

# A Picture of Health

## In focus this month: Mental Health

In Public Health we look at the way people in Tameside live as a whole population. This helps us understand what the main health and wellbeing challenges are for people living here, so we can look for ways to improve levels of health. We'll be sharing facts and figures about health in Tameside with you every month, to put you in the picture. We'll also be giving you information on how you can help yourself and the people around you to live well.

**1 Mental wellbeing is more than just the absence of a mental health problem.** It is about feeling happy, confident, and resilient, so we can face the challenges life throws at us. Even if you don't have a mental health problem, you can still benefit from actively doing something to increase your levels of wellbeing. The 5 Ways to Wellbeing are principles you can incorporate into your life in any way that feels right for you. Connect, Give, Keep Learning, Stay Active and Take Notice are all ways you can increase your sense of wellbeing. Learn more about them, and how you can bring the 5 Ways into your life.



**2 Mental health and physical health go hand in hand, that's why people who take regular exercise tend to enjoy better mental health than others.** Exercise releases feel-good hormones, increases self-esteem, and can provide good social opportunities too. Exercise can be recommended for the treatment of depression, and for those with anxiety or stress, it can quiet the mind by helping focus on the outside world for a while. If you choose to exercise in the great outdoors, the distractions nature provides can be a real mood boost. Click below to see why physical activity can be the medicine for your mental wellbeing.



**3 For many years mental health has been talked about in hushed whispers, and people have been reluctant to speak out about their experiences for fear of being judged.** Thankfully times are changing and mental health is now being talked about more openly. Time to Change is a campaign that encourages us all to have a conversation with someone about mental health. Try it yourself. With one in four of us experiencing a problem at some point in our lives, you're guaranteed to know someone who'd be relieved to chat. Not sure where to start?



let's end mental health discrimination

**4 Mental health and physical health are two sides of the same coin.** You simply can't have one without the other. If you're not feeling great in yourself, it can affect your relationships, especially if you find it difficult to talk with people who are close. Healthy and supportive relationships reduce the risk of mental illness. That's why the Mental Health Foundation has chosen relationships for the focus of this May's Mental Health Awareness week. Take a look at their website for information and useful resources.



**5 People tend to think that smoking and drinking calms the nerves, but in fact, they are known to make anxiety worse.** Despite this, some people still choose to smoke, drink, or 'self-medicate' mental health problems with things that harm their physical health. The Healthy Minds service provides a range of treatment and support options for people struggling to cope with low mood, stress, anxiety, depression, or any of the common mental health problems, and can help find a healthier way of coping. If you would like to speak to someone from Healthy Minds, fill in the online form on the Healthy Minds website, and a member of the team will be in touch.



**6 Over 14,000 people are registered with depression in Tameside, and around one in 10 of us will experience depression at some point in our lives.** Chances are you'll know someone who is living with it, or you may have it yourself. There's still further progress to be made on attitudes towards depression, and making an effort to understand it as a real illness rather than simply 'feeling down' is something we can all do. 'I had a black dog' is a simple and helpful way to understand what someone with depression might be experiencing. Click to watch the short clip.



**7 Having a good support network is really important not only to reducing the risk of experiencing a mental health problem in the first place, but in helping you come out of the other side if you do experience problems.** Being close to someone with a mental health problem can be tough, especially if they are reluctant to get help. Being patient and not taking it personally makes sense, but it's not necessarily easy. Trying to get a sense of the problem through their eyes can change your own perspective. Watch this short video about one person's take on how it is to live with someone who has depression.



**8 Anxiety can feel like a sense of unease, worry, or fear.** It has its origins in our natural response to dangerous situations, and at the right time, can be a life saver. It gives us the energy to stand up and fight or run away if we feel threatened. Nowadays we're more likely to need that energy to get through an exam or a job interview than running away from something that wants to eat us, but the biological instinct remains. Some people develop a strong anxiety reaction which can be felt in non-dangerous situations, for example going to the supermarket. When this happens the symptoms can be unpleasant, and can feel out of control. Understanding anxiety and its symptoms can help to reduce fear, and take control back. Take a look at this beginner's guide to anxiety to understand more.



**9 Self-harm is sometimes used to cope with an overload of distressing thoughts or emotions.** Whilst it is believed that around 2 children in every secondary school class self-harm, it's not just the preserve of young people. Over 600 adults in Tameside went to hospital to treat self-inflicted injuries last year alone. Someone who is self-harming may need help to find a better outlet for their problems. If you are worried about self-harm in a young person, speak to our child and adolescent mental health services on 0161 716 3600. Or if you are or know an adult who is self-harming, encourage them to speak to their GP. If the person is seriously hurt call 999 in an emergency. Click to find out more about self-harm and young people.

**10 Sleep. When we're stressed or anxious it can be the first thing to go.** Lying awake watching the clock and churning worries over in our minds rarely helps, but trying telling your brain that! Getting a good night's sleep can feel like the impossible dream sometimes, but there are things that can help. Whilst a good night's sleep won't magic problems away, it can help you feel better able to tackle them come the morning. Find out how you can get some decent shuteye by visiting the sleep section of One You here.



**11 Stress. We all experience it from time to time.** In itself it's not a bad thing, in fact, some people thrive on it. It can give us the extra energy we need to rise to a challenging situation. Sometimes though, stress is prolonged. For example, ongoing money worries, relationship problems or a workload that is too much pressure. When long term stress occurs it can affect how you feel, think and behave. It can also affect how your body works. We can't always change our situations to remove the thing that causes our stress, but we can try to change the way you feel about it. Getting a different perspective, or finding ways to bring periods of calm into your day can help. Have a look at One You to see how you can reduce stress in your life.



**12 Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people tend to experience more mental health problems than straight people.** The reasons why are varied, but self-acceptance, bullying, discrimination, and attitudes of friends and family can all play a part. In a survey 44% of LGBT people said they had thought about suicide, double the number of heterosexual and non-trans people. The LGBT Foundation offers advice to young people who may be experiencing mental health problems as a result of their sexuality or gender. If that's you, take a look and you'll see that help is never far away.



**13 For some people, it can feel like there is no way out of their problems.** Even with a loving and supportive network of friends and family, they may feel their only option is to take their own life. Sadly, around 26 people do so in Tameside each year. Nobody's story needs to end this way. With support and treatment it is possible to allow negative feelings to pass.

The Sanctuary offer 24-hour mental health crisis support for adults; and a place to go for anyone who is struggling to get through the night.

Save this number in your phone in case you or someone you know ever needs it in a crisis.

