss with a little oil.
2. **Make Dressing:** Blend or shake all dressing ingredients together.
3. **Assemble:** Combine veggies in a bowl, add noodles, pour over dressing, and mix well.
4. **Finish:** Top with herbs and seeds, and serve.

More About MHELO...



Newsflash...

We've updated our Self-Care Toolkit and have just received a fresh batch hot off the press!

If your organisation would like to receive copies, we'd be delighted to hear from you. Contact us at mhelo@inclusion-glos.org.



Scan QR Code to read more, sign up for our next newsletter, or download a free copy of the toolkit

If you are interested in joining our friendly team, please contact us at Inclusion Gloucestershire 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!

