



What is VOX?

VOX stands for Voices of Experience; it is a national membership organisation that is made up of people with a lived experience of mental health issues. The organisation works to ensure that people with a lived experience of mental health issues get the opportunity to tell services about their experiences and to influence policies in relation to mental health at a national and local level. Membership is free and people can be as active as they want to be.

What is mental health?

Our understanding of mental health is that it is not much different from physical health. We all have physical health and we all have mental health.

Through the course of our lives many of us experience physical health issues, from colds and sore throats to sprained ankles and broken bones in some cases. Equally many of us will experience a mental health issue throughout our lives such as stress, anxiety, depression etc...You may have heard in the media that 1 in 4 people experience a form of mental health problem at some point in their lives, but it is important to note that this figure is only based on the number of people who have accessed mental health services and does not represent

all the people who have experienced mental ill health but never accessed any services for one reason or another.

There are however many different understandings of what mental health means to different people and this is where diversity comes in.

What is the Diversity network bulletin and why are we developing it?

This bulletin is a platform for people with a lived experience of mental health issues also known as service users and for organisations that represent people's views. The bulletin can be used to express views and experiences in relation to the theme of mental health.

What are the aims of this bulletin?

The bulletin seeks to hear from groups and individuals from diverse backgrounds and whose views in relation to mental health issues are not heard from traditionally. The aim is to share and learn from each other, to facilitate awareness, positive change and anti stigma, to promote partnerships and collaborations and to celebrate diversity.

Examples of some of the groups of people that we would like to hear and learn from are;

Older people, young people, people from ethnic minorities, people who may identify themselves as being Lesbian, Gay, bisexual or Transgender, people with disabilities and sensory impairments, people with gender specific issues, people who are homeless, asylum seekers and refugees etc...

This is by no means a complete list and we would welcome other groups to let us know about how mental health issues affect them.

In this issue:

- A project that supports Black and Minority Ethnic women based in Edinburgh.
- 'It Is Out'. The first research report looking at issues and services for Minority Ethnic people who may identify themselves as being LGB or T (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender)
- How to live a fulfilling life: a sample of a resource developed by a young man with Bipolar from a BME background

Submissions

Please contact the VOX team if you would like to submit an article, poem, report findings or information.

Important note (also known as the small print in some places)

The views expressed in this bulletin by members, individuals and organisations are not necessarily the views of VOX unless otherwise stated.

We recognise that we are all unique and therefore what might work for some people well may not be for every one when individuals, groups or organisations are describing what worked best for them in relation to mental health issues.

Saheliya is a unique bme women led organisation working towards supporting and promoting positive mental health and well-being for women in Edinburgh and surrounding areas.

Saheliya offers a range of therapeutic, practical and support services that includes:

Befriending

Complementary Therapies

Counselling

Peer Advocacy

Young Saheliya and Community Development

It is crucial that the women from BME communities have a safe, confidential, culturally aware and sensitive place like Saheliya to come to and receive a holistic service that helps with all aspects of their development.

Women from ethnic communities, especially with mental health issues often feel neglected, misinterpreted and lack proper support due to various reasons like the inability to communicate effectively as a result of language barriers, lack of cultural awareness and understanding amongst mainstream organisations and society, pressure from family and community and lack of awareness of their rights and ways of accessing services. Having a space to voice their issues and support each other would enable them to develop confidence and self-esteem by reducing barriers such as isolation and depression.

It is OUT!

It is out: the first ever Scottish research report on the intersection of race and ethnicity with sexual orientation and gender identity. Download it now on the Equality Network and BEMIS websites.

The Equality Network and Black and Minority Infrastructure Scotland (BEMIS) have been working together over the past year to produce this ground breaking work. The research has already received much praise and interest from many.

The report is quite extensive and covers a wide range of areas. Some of the key points related to mental health are:

- Many people and organisations in Scotland are keen to talk about how we can all provide better services and protections for Minority Ethnic people who may identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and/or Transgender (ME/LGBT people). However, there are also organisations in all sectors that are not prioritising or engaging with intersectionality (when people have aspects of their identities in more than one equality strand).
- ME/LGBT people are not just problems that need to be solved. They are people with gifts, experiences and knowledge that are of benefit to all. We should celebrate the richness that they

bring to our Minority Ethnic and LGBT communities and society as a whole.

- Unfortunately there is currently racism in the LGBT sector and homophobia and transphobia in the race sector. This can lead some ME/LGBT people to be isolated, putting them at increased risk of mental health problems.
- One of the key ways of addressing the many issues around the ME/LGBT intersection is for race and LGBT organisations to come together more often. This will allow us all to talk about the issues and understand them better, be better able to signpost people to different services, and develop working relationships and partnership.

Looking at the needs of ME/LGBT people can help us to develop new ways to better meet the needs of all individuals. Making assumptions about what people may or may not need because of what ethnicity we think someone comes from or what we think their gender or sexual orientation is often leads to misunderstanding, inappropriate assistance and marginalisation. This is especially important when looking at mental health provision. We are all complex individuals with multiple needs. Better awareness of ME/LGBT needs results in better awareness of the diversity of humanity more generally and better approaches to treating everyone better.

For more information please e-mail sam@equality-network.org

How To Live A Fulfilling Life

In this page we will hear from a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) man who has bipolar affective disorder and who has developed his own free resource (available to download) on how to live a fulfilling life, please get in touch for future editions if you have any resources or information you would like to share with others.

BE MINDFUL: Focus on your experience of the present. A fulfilling life consists of purposeful, positive and pleasant participation in life. Do not crave or cling to all that is impermanent.

BE GRATEFUL: Be grateful that life is not worse than it is. Be grateful for the present.

BE OPTIMISTIC: Be optimistic that you can continue to be mindful and grateful. Be optimistic that you can also be compassionate, constructive and balanced.

BE COMPASSIONATE: Be compassionate towards yourself. Be compassionate towards others. Examine and evaluate perceptions, thoughts, emotions, words, actions and omissions. But do not condemn anyone.

BE BALANCED: Life works best when everything is in optimum balance. Happiness comes from matching your activities with your abilities. There must be balance between activities and rest, between doing and being. Only you can find your optimum balance. Find your balance and sustain it. Your life is your responsibility.

BE CONSTRUCTIVE: Begin now. Do something positive and helpful. It can be anything that helps you and others to live and to enjoy being alive.

To Access the full resource please visit;

<http://www.CanWithCandle.org>

Contact Information

Samaritans

08457 909090

They provide confidential non-judgemental emotional support, 24 hours a day for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which could lead to suicide.

Breathing Space

0800 8385 87

(Monday - Thursday 6pm-2am)

(Friday - Monday 6pm - 6am)



Breathing space is a free and confidential phone line service for any individual, who is experiencing low mood or depression, or who is unusually worried and in need of someone to talk to.

NHS 24

0845 4 24 24 24

An online and telephone-based service that can answer your questions about your health and offer advice.

VOX- Voices of Experience



c/o Mental Health Foundation, 30 George Square, Glasgow, G2 1EG

Telephone: 01415721663

Email: mal-gailani@mhf.org.uk

Website: www.voxscotland.org.uk

Saheliya

Saheliya is a Black and Minority Ethnic Women's Mental Health organisation based in Edinburgh. They provide several services such as counselling and complementary therapies.

Telephone: 0131 556 9302

Website: www.saheliya.org.uk/

DAS-Depression Alliance Scotland

DAS is a national organisation that focuses specifically on depression. They offer information, self help support groups and telephone and email support.

Telephone: 0845 123 23 20

Email: info@dascot.org

Website: www.dascot.org/index.html