



### **CWND AND BANGOR CARES**

Bangor Cares 2019 was a unique collaboration between schools, churches, community organisations, businesses, specialist mental health organisations, youth groups, individuals and statutory partners, who came together to:

- focus the hearts and minds of the community on mental health issues;
- bring people together to educate and inform one another on various aspects of mental health;
- highlight the support available to those facing concerns with mental health issues;
- pilot activity programmes in a variety of settings to promote positive mental health;
- encourage the development of relationships outside social media and highlight the importance of investment of time in the family.

It all began with the Prayer Space run by St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in conjunction with the adjacent Clandeboye PS, early in 2019, where the common thread in many conversations were the challenges of mental health in all its forms and the increasing issue of unsupervised screen time for those who are exposed to many unhealthy materials on-line. These matters were discussed with the Principal of Bangor Academy and the idea emerged of a full week of activities in September (23<sup>rd</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup>) to raise awareness about mental health in young minds, hearts and communities. This concept was shared with the members of Church Works who were very supportive and encouraging.

An open meeting was called on 21 March 2019 with representatives of schools, churches, community sector, youth organisations, statutory bodies, health professionals, PSNI, business sector and councillors. About 70 people attended and all were enthusiastic. The discussion confirmed the need for action and the brilliant idea of the daily themes was suggested. Very quickly post-its produced a range of possible activities.

A Steering Group was formed, consultation took place with groups of P7 children from 5 primary schools and 2 post primary and other community groups engaged in conversations with their young people. At these meetings mental health was described as the elephant in the room and this became the visual theme for the initiative. The ideas from the young people, along with the post-it suggestions, created an outline of a week's programme.

In parallel to the Steering Group there were meetings of Church Works, with an expanded membership to explore the activities which could be organised by churches and groups such as SU and Young Life.

Examples of the week's activities included:

- Each day of the week was themed along the Five Steps to Wellbeing, which statutory bodies promote – connect, be active, take notice, keep learning and give;
- 'Mindfulness Monday' raised awareness of those agencies which provide support for those facing concerns about mental health issues. Social justice charity Extern launched its youth engagement service;
- 'Talk about it Tuesday' provided places for people to go to talk about mental health concerns, including a workshop and pop-up cafes. Care for the Family ran a session on how to parent in the digital age;
- 'Work out Wednesday' encouraged people of all ages to put down their devices and engage in fun together. A football tournament saw 20 primary school teams compete for the Bangor Cares Cup, while Bangor Alternatives launched a reflective and meditation garden;
- Research has shown that getting involved in volunteering can help those struggling with mental health and wellbeing, and this was the idea behind 'Thoughtfulness Thursday';
- 'Forward-looking Friday' looked at how what had been learnt during the week could be used going forward;
- 'Social Saturday' encouraged families to turn off their phones for a day and take part in a digital detox. It was a day to 'shop local', get into parks and explore the world around them. The churches also got together and served tea and coffee at the Bangor 10K race to and Thunderpark gave a public demonstration of scooting and BMX riding;
- The whole week ended with 'Sharing Sunday' with special events to mark the week.

For the evaluation, Survey Monkey was used and responses included:

- there should be more than one week of activities in a year;
- there should be a constant stream of information to keep the issue of mental health in the public domain, perhaps with regular features in the free newspaper;
- there could be an emphasis on older people, perhaps with one day in the week devoted to the elderly;
- the daily themes are an excellent fabric for developing ideas for use throughout the year eg Mindfulness Monday could be the theme for January, Talk about it Tuesday could be for February etc and each theme could be used twice in a year;
- the themes could be used creatively, with no costs involved, eg school assemblies could highlight the monthly theme;
- there could be a greater emphasis on hearing the voices of young people. The use of the elephant, or mini elephants, as letter boxes might encourage young people to express their fears and concerns. Alternatives could be a "safe to send box or a worry box for each year group which could show the different stresses at different ages. It would be useful to get a sense of positive as well as negative feelings;
- there is a need to clarify sources of mental health support.

At subsequent meetings of the Steering Group it was agreed that there should be a meeting of the wider stakeholders at which the feedback received through Survey Monkey should be shared and people will be able to see what could be done with no financial resources.

The "lockdown" prevented any further meetings after February 2020.

## **EXAMPLES OF CHURCH BASED ACTIVITIES PLANNED FOR 2019**

**First Presbyterian Church**, Mon-Fri, 12.00-2.00pm, light lunch available each day;

**Scripture Union** circulated material which can be used in school assemblies;  
**Bangor Community Church** open during the day that week and could be used as a safe place;  
**Hamilton Road Presbyterian:** Welcome Centre open from 9.30am to 4.00pm as a safe place to call in to reflect, pray or relax with a cuppa;

### **SUNDAY 22nd SEPTEMBER 2019**

**St Andrew's Presbyterian,** Clondeboye Road: Morning Worship at 11.00am with a Mental Health focus and Bangor Academy SU present;

**Young Life:** young people and leaders to have prayer walks around schools and town;

**Bangor Community Church:** service will be around the Bible and mental health, the afternoon will be spent together with lunch as a Church family;

**Carnalea Methodist** 11.00am service: video clip about Bangor Cares and brief outline of the week ahead activities;

### **MONDAY 23rd SEPTEMBER 2019 MINDFULNESS MONDAY -**

**Prayer space** run and co-ordinated with Grange Primary School;

**King's Church** 11.00am to 1.00pm – Painting Workshop, a free taster arts session, and Woodwork Class, a fun project to make and take home;

**Young Life** office to be open and leaders available from 3-00 - 6.00pm for space and relaxation session;

### **TUESDAY 24th SEPTEMBER 2019 TALK ABOUT IT TUESDAY-**

**Hamilton Road Baptist:** Safespace in Hub, 11.00am-1.00pm;

**Bangor Community Church:** after school club will have appropriate activities to help the children think about the topic of that day;

**King's Church:** Listening ear and information leaflet signposting, Mums and Tots;

**King's Church:** Anxiety Workshop through Foundation Counselling, day yet to be decided so flexible; tables laid out for young people to engage, converse and seek support on mental health issues;

### **WEDNESDAY 25th SEPTEMBER 2019 WORK IT OUT WEDNESDAY-**

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian:** Youth Fellowship special trip to Boulder World or caving, open to Connect, young adults and wider Church family;

**Carnalea Methodist:** 2 hr Digital Fast from 3.00-5.00pm, using the free time to do some alternative activity;

**Young Life:** after school, young people to gather and walk along the coastal route followed by drop-in and chat at the YL office (upstairs at the Train Station).

### **THURSDAY 26th SEPTEMBER 2019 THOUGHTFULNESS THURSDAY-**

**Ballygrainey Presbyterian:** open for quiet reflection 10.00-12.00noon;

**Bangor Community Church:** Toddlers' Group -sensory play for the children, lead the parents in chats on screen time and how to best spend time with their children;

**Hamilton Road Baptist Women Together:** 1030-1130am – Pauline Wilson, Biblical Counsellor and Community Life Coordinator at Belfast Bible College will speak on "Mind Matters: Depression".

Refreshments and pre-school creche will be available from 10.00am;

**Carnalea Methodist:** open from 10.00-12.00noon for quiet reflection; Companionship meeting point for seniors in the foyer 1030-1200 noon;

**Hamilton Road Presbyterian:** Craft and Coffee Group at Welcome Centre with a thought for the day and time to chat with others;

**Young Life:** discipleship - young people and leaders to devote this night to acts of service in local community;

**FRIDAY 27th SEPTEMBER 2019 FORWARD-LOOKING FRIDAY-**

**Hamilton Road Baptist:** Look forward for safe space to talk – youth groups 3.30-5.00pm and 7.30-10.00pm: check in for mental health;

**Bangor Community Church:** went to Kilcooley Primary School to take part in assembly and lessons;

**SATURDAY 28th SEPTEMBER 2019 SOCIAL SATURDAY-**

**Bangor Vineyard:** 10.00-11.15am Bangor Aurora – Pause, an event for women taking time out on a Saturday morning -healthy breakfast/ talk about self care and follow with relaxation/ mindfulness mat exercises;

**Bangor 10K** - churches to work alongside Bangor 10K organisers (North Down Athletics Club) to serve runners, have picnic afterwards, give out water, tea, coffee, buns, to keep everyone mingling as a community afterwards;

**First Bangor Presbyterian**, Main Street: Town centre churches to have 24/7 prayer that week; work with our English class of 40 international folk on issues; a weekly event for seniors with an “open door” lunch; on Main Street work together with Trinity Pres and Parish to do an event;

**Carnalea Methodist:** Youth Club “God Spot”- youth pastor to engage with young people about pressure around growing up in a digital age;

**Hamilton Road Presbyterian:** 7.30-9.00pm- Youth Club and safe space to talk for years 8-11;

**SUNDAY 29th SEPTEMBER 2019 SHARING SUNDAY - services themed on mental health**

**St Andrew’s Presbyterian** 8pm: joint Evening Prayer and Praise Gathering with sharing stories of the week;

**Ballyholme Presbyterian:** Bring your elephant to church on 29<sup>th</sup> at 11.00am;

**Hamilton Road Baptist:** Service focussed on mental well-being;

**Carnalea Methodist 11.00am:** prayers for others will be dais for those suffering with mental health matters;

**Bangor Vineyard:** 10.30am in SERC- Morning Service focussed on “Does Jesus care about my mental health?”