



## Healthy Conversations

We were approached by the Royal Society for Public Health to be highlighted as a best practice example of an organisation that empowers communities through Healthy Conversation. We have a longstanding trusted relationship with communities across Birmingham and wider, engaging effectively through a variety of innovative means with communities that are often viewed as hard to reach. One of the ways in which we do this is by engaging and training community facing professions to pass on positive health messages and signpost post to services that can best meet need – One such profession is hairdressing, or more specifically, the Barbershop.

This ground breaking work, originally conceptualised in Preston, has recognised that for many African Caribbean Men, one of the only places they would truly talk about their feelings and concerns was whilst sitting at the Barbers' Chair. Barbershops for the African Caribbean Community (ACC) are seen as welcoming, safe, social hubs for opening up - Recognising this we adopted the Barbershop approach in Birmingham through the Barbershop Magazine – written by members of the ACC for the ACC on topics that were relevant to them.

[You can download the Document here](#)



Kiran Kenth, Caron Thompson, Shirley Cramer  
Public Health England and Common Unity

This Birmingham Joint Commissioning Team NHS funded service has gone from strength to strength since it began in 2007 developing into the City Wide URBRUM Project that through magazines and varied Social Media avenues engages diverse communities across Birmingham on areas of life that impacts on their health and wellbeing. Alongside their Grassroots Associates specialising in supporting communities to support themselves, we continue to gain a reputation in Birmingham and wider for developing, designing and delivering forward thinking innovative programmes that have the benefit of the community at its heart.



## Just whose responsibility is suicide prevention

A tragic case of suicide that occurred in 2013 has recently received much national media attention. The case which ended in the death of Angela Rich in 2013 by suicide spurred her bereaved daughter, who is a GP, to fight tirelessly for improvements in the NHS around supporting the safety of patients with thoughts of suicide.



Forward For Life were approached by the News Department of Capital and Smooth Radio to suggest what steps Mental Health services within the NHS could put in place to prevent suicides occurring. Forward For Life, co-founder of the SOS Suicide Prevention Programme alongside Common Unity, highlighted the key challenge of the stigma of suicide and how suicide prevention was the responsibility of not just health professionals but was everyone's responsibility. Talking about it, challenging the stigma surrounding it and discussing what can be done about it is often seen by many as a bridge too far to cross. But without talking about it, we can't reduce the stigma, and without reducing the stigma we won't reduce the numbers. It is only through dialogue that we can face this issue head on in the hope that suicides will reduce in number across our communities. If you want to know about the suicide prevention training we do with Forward For Life to support communities to be suicide safer please email [info@forwardforlife.org](mailto:info@forwardforlife.org)

## Suicide Prevention Week



As part of World Suicide Prevention Day in September, we are joining forces with Forward For Life to deliver the 2 day world renowned Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). We at Common Unity and all our Grassroots Associates recognise the vital work of charities that pick up the pieces left behind by suicide through supporting people bereaved by suicide; so this ASIST, being on the 10th and 11th of September will see all proceeds from the course being donated to Cruse Bereavement Birmingham.



These places are limited at a reduced price of £100 per delegate. For more information and to book your place please get in touch.

We also realise that people out there don't know enough about the work of our SOS Programme which through both the ASIST and safeTALK suicide prevention courses can save lives of those who may be considering taking their own life. So we produced a short film on the impact of the training we are doing across the UK.

## Men's Health Event

Common Unity teamed up with Time to Change to support the 300 Voice Project aimed at supporting African Caribbean men in accessing more supportive and responsive mental health services. The event showcased the "Revolving Door" DVD and board game which was used as a base to generate meaningful conversation amongst delegates

## Wellbeing in Birmingham



The Birmingham Wellbeing Forum, established with direct support from Birmingham Councillor. Paulette Hamilton is going from strength to strength.

It's membership, made up of small social enterprises and voluntary sector organisations with a passion for promoting wellbeing has met up on two occasions and now has recognised representation at the City Wide Mental Health Stakeholders Forum and is flying the flag for forward thinking opportunities in improving the quality of life for citizens across the City of Birmingham.



## Message from the Director

Welcome to our second edition of Vanguard Community News by Common Unity. The last three months have been a very busy period for us and our associates with the development of the Birmingham Wellbeing

Forum, the start of the Sandwell suicide prevention three year contract and the additional representation of Common Unity on new and existing strategic forums. The media has also taken a keen interest in the work we and our associate organisation Forward for Life have done around suicide prevention and the delivery of wellbeing messages across communities.

We have been interviewed by the BBC National News with the release of the Health Conversation document by Public Health England and Capital Radio in regards to suicide prevention. Councillor Paulette Hamilton has been very supportive of our work, we would like to formally congratulate her in her new role as the Wellbeing Cabinet Member for Birmingham City Council and we look forward to working alongside Councillor Hamilton in the future.

Caron Thompson  
Director  
Common Unity



## Moving Forward

URBRUM has been very successful over the last 3 years at engaging with the young the people of Birmingham in regards to their health and well-being utilising social media and magazine, but the team guided by the young people feel it's time to move in a new direction. So where to now? The URBRUM Team will be adopting a more hands on approach along with the social media. URBRUM will be focusing on the challenges and issues that young people are facing and will give them a platform to have open discussions and debates which can be listened to as podcasts via the URBRUM website. The URBRUM team will be out and about at colleges and youth clubs across the city setting up focus groups listening to what the real issues and concerns are. We have been hearing from government bodies the conclusions they have come to as to what these issues are whether they be health both physical and mental, let's see if our findings are the same.



## MMD | Man Made Dudley

The Forward For Life led groundbreaking pilot project that successfully engaged men from across Dudley in supporting their own, and their peers mental health and wellbeing continues to move forward. This week they received the fantastic news that the ManMade programme in Dudley, being led by men who engaged with the original pilot, have received a small grants fund from the Office of Public Health in Dudley to further support men in Dudley to realise their aspirations. This is a real opportunity for a male led peer support group in Dudley having a real impact on the wellbeing of unemployed men in the area. For more information contact Forward For Life on this exciting project. [info@forwardforlife.org](mailto:info@forwardforlife.org)



## Men's Focus Group

Common Unity supported National Mind to engage with African Caribbean men in regards to their experiences around health and wellbeing. The focus group took place at Common Unity offices in Lozells and was attended by 15 men between the ages of 18 and 30. The information gained will be sent to NHS England and will hopefully help shape future health services nationally.

The group was made up of students, employed, unemployed and self-employed men. A range of subject areas were covered in the focus group and the young men were very forthcoming in sharing their experiences and offering solutions to their challenges.

They talked about what barriers they felt they faced when accessing services such as housing, GPs, dentists, Mental Health services and others. Even though the guys were from different backgrounds many of their experiences were very much the same. Vicki Ensor Policy Support and Research Officer for National Mind said

**"It has been invaluable for us to be able to speak to such a great group of people who were willing to be so open with us about their own experiences and the factors that influenced their own wellbeing"**

This is a group of people that is deemed hard to reach but hold valuable information to help improve services.

The group asked National Mind to return to Birmingham to feedback as to what happened when the information was presented, this was agreed and hopefully this will happen at some point later on in the year after a full report is produced.



We are a not-for-profit organisation with a clear organisational mandate for active social investment going above expectation to ensure we are a recognised "can do" organisation. Our business has social objectives meaning we reinvest for the benefit of the communities we engage with including free/minimum cost training, project development and wider programme support. Common Unity provides services with social aims and ensures social ownership through both formal and informal participation with a range of stakeholders including users, community groups and employees. Through being a small social enterprise and through the use of highly skilled associate links, we are able to keep our overall management, internal staffing and administrative costs to a fair minimum whilst also ensuring the highest quality of delivery across communities.