



# Pathfinder News

Winter 2021

Wishing all our service users and partners a safe and peaceful festive period

## Tips for winter wellbeing

The festive season can be a difficult time for people for all sorts of reasons. Here are some tips for taking care of yourself over Christmas and for getting through the winter months.

Think about the little things you can do for yourself each day:

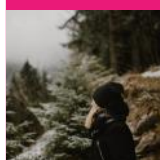
- Do the festive season your way – and take it one day at a time.
- Save your energy for the things you really need to do and try not to get caught up in unnecessary things. Don't feel pressured.
- Take time for you – spend time outside and or snuggle up and watch a good movie.
- Plan ahead – make sure you organise what you need, food, medication and data on your phone etc.
- Try and shop online or go at quieter times if you can; homemade gifts and cards are a thoughtful way of showing you care.
- Food and mood – our food can have a big impact on our mood, so think about meals that are delicious and healthy; warming soups are good at this time of year.
- Anxiety and stress – it's normal to feel a bit more stressed than usual, but if things get too much, make sure to take the time to talk about how you're feeling.



- Physical health can impact how we feel, so make time to move; try marching on the spot for a few minutes or going up and down the stairs for as long as you feel comfortable.
- Don't compare yourself – TV and social media are full of happy festive images; these are not reality, so don't compare yourself with them. And remember you are not the only one who is finding things difficult.
- Ask, how can I be kind to myself right now?

For more information, see Mind in Brighton & Hove's [winter wellbeing leaflet](#).

**Woodland wonders:**  
the benefits of walking  
in the woods for your



mental  
health

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**LGBT+ survey:**  
the effects of the pan-  
demic on the LGBT+  
community



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# The gift of giving

It's not all about presents, as we all know.  
There are lots of ways to give at Christmas.

Giving is one of the five ways to wellbeing, an evidence-based approach to looking after your wellbeing, developed by the New Economics Foundation. This research found a strong connection between helping others and personal happiness.

We all know Christmas is a time where people exchange gifts, but we want to highlight the importance of giving our time to those around us and those in need. This not only improves the lives and wellbeing of those around us but can also improve our own wellbeing.

Here are a few suggestions of ways in which you can offer time, energy or support.

- Check in on our friends and family, either by text or phone or even in person. Christmas can be an isolating time for many and the simple act of checking in can go a long way to remind people that they are loved – and have a support network around them during this difficult time. Just a simple chat about how they have been, their Christmas plans, what they are looking forward to (or not as the case may be) can make such an impact.
- Remind people you are there for them. If you have elderly neighbours or anyone you know who is on their own, pop in and say hello and if you can, consider inviting them to your Christmas dinner! If this isn't suitable for them, you could even offer to take a plate round. It may also be difficult for those who are vulnerable to get out to buy their presents or put up their decorations. Perhaps see if they need anything that you can buy when



you are shopping yourself or if they would like a hand putting their decorations up!

- One way to give this Christmas is to donate to charity if you are able. Most charities rely on fundraising to continue providing vital mental health and other support to our local communities, so please giving your time or donating this festive season if you can.
- More than anything, be kind. Research has shown that an act of kindness once a week over a six-week period is associated with an increase in wellbeing. It's more important than ever over the festive season, which can be a trying time for many people.

This past year has been difficult for many. Let's come together this Christmas time and be a support network for those around us.

Every gesture, no matter how small, can have a large impact on the mental wellbeing of others and ourselves.

Have a peaceful festive season.

# Could woodland walks save millions in mental health costs?



**What do woodland walks have to do with the budget of the NHS? It may seem like these are things from two very different worlds, but new research has highlighted an important link.**

According to a study published by Forest Research, walks in UK woods could save £185m a year in mental health costs.

The study combines data on woodland visitor numbers, the prevalence of mental health conditions and evidence that regular nature visits reduce depression and anxiety. The final figure is based on the role of woodland in alleviating mental illnesses, resulting in reduced costs to the NHS and employers.

A growing body of research has shown that spending time in a natural environment can have huge benefits for mental health. A 2019 study by the University of Exeter Medical School found that a two-hour “dose” of nature every week has a profound effect on health and wellbeing. Interestingly, the

results seem to be the same regardless of whether there is an activity involved. Merely sitting and enjoying nature is enough.

Many nature-lovers may think this is common sense, but sadly common sense doesn't always factor in policy decisions. Forest Research's study aims to inform policy makers and makes the case for continued investment in and expansion of the UK's woodlands. Importantly, it is the first study of its kind to put a figure – £185m – on the associated mental health benefits.

This figure was derived from the cost of various treatments, including visits to GPs, drug prescriptions, inpatient care and social services. It also includes costs based on estimates of the number of working days lost due to mental health. The researchers say they have used conservative estimates and the real cost could be even higher.

The research follows a number of schemes that have sought to tackle mental health issues by organising activities in nature, a treatment referred to as “green social prescribing”. These have included wildlife projects, arts and heritage events and exercise groups. The National Academy for Social Prescribing, launched in 2019 with funding from the Department of Health, now promotes such schemes on a national level.

In addition, the government recently awarded £5.5m to seven NHS care groups to test how nature can be used to improve mental health and wellbeing. This money will be put into projects such as tree planting and growing food.

During lockdown many of us rediscovered the joy of being outdoors in nature. A walk in the woods provides time to reflect and can help us feel connected to the world. Given how important woodlands are to our mental health and the climate, it's vital we protect and cherish these spaces and keep them accessible for all.

# Today's young people are more optimistic than older generations, survey finds

A global survey commissioned by UNICEF for World Children's Day 2021 has found young people believe that the world is improving with each generation.

The intergenerational study, conducted by Gallup, surveyed 15-24 year olds and 40-plus people across 21 countries and from different socio-economic groups and compared their attitudes in a number of categories.

It found that three out of five young people said they thought the world was progressing towards a better future (57 per cent), compared to 39 per cent of 40+ year olds.

Younger people were generally more trusting of national governments, scientists and news media as sources of accurate information, but were sceptical of what they read on social media with only 17 per cent of young people saying they trusted social media platforms "a lot" for information.

However, the survey (which was conducted during the pandemic) also found that young people were well aware of the problems the



world faced and the challenges specific to their generation. For example, on average 59 per cent of young people said they believed that children faced more pressure to "succeed" than their parents did, while 36 per cent of 15-24 year olds reported often feeling worried, nervous or anxious, compared to 30 per cent of 40+ people.

One in five young people said that they often felt depressed during the Covid-19 pandemic – once again illustrating how the pandemic has impacted on young people's mental health.

The report concluded: "Born into a more digital, interconnected and diverse reality, young people see a world that is largely a better place for children than the one their parents grew up in – a safer and more abundant world that offers children better education, opportunities and hope for the future. At the same time, they aren't complacent. They report greater struggles with mental health conditions and low levels of trust in the information sources they use most."

Henrietta Fore, executive director of UNICEF, said: "The world's young people remain hopeful and determined to make the world a better place. [They] have concerns for the future but see themselves as part of the solution."



# Isolation and poor mental health widespread among LGBT+ communities during pandemic

Multiple lockdowns and limited access to support during the pandemic increased gender dysphoria – the distress a person feels due to the mismatch between their personal sense of gender and their sex assigned at birth – and the mental health challenges experienced by transgender people, according to new research from the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen).

The report is the first large-scale review of evidence about the experiences of LGBT+ people in Britain during the pandemic and analysed 50 studies from 2020-21 and data from 1,745 people who took part in surveys during April and June 2020.

The research identifies that the loss of safe and supportive spaces, and isolation from peer groups, including the disruption to LGBT+ services, significantly impacted the mental health, wellbeing and safety of LGBT+ communities in the UK – with many trans and younger LGBT+ people reporting that they were more likely to self-harm or attempt or think about suicide during this period.

Many of those surveyed said their mental health and feelings of gender dysphoria were exacerbated by cancelled hospital appointments,



postponed transition-related care and reduced mental health support, as well as reduced face-to-face contact with their LGBT+ peers – with the latter particularly felt by younger LGBT+ people. The review revealed that feelings of loneliness and isolation were “key aspects” of LGBT+ communities’ experience.

The research was a combination of a rapid evidence assessment of existing studies conducted during the pandemic, as well as survey data collected by Intercom Trust, LGBT Foundation and Stonewall during April and June 2020.

NatCen reports significant evidence gaps about the experiences of LGBT+ people during the pandemic and says that there is a particular need for further research into the experiences of LGBT+ people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and LGBT+ people of colour, as well as LGBT+ disabled people.

“LGBT+ communities’ experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic have been wide-ranging, with negative impacts on mental health, safety and access to services,” says Nathan Hudson, research director at NatCen. “There are significant evidence gaps for particular LGBT+ communities and this shows the need for further research to help ensure no group is left behind in our recovery from COVID-19.”

# Workplace mental health needs a culture change

Prince Harry made headlines for saying that we should celebrate those who quit their job for the sake of their mental health. Meanwhile, a UK government agency has warned that workplaces in Britain need to undergo a “culture change” if they want to avoid a “health and safety crisis” among employees.

In the wake of the pandemic, there have been numerous studies investigating mental health and the workplace. A YouGov survey reported that 66 per cent of respondents attributed worsening mental health to their work life, and 28 per cent believed their employer wasn't doing enough to safeguard their mental health. Another poll conducted by Employment Hero found that 48 per cent of employers said they didn't have the budget to support their employees' mental health, while 30 per cent said they don't know how to support mental wellbeing.

It is well documented that happy employees perform better at work. Mentally healthy workers are more likely to think creatively and take an innovative approach to the tasks they are given. They are also able to cope better with stress and tend to take less sick days. According to Westfield Health, worker absenteeism resulting from mental health issues cost the UK economy £14bn in 2020.

But the true costs of an unhappy workforce are much more profound. Economists in the US have coined the term the “Great Resignation” to describe a spike in the number of people leaving their jobs. It believed that this trend is caused by burnout and job resignations spurred on by Covid.

Some measures are being taken to address the problem in the UK.



The government's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has launched a new campaign warning against what it calls a “health and safety crisis”. The regulator claims mental health issues are now the main reason given for sick days, with more than 17 million working days lost last year due to stress, anxiety or depression. The initiative aims to help businesses recognise the signs of work-related stress, and calls on workplaces to treat psychological and physical risks equally.

At least some businesses do seem open to the idea of changing the culture of their workplaces, according to a survey of 1,000 key decision-makers conducted by digital education platform FutureLearn. It found that 21 per cent of business leaders say they are willing to reevaluate their mental health policies. However, it also found that 12 per cent of employees who left their job cited mental health as one of the main reasons for leaving.

“We're just at the beginning of the mental health awakening,” said Prince Harry, speaking recently at a roundtable discussion as chief impact officer for BetterUp, a coaching platform for employers. He said that the new wave of job resignations wasn't necessarily a bad thing. “In fact,” he said, “it is a sign that with self-awareness comes the need for change. Many people around the world have been stuck in jobs that didn't bring them joy, and now they're putting their mental health first. This is something to be celebrated.”

## Crisis numbers

Samaritans – 24/7, call 116123

Calm – open daily 5pm to midnight, call 0800 585 858

Sussex Mental Healthline – 24/7, call 0800 0309 500

Papyrus – open daily 9am to midnight, call 0800 068 4141



## What is Pathfinder West Sussex?

Pathfinder West Sussex is an alliance of organisations working together to enable people with mental health support needs, and their carers, to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

We provide a pathway of mental health recovery support so people can move freely between services to get well and stay well.

Services are provided in ten areas: Adur, Bognor, Chancetonbury, Chichester, Crawley, Horsham, Littlehampton, Midhurst, Mid Sussex and Worthing.

The four lead providers of Pathfinder services are West Sussex Mind, United Response, Sussex Oakleaf and Richmond Fellowship. The other organisations that make up the alliance with them are CAPITAL Project, Mind in Brighton and Hove, Rethink, Stonepillow, Southdown and NHS Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust (SPFT).

