

Dorset residents urged not to suffer in silence during ‘toughest time of the year’

People living across the county are being reminded about the importance of seeking help and support if they feel down or depressed, at what is known to be one of the most challenging times of the year for our mental health.

The message comes from Meherzin Das, Professional Lead for Psychology and Psychological Therapies at Dorset HealthCare, who is urging people to focus on keeping busy and doing things to improve their mood.

With the new year now upon us, January is a month where a lot of us are faced with post-Christmas blues, cold dark weather and financial problems, all of which can have a negative impact on our mental health and wellbeing.

This week saw ‘Blue Monday’, the third Monday of January, when it is claimed these issues become more apparent and affect us the most.

Many TV viewers have also empathised with the recent Eastenders storyline surrounding ex-soldier Lee Carter and his heartbreaking battle with depression.

Meherzin said: “Many people struggle with depression all year round, but for some it can intensify at this time of year. January can be a time of stress and worry which can trigger symptoms.

“Christmas debt, returning to work and dealing with the aftermath of family arguments can all be contributing factors, causing negative thoughts and feelings. Add to this the typical decrease in leisure activities and spending less time with friends and it isn’t surprising that people can find themselves in a position of having more time to think about their worries, and not being able to do the things that would normally improve their mood.”

Dorset HealthCare receives over 12,000 referrals a year for psychological therapies to help people suffering with anxiety or depression. They are supported either through our confidential Steps2Wellbeing service (www.steps2wellbeing.co.uk) or through our Community Mental Health Teams.

Dr Rachael Tanner, Clinical Psychology Lead for Dorset HealthCare in North Dorset said: “Reducing our activity levels is a big contributing factor in depression. When we stop doing things we enjoy, we miss out on positive experiences and pleasant feelings.

“By setting small, manageable tasks such as going for a five-minute walk, reading, or simply carrying out a hobby for a short period of time means we are less likely to feel overwhelmed. This leaves us feeling more hopeful and motivated, reducing the symptoms of depression.”

For anyone struggling with the effects of depression, there is a range of help available locally.

NHS Choices (www.nhs.uk) has a dedicated section on depression and its background. Depression UK (www.depressionuk.org) provides support and advice and Blurt (www.blurtitout.org) provides the same but in the form of email alerts.

Support groups can be a safe, supportive environment to help reduce isolation. There are many across Dorset including ‘Wellbeing in Mind’ based at Verwood Community Resource Centre (www.dorsetmind.uk/services), and ‘Active in Mind’ at the Trinity Methodist Church in Southbourne.

There are also many courses run by NHS professionals with lived experience of mental health problems which aim to educate people on recovery. The courses are free to attend and are available to register at www.dorsethealthcare.nhs.uk/services/recovery.

You can also call the Samaritans on 116 123, or use their text service via 07725 909090.

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Notes to editors

1. Dorset HealthCare provides community health services covering mental health, learning disability, addictions, brain injury, dental, and some primary care services, across Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole. Community health services include district nurses, health visitors, school nursing, end of life care, sexual health promotion, safeguarding children, diabetes, education, audiology, speech and language therapy, orthopaedic care, prison health care, breastfeeding support and Dorset’s 11 community hospitals.