Introduction – Using this toolkit

Mental Health is not always the easiest subject to talk about – its often associated with stigma and a degree of misunderstanding. There are different levels of knowledge and understanding in particular parish and deanery communities. For this reason the toolkit is designed to be as flexible as possible to cover the variety of needs and situations which we will come across.

'Welcome me as I am' can be used in several ways:

- To open up conversations about mental health in a deanery or parish.
- To enable reflection on positive mental health as well as mental ill health.
- To understand the needs of people who experience mental distress.
- To plan and implement spiritual and pastoral support as a result of these reflections.
- To understand and address the needs of caregivers.
- To develop different but complementary forms of ministry in the parish and deanery.

What would we like to achieve ? Its important to ask ourselves this question at the outset of a programme which explores mental health issues in parishes and deaneries. You might use the 'See – Judge – Act' model so that we give ourselves time to reflect on the issues involved before getting involved in a process which might prove too demanding for all concerned.

For example, at a Parish Council meeting or Deanery Pastoral Council meeting you may wish to consider:
- Where are we now ? What is the level of awareness of mental health issues ? It might be useful to ask each organisation in the Parish or Deanery to think about what support they may need in their awareness of Mental Health issues. For example, members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul are often in contact with people with mental health needs, particularly older people.
- There are different ways of raising awareness, for example a healing Mass or using the framework of one or more of the modules in this toolkit.
- Are there places to which we might we might want to offer inreach – for example the Chaplaincy Service of a local Mental Health Unit ? This is explored further in Module 3.
- Mental Health is also an issue of interest to schools. You might want to discuss with the teacher responsible for this particular curriculum area areas ways in which this agenda can be raised in the school.
- You will find some ideas for liturgy in the resources section of this pack. If you are interested in raising awareness of mental health issues, the modules in this pack can be used as 'stand-alone' materials or as part of a half-day or day session
- Do we wish to use the materials for a half-day or day workshop ?

> - There are a number of opportunities during the year to focus on mental health issues. Lent or Advent are opportunities to organise an event. World Mental Health Day occurs on 10th October each year. Carers Week each June is a good opportunity to focus on the needs of carers – perhaps through a day of recollection offering the opportunity for a relaxing day away from the stresses and strains of the caring role.
> - Responding to existing needs through organising a healing Mass or a day for Carers. This can be a good way of raising awareness of mental health issues.
> - Remember that other Churches may also be interested in the Mental Health agenda. The topics in this toolkit could offer a good opportunity for work between Churches.

About the modules: Each module focuses on a different aspect of mental health and has been designed to form the material for a 'stand-alone' discussion or perhaps a half-day workshop in which you might want to have a keynote speaker and then use the material in the modules for smaller workshops.

1. **'Something deep inside me'** – In this module we explore   spirituality as the 'core' of our being – what gives us meaning and purpose in our lives. We then explore how spirituality relates to religious faith and how this sustains us. This module is designed to open up the subject of why spirituality is important not just for people with mental health problems but for all of us. This module forms the basis of an introductory session to the topic of mental health.

2. **'There is no health without mental health'**– In this module we explore protective factors in mental health and the boundaries between mental distress and a formal diagnosis of mental illness, as well as signposting people to local services.

3. **'Welcome me as I am'** – the ministry of   welcome and inclusion. This module challenges us to consider as a parish how inclusive we are as a community and to reflect on what actions we need to take to make progress.

4. **'Caring about Carers'** – Carers can so often feel distant from parish life. They may need to be able to talk about their often complex feelings in a safe and supportive environment. This module focuses on a number of testimonies, including Edna Hunneysett's story, and provides a focus for exploration of how we can better support carers.

5. **'The journey of hope'** – Mental Health services are now increasingly focused on the recovery model – our journey through mental illness needs support and a sense of optimism from those around us together with spiritual and pastoral support. In this module we explore the recovery model and its links with the Christian message of the resurrection

6. **Resources, prayers and suggestions for liturgy.** In this module you will find suggestions for liturgy and pastoral support, as well as additional prayers which you may wish to consider using.

> **When organising a group discussion session on mental health issues:** Remember not to be too ambitious and to invite representatives from all the parish groups: SVP, Youth Groups, etc.
>
> A possible sequence for a 90 minute to 2 hour session might be:
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> - Opening Prayer
> - Reflection from scripture
> - Group discussion on the issues raised (Depending on numbers, this can be done in twos or threes with a report back to the full group. In this way several perspectives can be obtained)
> - Discussion on next steps
> - Closing Prayer
>
> You will want to ensure that you take a refreshments break. For a 90 minute session you might want to organise refreshments at the beginning or end of the session, but for a 2 hour session it is advisable to take a break in the middle of the session. Each module contains several themes for group discussion. All the discussion topics are shown in the modules. The suggested timings are designed to be as flexible as possible as follows:
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> 'Something deep inside me' – 90 minutes
> 'There is no health without mental health' – 2 hours or a half-day
> 'Welcome Me as I am' – 2 hours
> 'The journey of hope' – 90 minutes
> 'Caring about Carers' – 90 minutes to 2 hours
>
> For each module the yellow sheets are for the facilitator and the blue sheets for use of participants. If possible it is helpful to distribute copies of the blue sheets in advance – if not you may need to allow up to an additional 15 minutes reading time. Copies of each module are available in Word 2003 format to enable you to 'cut and paste' as required. A flipchart is ideal to capture the points made during the discussion, but if this is not available, some sheets of paper will do equally well.

> **And some issues and ground rules to consider:** Remember that the subject of mental health can be sensitive for some participants who may have their own personal experiences.
> - Remember that you and those present are not expected to be experts on Mental Health.

- Think about who you would like to facilitate the event. The sessions are designed to be facilitated by someone who has taken part in a training session on using the toolkit. If you don't feel confident yourself yet you could ask someone from 'Rethink' or 'Mind' or an external facilitator. You may wish to share the facilitation with another person – this can work well but remember to plan together how you will both manage the session. The discussion materials in this pack are provided to stimulate debate – but depending on the nature and wishes of the group you may wish to guide the discussion using your own material.
- Group size can influence the experience of participants. For up to 10 people, you may wish to discuss the topic as a whole group. Beyond this number you may wish to ask participants to form smaller sub-groups which can then report back to the larger group. Each of the modules can be used with both formats.
- Be aware of options for professional help (usually via the GP), helplines, and other self help groups in the area.
- Create an environment in which those present can be honest about their own feelings as well as their fears. Its important to think about the dynamic of the group as one of exploration and growth. Its also important to develop a climate in which those present are encouraged to search and discern rather than make hasty judgements.
- Clarify the ground rules – for example confidentiality and respecting each person's point of view. There may be other expectations which you want to add: for example that each person is responsible for setting the boundaries about what they tell about themselves.
- Think about how to react to someone experiencing mental distress during the group. You may want to suggest that they should take time away from the group – somewhere comfortable away from the group may be helpful. Where possible it is useful to have someone identified in advance who can act as a supporter for a group member who is distressed.
- Where possible, ensure that there is someone with whom you can discuss the session – both before and in advance of the session.

Parish or Deanery level ? Most of the material in this toolkit can be used at Deanery level as well as Parish level even though throughout the modules reference is made to parishes. Factors which influence a choice of parish or deanery include:

- Where there is an active Deanery Pastoral Council, this could be a helpful Lenten or Advent Project.
- Some people may prefer to share their experiences in a more 'anonymous' setting such as a Deanery rather than in their own parish.
- There may be a person in the Deanery who because of their professional role would be prepared take this agenda forward.

> *A word about terminology...There are a number of ways in which we can describe the experiences of people with mental health needs. Many of us experience transient mental health problems at difficult times of our lives. This is referred to in the toolkit as 'a person experiencing mental distress'. Sometimes these experiences develop into a clinical condition which meets agreed diagnostic criteria – at this stage this is referred to 'mental illness' or 'people with more enduring mental health problems' so as to avoid any confusion. Remember also to treat the term 'sufferer' with care.*
>
> *While this might resonate with some people, others, particularly as they are recovering from a mental illness, might have difficulty in linking this term with their own experience. In Mental Health services, people who receive services are often referred to as 'service users'. You may see the term 'survivor' in use – this refers to someone who has got well despite – rather than because of – mental health services !*
>
> *The toolkit makes frequent references to carers. Those in this role may not always feel comfortable with this term and may see the care and support they provide as something natural rather than something that needs a specific term.*

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Note – Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy of the information in this pack, but Telos Training is unable to take responsibility for any errors arising from the use of this pack.

The discussion sheets for participants may be copied freely and Word files are available from Telos Training as required. The information on Mental Health legislation (in Module 2 - There is no health without mental health) applies to England and Wales but not to Scotland and Northern Ireland).

Feedback on the use of this toolkit is always welcome so that we can continue to develop and improve the resource. You can email your feedback to Ben Bano at telostraining@aol.com

Some useful resources

Disturbed by Mind and Spirit – Mental Health and Healing in Parish Ministry – Knight, G and Knight J, Mowbray (2009)

Guidelines on spirituality for staff in acute care services (Staffordshire University, 2007)

Loneliness – human nature and the need for human connection (Cacioppo, J, Patrick, T, Norton) London (2008)

Man's search for meaning – (Frankl, V,) Rider Publications (2004)

Our Suicidal Teenagers – Hunneysett, E. Chipmunk Publications (2009)

Petals of Prayer – reflections and resources for dementia sufferers and their carers– (O'Keeffe, Siobhan) Kevin Mayhew, 2011)

Prayers for the depressed (Hollings, M, and Gullick, E), McCrimmon Publishing (1986)

Prayers for surviving depression – (Hermes, Kathryn), Pauline Books (2004)

Psychosis – stories of recovery and hope (Cordle et al), Quay books, (2011)

Promoting Mental Health – a resource for spiritual and pastoral care (Church of England Archbishops Council, Mentality, NIMHE (2004)

Spirituality and Personhood in Dementia (Jewell, A. (ed) Jessica Kingley (2011)

'Spirituality and Mental Health (Gilbert, P. ed) Pavilion, (2011)

Surviving depression – a Catholic Approach (Hermes, Kathryn, Pauline Books) (2003)

Some DVD Resources:

'Hard to Believe' – a film exploring Spirituality and Mental Health (Croydon MIND,) (2005)

'Its still ME, Lord' – a film exploring Spirituality and Dementia (Caritas Social Action Network) (2009)

Spirituality – have you found any yet ? (Alzheimer Scotland – Action on Dementia (2010)

Some useful websites:

Royal College of Psychiatrists – www.rcpsych.ac.uk (Helpful factsheets are available on this website).

MIND – www.mind.org.uk

Rethink – www.rethink.org.uk

Mental Health Foundation – www.mentalhealth.org.uk

Young Peoples Mental Health and well being – www.youngminds.org.uk

Information on dementia – www.alzheimers.org.uk

Support for carers : www.carersuk.org.uk