

# A MONTHLY COLUMN BY STEPHEN LLOYD MP, EASTBOURNE AND WILLINGDON CONSTITUENCY

**M**ental Health is back in the headlines again with conflicting reports that on the one hand the government is making mental health services in the NHS a priority, alongside consistent reports that the service remains woefully under-funded. Certainly, from my perspective as Eastbourne's MP, the numbers of constituents who contact me with stories of inadequate care or provision lead me to believe we still have a long way to getting it right.

However, for this column I'd like to write instead of my own experience of mental health. My mother was bi-polar and I was the one in our family who was most often best able to manage the occasional episodes she experienced. This meant that on a number of occasions it fell to me to help Mum through some difficult patches. And from this experience I learnt, close up, just how frightening

and debilitating the illness is. Like most people with a mental health problem, she was perfectly capable most of the time but when an episode occurred then all bets were off. It would sometimes need psychiatric intervention and even sectioning into a hospital. These were awful for her and, as you can imagine, traumatic for the family. From these though have come two lasting lessons; firstly, when someone is mentally ill they need proper medical care and secondly, they need to know those around will be there for them. Still to love and support them come what may.

I don't profess to be an expert on mental health - who is? But if either one of the lessons I've highlighted are unavailable, for one reason or other, it makes it much harder for the patient to recover. This is why I am so committed as your MP to ensuring our NHS does a better job for people suffering with a

mental health condition, and also why I think it's vital that the loved ones of the sufferer dig as deep as is necessary to support the individual. It can be hard for both party's sometimes; I won't deny that, but standing shoulder to shoulder with someone experiencing a mental health episode is, I believe, crucial in supporting them in their recovery.

Mental health impacts on many more people than perhaps you may realise and the more we know about it and the more support our NHS can provide the better. That may be an obvious statement but it bears repeating, and as Eastbourne's MP I am determined to always be a strong advocate for those with mental health problems. It can happen to you, me, any of us and its recurrences can be rare or common. Our support though should be constant.



In conclusion, my dear Mum meant the world to me and her pain at her mental illness broke my heart at times but her gift to me was timeless. The gift of being a loving mother. I miss her still.  
[www.stephenlloyd.org.uk](http://www.stephenlloyd.org.uk)

## SHINEWATER SHAFTESBURY CENTRE

**I**t might be the longest name for an eastbourne charity but we are celebrating our 25th year of service to the Eastbourne community this year.

So what do we do?

We are an advice and counselling centre situated in the heart of Shinewater providing a free advice and counselling service to the whole Eastbourne community.

Our trained advisors offer free advice with debt and money issues, benefits advice, housing, pensions, community issues, employment issues and consumer issues. They can help you through the whole process from form filling through to a positive end result.

We have advice clinics at our centre in Shinewater Monday -Thursday from 9.15am - 12.15pm and also at the Gateway Centre in Hampden Park Monday & Wednesday mornings.

Our counsellors work with anyone aged 18 years plus and you can contact us directly to enquire about current availability for counselling appointments. Counselling times can vary depending on your needs and availability of counsellors from morning, afternoon or evening time slots.

Our mission is to provide accessible advice and counselling services in a safe, welcoming, non-judgemental environment.

We know that we have the most amazing team of advisors, counsellors, office support team and volunteer support in fact it's important to add that 42% of our service hours last year were staffed by a diverse and gifted team of volunteers without whom we couldn't maintain the continued capacity of appointments.

This year we have seen a 27% increase in appointments made for our advice service and a 19% increase in appointments for the counselling service; We think it's probably best to let our clients speak for our results, so here's what some of our clients have said about our service in 2017:

"Your counselling service has helped me a great deal and surprisingly it has helped me to realise what a nice person I am and that I have done nothing wrong, I now feel more confident in who I am and also more happy with my life. Thank you to all members of staff."

"I felt overwhelmed with anxiety and fear and I could not cope with filling

out the form due to short term memory issues. The PIP form was 56 pages long and took 3 hours to fill in with your help! Without the help I received from your service I would not have managed to complete the application. The outcome was: From the lowest rate of DLA for mobility & care I was rewarded the highest rate of PIP for mobility & care for three years. Thank you for everything!"

So that's us! possibly the longest name in history for any Eastbourne Charity but matched by our longevity for service to the Eastbourne community.

Would you like to join our team? We currently have multiple vacancies for volunteers with differing skills; see our website [www.shinewatershaftesburycentre.co.uk](http://www.shinewatershaftesburycentre.co.uk)

"The Shaftesbury team were kind & helpful and achieved a successful outcome to a difficult issue- where I could not"



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