

# SUMMER TIME OUT



A Festival of Mental Health and  
Wellbeing at work August 2020  
Programme report October 2020

# INTRODUCTION

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**Summer Time Out** was a month-long zoom-based, festival of learning and information. It focussed on mental health and wellbeing at work for staff and volunteers in third sector organisations across Leeds. It was organised by Forum Central, and sessions were run by staff from Volition and Leeds Older People's Forums in partnership with third sector member organisations. Events took place during August 2020. In response to requests for support around staff and volunteer mental health following the initial very stressful transition of services to a new model in the first three months of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This report will consider the outcomes of the events against feedback from participants and our initial aims; it will also look at the logistics of running this sort of event in the future.

## PURPOSE

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The festival was set up as a way of meeting some of the needs of Forum Central members around mental health and wellbeing at work support for their staff, volunteers and board members.

Staff working, in frontline care/community roles, those with temporary role changes and those working from home were suffering an increased workload, and the increased emotional burden of that workload. They were anxious about service users and their increased needs, and anxious about their own jobs and their families.

Forum Central members' managers had expressed concerns about how to manage and balance both the expected increased needs of people who use services, the switch to remote working and the implications of that, with already full caseloads and the additional support staff will need over the coming months

They needed to be able to support staff whilst looking after their own wellbeing.

There was also a recognition that they and their staff were going to need to keep this up for a long time.

## AIMS

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Our aims were to enable staff and managers to:

- Increase workplace well-being
- Create a healthy, happy and inclusive workplace
- Support their colleagues and their team

It was organised in the spirit of the cult of the imperfect "Give them the third best to go on with; the second best comes too late, the best never comes." \*

It was brought together very quickly in response to feedback from third sector leaders and staff, utilising our existing team skills, networks and connections.

# BACKGROUND/SCOPE



Forum Central undertook conversations with its members around mental health at work, recognising the potential impact of the crisis on the staff within member organisations. It ran an online discussion looking at workforce mental health at the end of May 2020, and some sector specific consultations.

These identified some very specific concerns: how best to support staff who have been bereaved, dealing with employment issues arising, issues with remote working and increased/changed demands to their services.

There were also more general findings. Managers wanted help with: accessing the right information from the plethora out there, supporting staff with anxiety (from all causes), peer support - for their colleagues and themselves and access to practical tips and ideas for managing in fast changing circumstances.

## ORGANISERS



Volition (the Mental Health, Physical and Sensory Impairment and Learning Disabilities Forum) and Leeds Older People's Forum make up the partnership of Forum Central, the collective voice for the health and care third sector.

Sessions were brought together in a collaboration between appropriate specialist Forum Central member and staff from the Volition and LOPF staff teams.

The event was organised by Volition and funded by Time to Shine (National Lottery Communities Fund) and Harnessing the Power of Communities (West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership)

A number of partner organisations helped us by facilitating sessions. Thanks go to Carers Leeds, Leeds Bereavement Forum, Leeds Mind - Mindful Employer, Leeds Mindfulness Coop, MindWell Leeds, Touchstone - Your Space Leeds, Crossgates and District Good Neighbour Scheme and Garforth NET.

## SESSIONS



Sessions were advertised entirely through an online programme though printable materials were also available to organisations to place where staff without access to online materials could find them.

They were themed under three headings

- **Wellbeing for Employees**

Focusing on your needs within the organisation. Learn about tools and techniques to support the ongoing development of your skills and own wellness at work.

- **Organisational Wellbeing**

Spanning the workforce; we want a wide audience for discussions, learning and techniques to support individual and team wellbeing in the workplace.

- **Trustee, Managerial and Senior Leader Support**

Focusing on how those with managerial responsibilities can support their workforce. Toolkits, learning and discussion to increase wellbeing at work. To help you to support, engage and empower your people during this challenging time.

There were 18 events in total, with one spilling into September. We could in fact have staged more events, as offered to us by other Forum Central partners, if we had had a longer lead in time. We had however taken the decision to run the event as soon as possible as sector leaders had expressed the urgency of their needs.

### The programme consisted of:

- 5 employee sessions covering frontline workers peer support for any third sector workers, and one for older people's organisations:
  - » 2 x peer facilitated sessions for older people's organisations (Time to Shine & LOPF)
  - » Mental Health and Wellbeing (LCC Public health)
  - » Supporting bereavement at Work
  - » Self-care in dealing with Bereavement and Grief.(specialist counsellor from Leeds Bereavement Forum)
- 7 aimed at senior leadership.
  - » Why be a Mindful Employer?(Leeds Mindful Employers Network)
  - » Returning to Work: keeping a focus on staff wellbeing (Leeds Mindful Employers Network)
  - » A peer led session on anxieties around re-opening (TTS)
  - » One Step Ahead - working carers (Carers Leeds)
  - » Mindwell at Work - exploring the professionals section to find resources (Mindwell)
  - » Reengaging with Volunteers (TTS)
  - » Mindfulness for Managers (Leeds Mindfulness Coop)
- 6 aimed at anyone working towards positive organisational wellbeing:
  - » Neighbourhood networks: Creating a healthy workplace (NNS managers),
  - » Let Talk - conversations about mental health (Touchstone: Your Space),
  - » Stress management (Phoenix Health and Wellbeing)
  - » Introduction to Coaching (LOPF),
  - » Creating Coaching Action Plans (LOPF),
  - » Coaching for Managers (LOPF).

Most of the sessions were run on a pro bono basis by partners as part of a mutual aid response to the pandemic. We £1050 paid for 6 events to small organisations who were unable to afford to donate their time. We had a small budget for accessibility considerations such as BSL interpretation but this was not utilised.

- *It might not be possible to run events of this basis in the future or on a regular basis without some form of reciprocity at least. this might be in the form of payment for staff time, backfilling staff hours or benefits like preferential access to other programmes.*

## ATTENDANCE



The sessions were aimed at front line staff(and some volunteers), managers and trustees. The events were essentially aimed at the third sector in Leeds, but as events were bookable through Eventbrite we also got bookings from colleagues in LCC, the NHS and other third sector organisations from across West Yorkshire. The mixed nature of the participants created a rich content, particularly in the events which involved sharing experiences.

- *We did get some bookings from private companies. Where it appeared these were trying to access training for free and where there were limited spaces, we asked that they didn't attend.*
- *We were unable to totally control bookings because people were on furlough using personal email addresses, some volunteers and trustees also use private/other organisational email addresses and some small third sector organisations don't have recognisable emails and we didn't want to restrict their access. We made it clear who places were aimed at and generally trusted the audience to self-police beyond very obvious misuse.*

We had 302 bookings for 19 events across the eventbrite bookings plus another 45 from the one run in partnership with Public Health.

Around 30% of bookings came from people who booked to attend one event, the rest from those who booked for 2 or more. While there were a couple of outliers who had booked on more or less everything there was a good number of people(52) who booked to attend 2 or 3 which indicates a positive level of interest.

The attendance rate for the events where we kept a register was an average of 50% or those booked (though that average over a small number of events hides massive differences so it is a very crude measure). It appears we were naive in hoping that people had made a commitment by reserving a ticket through eventbrite. There must be much more complex factors involved, but I think we can broadly conclude that

- *For those events where attendance was critical, or limited, (discussion, skill share/interactive training) we need to use a different approach to controlling numbers.*
- *For training and interactive events it seems we can book larger numbers with the assumption they won't all turn up, and have a teaching plan that enables us to be flexible if the drop off doesn't happen.*
- *We could consider a paid system; Community Matters Yorkshire have a notional £5 charge, we have seen a 'price of a coffee' charge too, used elsewhere. There is the potential however for this to cost more to administer than is worth the income - as especially if the fee is nominal it is likely to merely reduce drop-ins whilst not reducing last minute cancellations. It could be considered as an option however.*
- *It seems that discussion or skill share events with fewer than c. 8 bookings should be cancelled as it is hard to have a fruitful discussion with only 4 or 5 attendees.*

Some events seem to have been underbooked because they were very close to the start of the programme and the time for marketing was short (momentum built as the programme continued), others may simply have been less popular or the titles and descriptions were not clear, and in retrospect the one we tried to run the day after the bank holiday was just a mistake.

- *We need to give a longer lead in time to events. Perhaps start with a well publicised launch event rather than low key activity. Generally don't plan events for a Monday/first day of the working week.*

There appears to have been scatter for bookings from organisations across the Forum Central Membership but as people were not consistent when filling out the bookings the amount of processing that would be needed to identify whether there were disparities is beyond the scope of this report.

- *We need to force completion of the organisation section of the booking form on eventbrite for future events. So we can be certain which organization the individual attending is connected to*

## FEEDBACK



### Programme feedback

Participants enjoyed their sessions and found it a positive experience.

There were some issues with organisation which we were able to take on board during the programme itself and in the planning for future events (see recommendations)

### Accessibility

We received some positive feedback from someone with a physical disability who said she was really enjoying meeting so many people through the events as even though most events are accessible it is just so much more effort to get to them

### Your responses to the learning

Overall feedback for the event was positive

The programme covered a fantastic breadth of topics and represented a really impressive range of expertise from across the sector. I would love to be involved in similar programmes in the future.

Brilliant concept, short training sessions, able to meet new people with the same interests.

Well designed training and delivered in a clear and concise way.

It was really helpful to focus on simple methods to reduce the impact of stress.

good chatting about things from other agencies and finding out what they are doing and how they are managing.

I really appreciated having the opportunity to think about this area for myself personally and how I could use it to better support my team.

## Our responses to your comments

As a delivery team we learned a lot about running, promoting and hosting digital events and using Eventbrite to promote a series of events. The responses from the participants have been very positive and make us feel running something similar in the future would be worthwhile. Your comments have also enabled us to think about the changes we will make to the event, to improve how sessions are run and the organisation of the event.

Feedback from participants and the delivery team mean there are some changes we can make.

## What we learnt from what you told us

- *We should improve clarity about what sessions include from the title to descriptions of the contents (this might mean testing programme wording with a small group of people first before finalising)*
- *We need to be mindful of the use of terminology and descriptions which can have different meaning in different parts of the VCS (like peer support)*
- *We must protect more time for discussion in events and brief facilitators to ensure their session plans and timing include space for this, as well as housekeeping, thanks and a good chunk for summary and reflections too.*

Very interesting it would have been good to have had more time to discuss some of the questions in more depth so we could share information.

- *Use a system of advanced notice of sessions and consistent, timely reminders beforehand, and a clear system for sending out zoom links; maybe a last minute alarm call too to reduce failure to attend*
- *We need to set a minimum amount of attendees for good discussion*
- *We should plan for what seems to be an inevitable drop in attendance at digital events, due to a variety of reasons. We could overbook sessions to accommodate for last minute dropouts.*

Very interesting it would have been good to have had more time to discuss some of the questions in more depth so we could share information.

- *We should ensure there are always two or more hosts for smooth running, the ability to respond to technical issues and interact with the chat.*
- *We should plan opportunities for people to talk to their colleagues from other organisations as just the opportunity to talk and share ideas can help to reduce stress*

Very worthwhile session - the diversity of experience/findings are very useful as they resonate for us.

Great to actually have that time out and see staff from other organisations, having worked in our bubbles for so long.



# SOCIAL MEDIA



The event was publicised entirely online for speed, with the recognition it was mostly aimed at staff currently working remotely (so we could assume they had access to technology). There is still the possibility information about events was not widely circulated to frontline staff as we do not have direct access to them and rely on managers circulating what they **think** staff might find useful.

What worked best of the tweets were:

- *links to the programme and booking up to 583 views whereas info tweets got as low as 179 views with no retweets or likes*
- *information about specific events with links to delivery partners*

Many of the tweets got low views and retweets from LOPF, but we did retweet a lot of TTS and FC Summer Time Out tweets, so didn't need to do as many specifically from LOPF.

- *We need allocate enough time and staff resource to create an effective comms plan and work in partnership with others(e.g. VAL, Leeds Inspired) to do this*

# COSTS



Most of the sessions were run on a pro bono basis by partners as part of a mutual aid response to the pandemic. This might not be so easily possible in the future where organisations usually rely on an income stream from their training provision.

There are partner organisations who would still be able and willing to run sessions, chair skill shares and so on but we need to be considerate about who we ask and what we ask of them. We £1050 paid for 6 events to small organisations who were unable to afford to donate their time.

We had a small budget set aside for accessibility needs such as BSL interpreters, which wasn't used.

Design costs £120

No printing costs

There was a cost in staff time - we did not keep detailed timesheets but estimate across the team it meant approximately 20 days pulling events together, setting up systems and promoting the events, and 22 days delivering the 19 events (this was because events were only 1-2 hours they did require 2 people to be present for effective delivery), plus some time for reporting.

It would be appropriate to decide some parameters around payment.



# BROAD RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROGRAMME



- *Might we run something in Jan/Feb - winter time out - as it is likely to be a tough few months for all staff*
- *We could run more sessions more frequently on things such as: bereavement, mindful employer, HR advice and holistic wellbeing. We might also offer skills shares and support and information discussions led by frontline staff or managers as appropriate.*
- *Could we implement monthly peer-led networking sessions for members to come together and discuss topics of interest?*
- *Should we do this on a regular basis, or work with other providers in the city to create a partnership, sustainable offer?*
- *Potential collaborators -*
  - » *Voluntary Action Leeds.*
  - » *The Health and Care Leaders Academy,*
  - » *Better Conversations,*
  - » *Public Health,*
  - » *This is Me campaign,*
  - » *Mindful Employer*

There are some broader strategic considerations in considering whether Forum Central should organise something similar in the future.

- *Clear links to the mental health strategy - prevention being the first priority*
- *It encourages cross specialism discussions and knowledge/understanding - strengthening the sector and creating wider links, networks and relationships in turn*
- *Helps to promote Forum Central, Volition, Time to Shine and Leeds Older People's Forum - and is what we are here for - to provide that space for members to link, as well as to represent them.*
- *Considerations around wider training and development implications and lessons learnt from the model/ approach used*
- *Wider training and development implications too - could widen scope from workplace wellbeing to use the same model and relationships to discuss wider training needs and offer that the third sector can bring to our partners too (awareness, in depth community knowledge etc, in return for access to NHS training and development)*
- *Encourage more links and membership with Mindful Employer and the This is Me Campaign. Work with these two funded projects to increase third sector membership and access to the help, support and resources available there*
- *Encourage increased awareness and promotion of MindWell Leeds and their engagement/staff training offer*

**Forum Central October 2020**





**LEEDS  
BEREAVEMENT  
FORUM**



**Forum  
Central**

A collective voice for the  
health and care third sector



**volition**  
working well together



**Carers  
Leeds**

Working together to support carers



**Time to  
Shine**



**COMMUNITY  
FUND**

