

### ACTION ON MENTAL HEALTH – YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Many people across the West of England are affected by mental health issues. Locally and nationally, health services are concerned about their ability to meet rising demand. Acting early can prevent crises from occurring, saving the financial and human costs of ill health, but more philanthropy is needed to increase support in this area, where we know it can be effective.

Mental health affects people from every part of our community. Those who are most likely to be affected by mental ill health are people who face multiple disadvantages including poverty, homelessness and disability. For these people, mental health problems can quickly develop and escalate, leading to negative impacts on other aspects of their lives. We know that early support makes a difference. This is especially true for children and young people and those most at risk, where building resilience and support networks can be hugely beneficial.

#### Risk factors for having mental health problems

Having a Learning Disability

Living in Poverty

Substance Misuse Issues

Homelessness

History of Offending

Being Lesbian, Gay,  
Bisexual or Transgender

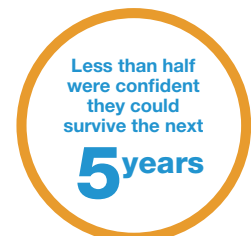
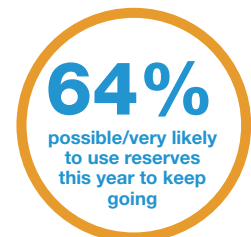
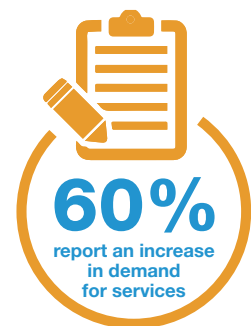
History of Being in Care

Belonging to Black, Asian  
and Minority Ethnic Groups

Being Isolated as an Older Person

Experience of Abuse or Violence

#### West of England VCSE 'State of the Sector' survey




For years the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE) has provided flexible and wide-ranging support for people in need and a safety net to catch those missed by mainstream services. But local research commissioned by us shows that this sector is struggling from cuts and is having to deal with an increase in both volume and complexity of needs.


This Vital Signs report presents some of the current issues and statistics around mental health and our approach to improving them. It is designed as a guide for effective philanthropy and we hope it will inspire a conversation about how we can all work together to improve mental health in the West of England.

## FAIRNESS

Poverty is a significant risk factor for mental ill health. Child poverty is particularly so, with 1 in 3 mental health issues among adults directly relating to difficulty in childhood. Early help is crucial. In an estimated 50% of lifelong mental health issues, symptoms begin by the age of 14. For people of working age in our area, the risk of poverty is highest in Weston-super-Mare. Despite being three times more likely to experience multiple mental health issues, research on women in poverty shows that these women are much less likely to be receiving mental health treatments.




North East Somerset has an above-average rate of antidepressant prescriptions, the second-highest in our area after Bristol South.



North Somerset has above average rates of depression, while Bristol has above average rates of severe mental illness.



People facing multiple disadvantages are at higher risk of experiencing mental ill health. People from black, minority ethnic and gypsy/traveller groups can face additional barriers to accessing support.



At the last census, there were 7,521 unpaid carers under the age of 24 in the West of England - 2 in 5 young carers have mental health problems and 2 in 3 report being bullied.

## STRONG COMMUNITIES

Loneliness and exclusion have a negative impact on mental health. Social isolation increases the risk of premature death by up to 29% and can increase chances of developing physical disease. Older people are particularly at risk. Community belonging, cohesion and relationships are vital for well-being. Research in Bristol showed that some areas, such as Easton, have much higher levels of well-being than expected due to residents' strong sense of community belonging. Mental health is not only an individual medical issue but concerns whole communities and the ways we relate to each other. Hate crime and bullying are huge problems; people who have experienced racism are three times more likely than others to develop depression and psychosis.



In Weston-super-Mare South & Lawrence Hill 40-50% of children live in poverty.




Each of our 4 local authority areas has above average rates of hospital admissions for self-harm among children and young people aged 10-24 years.



1/4 of people we surveyed said that mental health is a priority issue in our area.

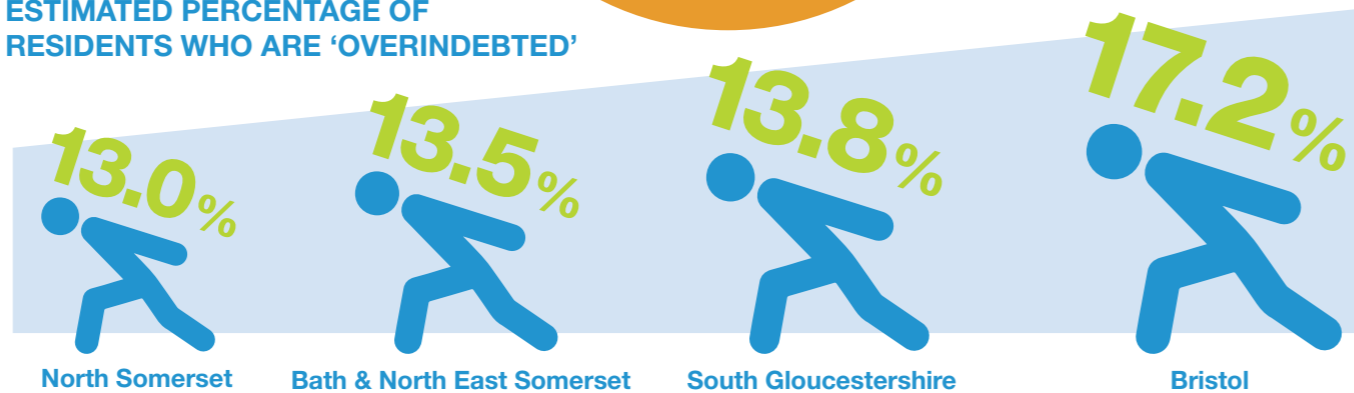


People who are in debt are more likely to report feelings of depression, suicidal thoughts and to struggle with substance misuse.



Areas of very high risk for loneliness among the over 65s exist all over the West of England, across rural and urban wards. In South Gloucestershire, these include Severn Beach and areas of Bradley Stoke, and in B&NES, areas of Paulton, Twerton and Peasedown.

## ESTIMATED PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTS WHO ARE 'OVERINDEBTED'



## HOMELESSNESS

Poor mental health is both a cause and consequence of homelessness, in a negative cycle that can further affect health. Nearly half (44%) of homeless people have a diagnosed mental health problem. When asked what early measures could have been taken to prevent them becoming homeless, 50% of homeless people said support with mental health or addiction. Nationally, a disproportionate number of homeless people are from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups; in the West of England last year, 24% of households accepted as homeless were from these groups. Homeless people often face multiple issues and barriers to accessing support but services are not always designed to manage this.



Only 50% of people with a disability are in employment. Additional costs and lack of income mean that disabled people are two times as likely to have unsecured debt totalling half of their household income or more.

## HEALTH

Our mental and physical health are intimately linked. People with long-term health conditions and disabilities are more likely to experience mental health problems, and vice versa. For example, people with mental health issues are three times more likely to smoke, with the associated health implications, but are less likely to receive stop-smoking support. To be effective, support must be integrated and barriers to accessing services removed. It is important to remember that anyone can suffer with mental ill health. During pregnancy or following the birth of a child, for example, 10-20% of women will experience a mental health issue, affecting not just mothers but potentially also the development and long-term health of their children.

# VITAL STEPS

Last year, **36%** of the funding we awarded through our grants programmes was directed at strengthening local communities and promoting healthy living in the West of England. We made **£900,000** in grants to small, local groups enhancing health and well-being in our area, strengthening communities and supporting those most vulnerable to the effects of ill health.

We know from experience that philanthropy makes a real difference, so here's where you can do the most good:



Invest in early intervention or preventative support for at-risk groups.

Support projects targeting people facing multiple disadvantage – even where the focus is not specifically on improving mental health, benefits will be evident further down the line.

Support projects which bring diverse groups of people together – community cohesion is hugely important for well-being.



In the current funding climate, support groups to pilot new ways of working, collaborating or sustaining their work.

Recognise that projects focusing on improving mental health, especially those with preventative aims, can find it difficult to evidence hard outcomes, and small groups may need additional resources to help monitor their impact.

Prioritise services that are tailored for people with very specific needs – general services aren't appropriate for everyone.

Recognise the importance of outreach services that help people overcome barriers to receiving support.

Prioritise support for people at transitional points in their lives – social isolation often develops or worsens during periods of transition.

Support projects which help to bridge gaps in eligibility for other services, including very general and open-access provision where people can go for initial guidance, signposting and support.

Offer long-term funding for mental health services – funding restrictions often mean that charities can only work with people for a very short time, undermining the efficacy of interventions.

At Quartet Community Foundation we believe in inspiring local philanthropy that changes lives today, tomorrow and forever to give as many people as possible the chance to fulfil their potential. If our Vital Signs report has inspired you to help people facing mental health difficulties please do contact Ronnie Brown for further advice and information on 0117 989 7700 or [ronnie.brown@quartetcf.org.uk](mailto:ronnie.brown@quartetcf.org.uk)

Vital Signs is researched and written by Lucy Gilbert, Philanthropy Officer. To see the detailed report on which this summary is based contact Lucy on 0117 989 7700 or [lucy.gilbert@quartetcf.org.uk](mailto:lucy.gilbert@quartetcf.org.uk)

Your comments and feedback are very welcome – [vitalsigns@quartetcf.org.uk](mailto:vitalsigns@quartetcf.org.uk)



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