

Navigating a way out of chaos

Abdi Mohamed is one of **Second Step's Recovery Navigators delivering community mental health services** on the frontline to people across Bristol. He works with more than 20 people including Jack (not his real name).

"I first met Jack in July of this year and suggested we have our first meeting in his flat. It is important that the first meeting you have is in your client's home. This way you can see how they are and how they are doing. He was reluctant to let me see his flat and I later discovered no-one visits him at home. And it wasn't hard to see why.

No-go

"There was rubbish everywhere, a few inches deep across every floor space. There was decaying food and the kitchen was a no-go area. There was nowhere to sit down, his sofa was broken. Jack was living off take-away food, but never threw anything out. We decided to go to the nearby library to make a plan of what to do. Straightaway, Jack said I will clean my flat. He knew he had to take action.

Practical support

"We worked quickly and effectively. I made the applications by phone and explained that this very visible support would make a lot of difference. Within two weeks he had a new washing machine, fridge, cooker and a second hand sofa.

"At the same time as this was going on Jack set about getting rid of the rubbish in his flat, agreeing to remove three bags of rubbish every day. He did so and the flat is so much better now. There is still rubbish and still need for a good clean but we are getting there.

Start to care again

"Jack is an intelligent, lovely man in his 40s who engages well with everyone. He works as a volunteer gardener – something he loves doing. In fact, unless I had gone to his flat I would never have suspected he was living like that. But now that he is back in control and has seen how much he can change things himself – I am hopeful he will find it easier to look after his flat and his life will become better.

"My next hope for Jack is that we will be able to find some ongoing support to help him manage at home, start cooking and start caring for himself again."



Welcome to SecondStep news



Welcome to Second Step News - the newsletter for staff, volunteers and people who use our services.

This December issue highlights the work of one of our Recovery Navigators and the difference he has been able to make to one of his client's lives.

We also talk about taking care at Christmas, a time which can be difficult for so many of us and we also include some of the helplines which will be available during the holiday period.

Do get in touch if you'd like to share your news, and have a peaceful and restful break.

Jane Edmonds
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Taking care at Christmas

Christmas can be joyful, but it can also be a difficult time of year for many of us. We feel obliged to get together with our families and to join in, but for many the prospect, let alone the reality, can feel stressful - even unbearable.

The number of suicides soar to their highest levels in January and the Samaritans expect to receive one call every six seconds over Christmas and the New Year.

The sense that everyone else is finding the festive period enjoyable serves to emphasise our own insecurities and problems. Many also feel pressurised to spend money they may not have, adding to their sense of feeling overwhelmed.

The last thing we want to hear are platitudes about grinning and bearing it. Instead, here at Second Step we have put together our top tips to cope with Christmas based on the five ways to wellbeing.

Top Tips

- 1** | Many of us have family obligations at Christmas and some of us find these hard. Others may not have places to go or people to see, and that can be upsetting too. Either way, try not to beat yourself up about your situation. Be kind to yourself.
- 2** | Take care not to indulge too much, but adding a bit of activity into the mix will make you feel so much better and more balanced. So go for a walk or do some other exercise, whatever works best for you.
- 3** | Keep things small and simple. Trying to do too much will stress you more. If you keep things doable and don't expect too much of yourself you will feel much better.
- 4** | Don't be afraid to ask for help. There are people out there who understand how difficult Christmas can be and will be keen to help you through.
- 5** | Do something for others if you can. Maybe visit a neighbour if that's a possibility. For some, this may be difficult and so it is important to remember to treat yourself well at this time of year. Be sure to do something for you - it's important to take care of yourself.

Helplines at Christmas

Samaritans
24 hours a day, 365 days a year -
National 116 123, local 0117 983 1000
or email jo@samaritans.org

Bristol Mental Health Crisis Service
24 hours a day, 365 days a year -
0300 555 0334

Rethink
Mon - Fri 9am to 2pm (not bank
holidays) 0300 5000 927

Mindline
Wed to Sun 8pm to midnight - 0808
808 0330, National Mindline Mon to Fri
9.15am to 4.15pm - 08457 660 163



Coffee, croissants and system change

Golden Key recently held a breakfast forum to gather feedback on its initial system change strategy from the sector. Talking at the event, Aileen Edwards, Second Step Chief Executive, emphasised that 'we all have a role to play in making Golden Key a success' and invited attendees to help strengthen the partnership's plans by sharing their thoughts on how to improve Bristol's services.

Attendees heard from Richard Bolden, Director of Bristol Leadership Centre, who is part of the University of the West of England team who are evaluating the Golden Key. Richard stressed the importance of working collaboratively to create a sense of trust so that assumptions can be challenged in a constructive way.



Photo: Partners and friends of the Golden Key Programme get together to discuss changing the system in Bristol.

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www.goldenkeybristol.org.uk/join-our-mailing-list

How your mental health experiences can work in your favour

Recovery College Manager Amanda Headley-White spoke recently at the Bristol Mental Health seminar on equality and diversity. She spoke about the power of peer work and the opportunity for those who have experienced mental health services to use that experience to find employment.

She explained that mental health comes under the Disability Act and is an often hidden area of diversity in the work force. Second Step sees mental health experience as an asset rather than a problem and actively looks for this in all roles. In peer support roles Second Step employs paid workers specifically for their experience of mental health services and their own recovery journey.

Peer workers have a positive effect on staff teams by challenging assumptions about mental health. Staff are sometimes worried that peers would be unable to cope with the stress of the job, but peers have proved that they are able and highly successful workers. Peers also help improve services too by making them more tailored to clients' needs.

Events for 2016

With a multitude of awareness days and events taking place throughout the year, Second Step is sharpening up its tool kit and thinking about which events will get maximum exposure over the coming year.

We're gearing up for Blue Monday on Monday 18 January joining other organisations at an event based at The Galleries in Bristol. During this week Bristol University are also holding their mental health awareness week. We're putting together an events calendar for 2016 - so please do get in touch if there is something you'd like Second Step to get involved with.

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