

Positive Minds is a consortium of organisations – it was founded 11 years ago and we work to improve the mental health of older people in the Bradford District. We identify gaps in provision, and try to address those gaps by developing a new project led by one of the organisations in the consortium. We run events to discuss and highlight relevant subjects, for example self-care, mental health first aid and volunteering.

We are looking to run more events in the coming months working with a wider range of partners so watch this space.

#### **Why was the organisation founded? –**

Marilyn, one of the founders, said “I worked in the NHS as a counsellor until I retired, and I was conscious that in the UK when you got to a certain age, mental health became less important as it was seen as ‘part of the ageing process’ – this is something I wanted to help overturn”. The upper limit for access to adult mental health services is 65, and I feel this is far too low. In order to address this, we started a group called the ‘Older People’s Mental Health Group’, eventually this became Positive Minds. We then were joined by other organisations like Age UK, Carer’s Resource and Bradford Relate, and earlier this year we were pleased to receive our Charitable status.

#### **Tell us about what you get up to and what you offer –**

Most of what we offer is raising awareness of the changes due to ageing and the part that good mental health plays in a healthy lifestyle, we do this through events and working with our partner organisations, some of whom deliver services directly to older people.

We did a brilliant pilot called Worth Connecting a few years ago around IT and older people. It was so well received and oversubscribed that as a consortium we applied for a Big Lottery bid to carry this on which was successful. The project is led by Carer’s Resource, but has workers based with Age UK, 3C and The Welcome Project.

We don’t just target older people with our consortium activity, we are trying to run events that are inclusive of younger generations, all genders, all ethnicities and cultures, so we get a whole-society perspective on ageing. If we engage the younger generation early enough in our events, our projects and our activity, we can establish what is important to them and implement change for future generations.

#### **What are you most proud of about your partnership? –**

One of the things we are proudest of is our Worth Connecting project, the funding we received from the lottery of £500,000 has enabled us to extend it to the whole of Bradford and District, expanded from its initial Keighley geography.

We have been able to sustain our organisation for 11 years, with very little funding, but dedicated staff, volunteers and people that really believe in what the project stands for. We have got so many different organisations and groups involved and manage to retain them for long periods of time due to the passion they, and we, show.

#### **What is your greatest challenge and how could others help you overcome it –**

As with the majority of the sector, funding is a major challenge for us, and so we welcome any donations, no matter how small – and we also welcome donations of time, if anybody wants to volunteer with us or with our projects it would be of massive benefit.

But our greatest challenge is redefining what it means to be an 'older person' in today's society. They often have a negative stereotype as being frail and not contributing much to society, whereas the reality is that they have contributed to society for their whole lives and continue to do so in many forms such as childcare for grandchildren, volunteering, being carers etc. Marilyn is 72 and is still very much an active member of society, in the voluntary health sectors. She is still a part of Positive Minds as their chair. The 65+ bracket contribute £61 billion to the economy every year and this deserves to be recognised. This is something the local and national media, as well as the Government can help us to redefine. We feel that Bradford could help to achieve this by becoming an 'Age Friendly City'.

### **What have you got coming up?**

We have an event called 'Make your Mind UP', a women's wellbeing event which is a partnership with People Can and Women's Health Network, it's an event to show that declining mental health isn't an 'inevitable part of getting older'. There will be key speakers including mental health organisations, the police, a local Bradford poet Sharena Lee Satti, and our founder, Marilyn Foster. This is on Friday 26th October, 10:00 to 13:00 in City Hall, Bradford.

We are also running an 'Ageing without Children' event soon for people who, maybe haven't had children, are estranged from their children, or their children may have moved away – leaving them relatively isolated. Professionals will also be invite to come and discuss the subject, hopefully leading to some community action, and even a local support group being set up.

Another exciting thing we are looking at is whether the Older People's Partnership Board can be re-established – we held an event, with an open call to anybody interested, and around 20 organisations came to discuss the possibility. Unfortunately to be able to do this we would need to access further funding so that we can give it the time it deserves. We hope that we can access this locally.

Take a look at our 'Banishing the Blues' [Booklet and Poster](#) – feel free to download, share and display these. You can also view our [Anxiety Poster](#)