

Mental Health Carers Newsletter

Welcome! We support people who care for family, partners, friends or neighbours who struggle with their mental health. Our Service is a partnership between Bromley Well and Bromley, Lewisham and Greenwich Mind.

Supporting you in February

Events and Dates for your Diary

Please register with Bromley Well to reserve your place on these free events, find our contact details on the following page

Coping with Caring

Our 6 week course for mental health carers

Next course starts 7th March taking place every Tuesday morning in Orpington

Hearing Voices

Lived Experience Guest Speakers

Evening talk about hearing voices from guest speakers with lived experience.

Stewart Tight and Sue Wild join us from the hearing voices network to talk about psychosis, hearing voices, phases of mental health recovery and medications.

21st February 6pm – 8pm
BLG Mind, 20b Hayne Road, Beckenham



Coffee Afternoon Peer Support Zoom

Every Wednesday at 3pm, email us for the zoom link to attend!

Voice your views to GPs!

Do you care for someone with a serious mental illness that finds it hard to engage with their GP?

Join our online forum to feedback to GPs directly about the barriers faced. More information on the following pages...

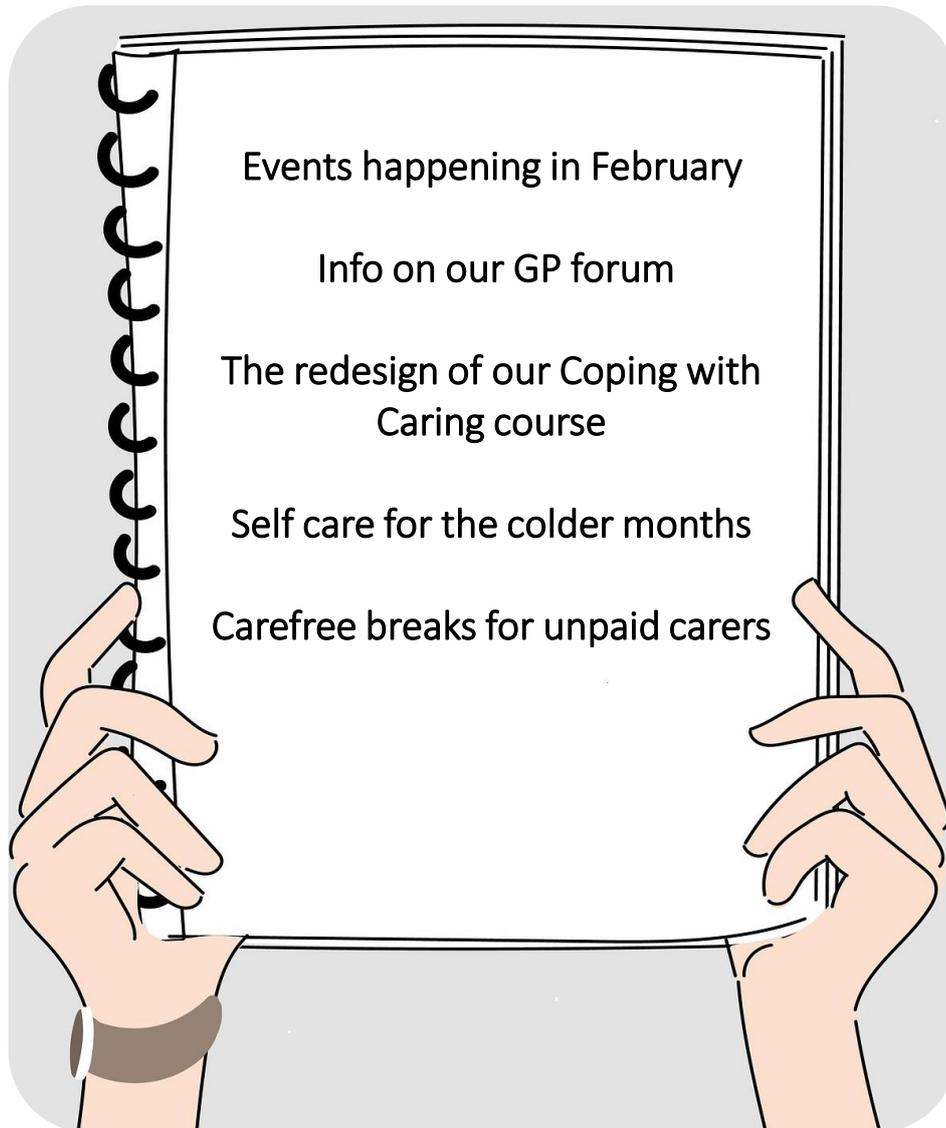
9th February 2pm – 3pm

Self Care Afternoon

You're invited to an afternoon of Self Care. We'll practice some self care together, including mindfulness exercises and creating a self care toolkit.

27th February 1:30 – 3:30pm
BLG Mind, 20b Hayne Road

Inside this issue



If you are seeking support, wish to sign up to one our events or have any questions please refer to us by emailing MHcarers@bromleywell.org.uk or by calling Bromley Well Freephone 0808 278 7898 and asking for mental health carers

www.bromleywell.org.uk/our-services/carers/mental-health-carers

Meet the team

We're a team of two mental health carers advisors and we're passionate about the support that carers deserve.



Lucy Blake



Aimée Roberts

Our Service provides...

Emotional support and a listening ear on the phone

Wellbeing advice and relaxation tips

Coping techniques for stressful situations

Peer support groups in person and online

Information and Skills Workshops and Talks

Wellbeing Events

General mental health information

Information on further support services for support for yourself and the person you care for

We want your feedback!

Tell us what workshops, talks and information sessions you would like

We want to create a mental health carers service that has the voices and needs of carers at its heart.

We're working with Oxleas NHS and local charities in the aim to provide a rolling timetable of monthly events to support you. Whether it's talks from professionals on specific subjects, workshops on different areas, peer support or self care and alternative therapies... What support would you like to see and what would help you the most?

Please let us know your views, ideas and any feedback by emailing us at MHcarers@bromleywell.org.uk



Voice your views to GPs Join the forum!

**Do you care for someone
with a serious mental illness
who finds it hard to engage with their GP?**

We are hosting a forum online for carers of people with serious mental illness to discuss with a lead GP and feedback about what barriers people with serious mental illness face for accessing routine health checks through their GP surgeries.

**February 9th
2pm – 3pm on Microsoft Teams**

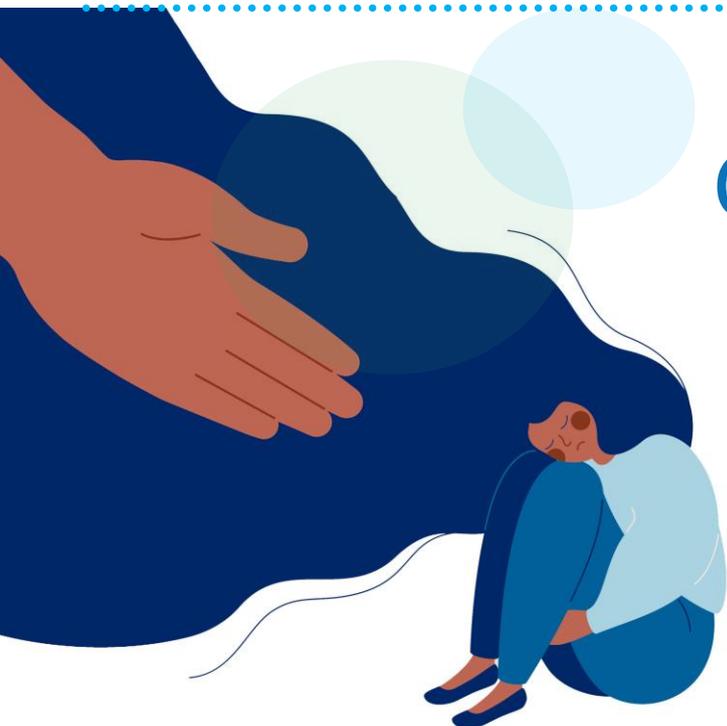
This is your opportunity to feedback directly on why GPs can be hard to engage with for some and what can be done differently to encourage people to reach out to their GP's and take up offers for health checks and generally seek support.

We believe you, as carers, have invaluable insight into this and can voice your views on what more can be done, from lived experience. We will be joined by the Bromley Clinical Lead for Mental Health Dr Sabri and we would love for you to join us too!

Please email MHcarers@bromleywell.org.uk
to register your place and find the Microsoft Teams link to join the event below
on the day.

<https://bit.ly/MentalHealthGPForum>





Coping with Caring Redesign

Last year our course for mental health carers underwent a redesign. We want to share more about it with you!

The Coping with Caring course is free and for anyone who supports someone who struggles with their mental health (whether it's a relative, partner, friend or neighbour). It's held over 6 sessions in person and you'll meet new people with similar experiences and learn different ways to cope with the challenges being a carer can bring.

Until now the course has been held in our BLG Mind building in Beckenham. Now that our Orpington premises have reopened after refurbishment, we'll be holding some courses in Beckenham still and some in Orpington (BLG Mind centre, Anchor House).



Please register with Bromley Well to book your place on the next course by emailing us at

MHcarers@bromleywell.org.uk

or by calling Bromley Well Freephone 0808 278 7898

Coping with Caring Redesign

Six Sessions Overview

1st - Introduction and The Emotional Impacting of Caring

Getting to know each other and thinking about the complex nature of being a mental health carer

2nd – The Body Keeps the Score

Looking at how the body holds stress, anxiety and overwhelm and techniques to manage the physical effects of this; including mindfulness, grounding and muscle relaxation that we'll practice together throughout the course

3rd – Coping with Distressing Conversations and Situations

Discussing the nature of mental health and what recovery means to individual people. Exploring different communication ideas, de-escalation techniques and the complex area of boundaries. We'll look at the emotional impact of distressing situations and explore together ways to cope and look after your own wellbeing

4th – Carrying What Can't Be Fixed

Using acknowledgement, self-compassion and realistic self-care. We'll explore creative ways to cope and express yourself and how to build a self-care toolkit

5th – Growing Your Life Outside of Caring

Exploring how many carers find they're feeling a loss of identity, as feelings become intertwined with the one you care for and it's hard when you take on their emotions too. We'll explore how to grow your life outside of caring and create a balance between your caring and your own life

6th – Looking Forwards

Looking at what the course has covered and how to bring the techniques practiced with you moving forwards. Here we will also look at future planning (for you as a carer and the one you care for) and navigating the mental health system, as well as advocacy and carers' rights.

Self Care For the colder months

This time of year, after Christmas is over and we're deep into the cold months, many folk find themselves struggling. When you're a carer for someone, it's natural to find it hard to balance your own mental health needs too.



You're invited to join us for an afternoon of Self Care for Carers on Monday the 27th February... 1:30pm till 3:30pm in Beckenham

We'll chat and practice some self care together, including mindfulness exercises and creating a self care toolkit

It sounds cliché to say 'be kind to yourself' and often people aren't sure what this means. Being kind to yourself means treating yourself like you would treat a friend. Remind yourself that it's okay if you're struggling. You do an enormous amount while caring for another, so be gentle with yourself emotionally.



Self Care For the colder months



Self care has become a buzz word these days, but self care is about a lot more than luxurious spa breaks and holidays. Self care can be the small and realistic ways you make sure you're looking after yourself too in the day to day. It is often those simple, small things, that just bring you a small moment of time for yourself in the chaos of life.

Take a few moments at night to read a chapter of a favourite book, or listen to a song that holds good memories. Make your favourite coffee and just take a few moments to yourself. We often forget to look after ourselves as life is so busy, but these small acts only take a few minutes out of your day. Making space for them in your daily life, even for 5 minutes each day, can be so helpful for wellbeing.



Make a plan for it, as otherwise it's so easy to slip into forgetting even the small thing for ourselves that we were aiming for.

This week, plan something small for yourself and pop it in your calendar. Whether it's to go to lunch at a coffee shop, go for a short walk or spend a small amount of time enjoying an old hobby. Even if it's only five or ten minutes out of your day, try something small this week, just for you.



Self Care For the colder months



The light can really affect us in these winter months. It can help to make sure your environment isn't making it harder. SAD lamps have good evidence behind them that shows they help our bodies cope with the darker months. The cost of living crisis means you might be turning your lights off more, but even if you're working on reducing your energy bills, try to get some of that light in when it matters and in low moments.

What's one thing you do to practice self care?

It can be good to get new ideas from fellow carers.

Feel free to reach out to us by email and we'll include your suggestions (quoting you by first name only) in our next newsletter!



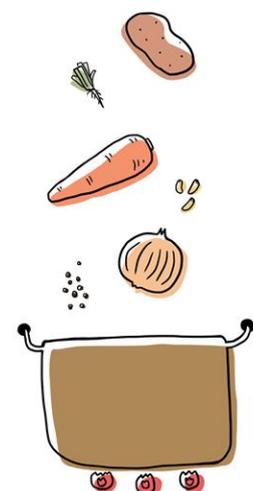
I make sure I have cosy blankets, a hot water bottle, a lamp or some fairy lights on! These things don't take too much organisation and can make a huge difference to my mood. Solar powered fairy lights are cost effective and really do help my mood. – Carers Advisor Aimée



Sometimes self care is simply reminding ourselves to stay hydrated, eat and rest. Eat toast for a meal if it all feels too much and you're overwhelmed, or treat yourself to that takeaway!

Equally, self care can also be taking care of yourself by eating healthier and cooking some home made meals. It's all about balance and looking after yourself in the way that works for you in any given moment.

VEGETABLE SOUP



Carefree Breaks

We are a partner of the charity Carefree. Carefree offers free breaks within the UK for unpaid carers. They have deals with hotels to offer free accommodation (one or two nights) for carers, you can even bring a friend!

The stay at the hotels is completely free, you only have to pay the cost of your travel and your food and drink (however most hotels do include breakfast) and a small admin fee.

If you're interested, please do contact us so we can refer you for a break – MHcarers@bromleywell.org.uk

Carefree transforms vacant accommodation into vital breaks for unpaid carers.

To qualify for a break carers must be:

- Aged 21 or over
- Full-time unpaid carer (30+ hours per week)
- Able to arrange interim care
- Able to pay for extras (£25 admin fee, transport, food etc)

The break is for the carer only. You are welcome to take a companion but not the person(s) you care for as this is a break and respite for you.

What do we mean by unpaid care?

At Carefree this means anyone who looks after a family member, partner, friend or neighbour who can't cope alone for reasons including frailty, illness, disability, mental health problem or addiction, for 30+ hours per week, including night times.

