



**Venusian  
Guide to Kingston**  
Mental Health Zine  
Time to Change Kingston  
Hub's Project  
by Dorota Chioma

**Kingston Upon Thames**

A fascinating insight  
into services, projects,  
events and advocacy  
taking place in  
Kingston, with the  
light shed onto arts  
and creativity  
supporting mental  
health and  
mindfulness.

**time to change  
kingston**

let's end mental health discrimination

*chioma*



## Zine Zone - Acknowledgments

The Mental Health Zine you are holding in your hands or looking at on your screen, has been a big project of mine for Time to Change Kingston as a part of their Champions Fund. I would not be able to pull together without a collective effort of many wonderful people. Although this project exceeded my expectations in terms of the work involved, it has been an absolute pleasure writing and I will forever cherish meeting people who do so much for others. This project has brought back my faith in humanity.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to it directly or indirectly. All the contributors who offered their time to speak to me and/or write to me. Thank you to (not in any particular order): Persephone, Lucy, Justin, Rasha, Shannon, Sarah, Danielle, John, Corin, Cheryl, Cherry, Sheena, Des, Hugh, Jo, Fabian, Marjie, Caroline, Paul, Edit, Sunhwa, Beomgi,...and many more.

If I have omitted anyone please know that it was not intentional.

A special thank you to my two Guardian Angels - Steve Loft and Tony Williams - who not only put up with a lot with me and my writing, but also provided a service of accountability, helped to reach out to others, and safeguarded my sanity in moments of panic or crisis. The Zine would not be finalised without their input and Patience (with a capital P).

**Trigger warning:** This publication includes stories of lived experiences of mental health. Be aware that there might be references that could trigger. Should you feel affected by any content or in the need of immediate help, you can contact the following:

**Samaritans** - 24-hour helpline on **116 123**, e-mail: **jo@samaritans.org**, or visit: **www.samaritans.org**

**Shout** - text "**Shout**" to **85258**, or visit: **www.giveusashout.org**

**Mind Infoline** - Call: **0300 123 3393** (9am-6pm Monday to Friday) or text "**help**" to **86463**

**Rethink Mental Illness Advice Line** - Call: **0300 5000 927** (9.30am to 4pm Monday to Friday), or e-mail: **advice@rethink.org**

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## Venusian Guide to Kingston - Mental Health Zine

This Zine has been titled as such for a number of reasons. Firstly, all who participated in the tough storm of finding a suitable title agreed that it provides a bit of humour. Secondly, it goes alongside the narrative I wanted to use, and I have always felt a bit from another planet.

As an outsider, and not a Kingston resident, it has presented me with the perspective of being an alien landing on a foreign ground and feels pretty lost, and this loneliness being enhanced by the time of pandemic that we are living through.

I wanted to provide Kingston with more of a story rather than just a pure informative booklet of what is there in terms of mental health. As a person with many hats on - a mother, an artist, a person with mental health illness, a person with English as a Second Language (ESOL) - I felt that I can explore the town of Kingston from many different perspectives and bring to light some amazing people and services that fall into the category of my 'tribe'. I have not been disappointed.

'Kingstonians', you have a wonderful community, full of generous people, who pour so much support and heart into what they do.



## Why Kingston?

The very first mystery of the planet Kingston I had to solve, was its name. Kingston is known as "the coronation site of as many as 7 Saxon Kings and the birthplace of England. The name of Kingston itself is derived from a royal connection as it comes from the phrase Kinges Tun, meaning a royal farm or estate. The very first reference to the town was made in 838 where details of a royal council presided over by King Egbert were documented. Many relics remain from its rich history including London's oldest bridge - Clattern Bridge,

the Coronation stone purportedly used in the coronation of Saxon Kings, as well as a medieval bridge and undercroft. The Clattern Bridge doesn't cross the river Thames, but rather the River Hogsmill, with its own claim to fame being that it appears in the John Millais painting of Hamlet's Ophelia." ([www.inkingston.co.uk](http://www.inkingston.co.uk)).



## Dancing to the music in the rain...

When I 'landed' in Kingston, I was fortunate enough to have the assistance of three knights - Steve, Tony and Paul - in shiny armours and equipped with... umbrellas as it was, of course, raining (but the shine might well have been enhanced by the rain, but I am not going to argue about it).



The tour was amazing and I was shown and told about some amazing historical facts about the town Kingston...

**Paul Mowatt**, British photographer and Kingston resident, was leading the tour and sharing his excessive knowledge:



*Kingston is primarily known as a shopping centre, but it is also culturally rich - you just need to scratch beneath the surface to find that culture!*

*Musically, it was one of the London suburbs that was prolific in hosting musical events, dating back to the 1920s and continuing right up to today.*

*These days, live music events are less common, which is a sign of the 'Digital' times, and this is also because a lot of the live venues have ceased to exist ...*

*Kingston played host to a multitude of internationally recognised artists, such as Queen,*

*Elton John, David Bowie, The Rolling Stones, The Who, U2, Radiohead, Lou Reed, The Cure, Pink Floyd, Sonic Youth, Roy Orbison, The Smiths, Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis, Genesis, Hawkwind, Gene Vincent, Yes, The Kinks, The Stranglers, Gong, Cliff Richard and the Shadows, The Supremes, Cream, Johnny Cash, INXS, The Animals, Eric Clapton, and many many more ... In fact Eric Clapton and his band The Yardbirds, were such so named because of their regular presence in the yard of the Kingston venue 'The Fighting Cocks' ...*



*These days, a lot of Kingston's live music is organised by John Tolley of Banquet Records, who recently hosted Stormzy in his shop for a signing session ...*



*Kingston has always been a home to various artists. A lot of painters in the 50s moved out of London to the leafy borough of Kingston, to take advantage of its beautiful surrounding parks and greenery, and its scenic river views. Of course, Kingston has one of the best Art schools in the country, the Knights Park facility, which is now part of Kingston University ...*

*In my opinion, Kingstons greatest 'Son' has been the Victorian pioneer of photography, Edweard Muybridge, who was simply miles ahead of his contemporaries as far as photographic techniques were concerned. His works with 'Animal and Human*

*Motion' led him to be known as the Godfather of Animation ...*

*Muybridge was born in Kingston, and spent a lot of his life travelling the world, especially the United States, but came back to Kinston 5 years before his death ...*



*I have been a Photographer/Artist for most of my life, I was born in London, but went to school in Kingston, and like Muybridge, spent a lot of my life living elsewhere, and travelling the world, and I've now been back in Kingston for ten years - though I've no intention of dying just yet!*

*I was awarded the first ever 'Artist in Residency' position at Kingston Museum (where the Edweard Muybridge collection is held) three years ago. I organised the 'Homeless in the Royal Borough' exhibition, which gave Kingstons homeless the opportunity to photograph their daily life, which was subsequently exhibited ...*

*I also organise the annual 'Mystery Art sale' in conjunction with MIND ...*

*I have my work in private and public collections, and do the odd bit of teaching of 'Analogue' processes to students in Kingston and London ...*



You can contact Paul by email: [paulmowattphoto@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:paulmowattphoto@yahoo.co.uk)

**A Hub** - /hʌb/ (*noun*) the effective centre of an activity or network.

(Reference: Oxford Languages)

Being a Time to Change Champion comes with the reward of getting to know so many wonderful people and with opportunities to get involved in different projects leaving you with the feeling of having a purpose and making a change.

When I got involved in the Time to Change Kingston Hub, I felt so warmly welcomed and connected with so many champions who are extraordinary people. And apparently I am not the only one feeling that way (see the quote below):



**"I've really valued being involved in Time to Change Kingston's Champions Network over the past three months.**

**The group has provided support and an anchor of continuity at a very uncertain time.**

**The new weekly online 'check-in' session for Champions is particularly helpful and a good use of digital channels**

**- I've enjoyed getting to know the other Champions in a more informal setting."**

Fabian,  
TTC Kingston Champion, May 2020

## So what is the Time To Change Kingston Hub (TTCKH)?

In conversations with TTCKH coordinator - **Persephone Pickering:**

Time to Change Kingston, the second funded Hub in London, aims to engage people of all ages and backgrounds in creating a mental health friendly Kingston. It combines insight from the national campaign with local knowledge to embed anti-stigma work locally in schools, workplaces and the community.



Our Hub is hosted by the Royal Borough of Kingston Council and coordinated by Healthwatch Kingston. We are working with our partners and Time to Change Champions to create campaigns and organise events, to reduce mental health stigma and discrimination in the Kingston area.

Statistically, 1 in 4 of us will experience a mental health problem in any given year. However, we know that many people still don't consider mental health relevant to them and have stigmatising attitudes. That's why our work is so important as no one should have to fear being treated differently because of a mental health problem.

You can find out more about  
**what we do here:**  
[https://  
www.healthwatchkingston.org.uk/time-change-kingston](https://www.healthwatchkingston.org.uk/time-change-kingston)

In 2020 for example, our Champions created the 'Kingston Living Library', a safe community space where members of the public can speak to a person with lived experiences of mental health issues to improve their understanding. The idea of the Kingston Living Library is that you can borrow a person to speak to about their lived experience rather than borrowing a book. Thereby helping others to understand the impact mental illness can have on people's lives and to reduce the stigma. This was held for the first time at New Malden Library for Time to Talk day on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020 with great success.



For Mental Health Awareness Week, given the restrictions due to Covid-19, our Champions decided to create the 'Time to Change Kingston Online Living Library' and some 'In conversation' events on Zoom. The Champions wanted to share their experiences virtually to give people the option of learning more about mental health from the comfort of their own home.

watch some of our  
recorded '**In conversation**'  
events here:

[https://www.youtube.com/  
channel/UC3BYSiqsPqe-  
qyJTxbT7Pg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3BYSiqsPqe-qyJTxbT7Pg)

You can visit the **online living library** here:  
[https://www.healthwatchkingston.org.uk/welcome-  
time-change-kingston-online-living-library](https://www.healthwatchkingston.org.uk/welcome-time-change-kingston-online-living-library)

**The stats!**

**TTC Kingston outreach and engagement activities contributed to the following outputs, including Champions recruitment TTC Kingston has recruited 20 engaged Champions who have had conversations with more than 400 members of the public at 10 public facing events. This year our TTC Champions worked to reduce mental health stigma in Kingston by volunteering over 600 hours planning events, activities and campaigns.**

**How to get involved?**

We are always looking for more people with lived experiences of mental health issues to get involved in the project and become Time to Change Kingston Champions.

Research shows the best way to change attitudes is through conversation. When we share our experiences of mental health problems, we can make this change. Champions use their own experiences of mental health problems to enable others to positively alternate how we all think and act about mental health.

Being a Champion is a flexible and voluntary commitment.

You only need to do what you feel comfortable doing and have time for. You don't need to be an expert on mental health or have knowledge of


different mental health conditions.

Every Champion does different things to help people around them to understand and learn about mental illness. This could involve sharing your story, running an activity, supporting existing hub activities, writing a blog or shaping our future work.

You can find out more about **becoming a Champion** here:  
<https://www.healthwatchkingston.org.uk/become-time-change-champion>

If you would like to get involved, know when the next Champions Network meeting is or have any questions, please contact us by emailing our Time to Change Kingston Coordinator: **persephone@healthwatchkingston.org.uk**.

**New ventures? Any exciting project on its way?**



### FROM SEEN TO SCENE

Have you ever fancied yourself as a bit of a screenwriter? Maybe never at all, but have got a story you always thought should be on the stage or screen?

**FROM SEEN TO SCENE:** An exciting online event in which actors will perform live an auto-biographical short story written by you in the form of a stage/film scene (max. 5 pages), based on an event from your own life.

The theme is **ENCOUNTERS**. Maybe it's that story about how you met the person who became your best friend, the kindness of a stranger down to the downright bizarre and hilarious one that must be seen to be believed! The way you interpret it is down to you.


We want to hear from YOU! Examples of film scenes from screenplays and templates to help you put together your scene will be posted online.

Shortlisted scenes will be performed on the night, and there will be prizes for the top 3 as voted by the attendees!

**WRITING DEADLINE: JANUARY 21<sup>ST</sup> 2021**

**LIVE EVENT: FEBRUARY 4<sup>TH</sup> 2021 @ 7PM -9PM**

Please send your scenes to [patricknicholls01@gmail.com](mailto:patricknicholls01@gmail.com),



## Communities, minorities or those less in numbers... We hear you, you are not alone!

Leading the life of a mental health advocate is not limited to the community you belong to, or the heritage attached to you. On the contrary, it is such a universal field since we all have mental health and we do experience challenges in life that sabotage our wellbeing.

However, some communities are less involved in conversations around mental health due to many reasons, but the one barrier which we can break is language.

As a foreigner with English as a Second Language (ESOL), I can associate with the feeling of pain that a cultural and language barrier creates, and I arrived in the UK with proficient language skills. But what about those who are less fortunate in that area? Do not fear, Time to Change Kingston is on the case:

In conversations with **Lucy Bailey** Community Equalities Coordinator (London)

### Challenging mental health stigma in the Korean Community



#### Througout

November and December, a group of people from the Korean community and TTC Kingston Champions have been working on a project to open up dialogue about mental health.

Sun Hwa Griffiths, who runs the Korean Senior Centre in Kingston, has been concerned about how members of the Centre have been coping during the Covid pandemic. The Centre has moved its classes online via Zoom, but members have missed out on their usual face to face contact with others because the building has had to close during the lockdowns. So the group wanted to translate some mental wellbeing 'top tips' into Korean to support the Centre's members during this difficult time. We decided to include them in some gift parcels



along with some treats, and also support Sun Hwa and her team to deliver these wellbeing tips as part of their online Zoom classes.

As a group, we have created a beautifully illustrated A5 mental wellbeing tip card in the Korean language, and an A5 Christmas card in English and Korean, which will be delivered to 150 members of the Korean Senior Centre, along with treats, in time for Christmas. We want the tips card to be shared far and wide to help as many people in the Korean community as possible, and a downloadable PDF version of the wellbeing tips card will be available on the Mind on Kingston's website.



The group members include Sun Hwa Griffiths, Beomgi Kwon, Dorota Chioma, Justin Howard, Rachel Dykins, Persephone Pickering and Lucy Bailey.

An enormous thank you to them all for making this project happen, as well as to those who fed into the project and offered support along the way.

## Challenging mental health stigma in the Tamil Community

Throughout November and December, TTC Kingston Hub have been working with a group of people from the Tamil community on a project to open up dialogue about mental health.



The group have decided to build a website in Tamil and English, offering information about mental health and signposting to local Tamil services. We also want to create a video featuring prominent people in the Tamil community talking about mental health and saying it's OK to have a mental health problem. We are hoping the website will launch in the new year. Depending on Covid restrictions, filming for the video will also take place in 2021. The video will be featured on the website, as well as being shared through community networks and on social media. It will be also available to show at events and **workshops**.



An enormous thank you to all the members of this group for working so hard on this project.  
Keep an eye out for the finished results in 2021!

## Art - My Medicine

December 2006. I'm in a foreign country, with a language barrier, although fluent in English, I had trouble understanding the accent, or rather the range of accents. Most of the speech sounded like people were speaking to me with their mouth full. Having no friends, no understanding of the environment



and the systems running it, traffic moving on the opposite side of the road to the one I was used to for my entire life, and so constantly getting lost. Food tasting differently, children and myself catching all possible infections, and my frustration for the English 'national cure' - "take Paracetamol" for every medical problem you may have.

Well, to say that my beginnings in England were rough is an understatement...

The journey of last 14 years has been a bumpy ride accompanied by small joys and big trauma. I will spare you all the details because this is a whole other story, but depression was a monster that kept me in captivity throughout, with different strengths but still debilitating.

After giving birth to my third and youngest child in 2018, I was offered help due to severe post-natal depression I suffered. As part of this intervention, I was referred to the Expressive Art Sessions for Mums through the MumsAid charity.

At the beginning I was just splashing inks or paint around and producing only dark images, but I felt really good after each session. It was like some weight was lifted from my shoulders.

And then, one session, I felt something opening-up within me, and my first image containing colours emerged (see the image within this article)

From that moment, with encouragement from the sessions' facilitator, I started to draw and paint at home as well as during sessions. I also started to express my thoughts, feelings and states of mind through poetry.

Art became my medicine and the way I advocate for mental health and fight with stigma attached to it. I have a real urge to engage in whatever art I can daily, otherwise I find myself feeling unwell.

Of course, I still take my medicines, but art is the medicine that provides me with a unique tranquility.

**Art found me.... but I found myself through art.**



My name is Dorota Chioma. I am a self-taught artist based in London. My artwork explores the varying states concerning the mind and mental health. Engaging in these diverse subjects has led me to create reflective and visual representations. I aim to provoke the participant to either engage with unexplored territory, or to soothe them with familiarity should they identify with the anguish expressed.

My art manifests and represents the struggles of many people who suffer from mental health issues. It also demonstrates the healing properties of art, hence I advocate for raising awareness.

That is why I am an active Champion at Time to Change Campaign and engage in many projects trying to demystify mental health illnesses and to smash the stigma associated with them.

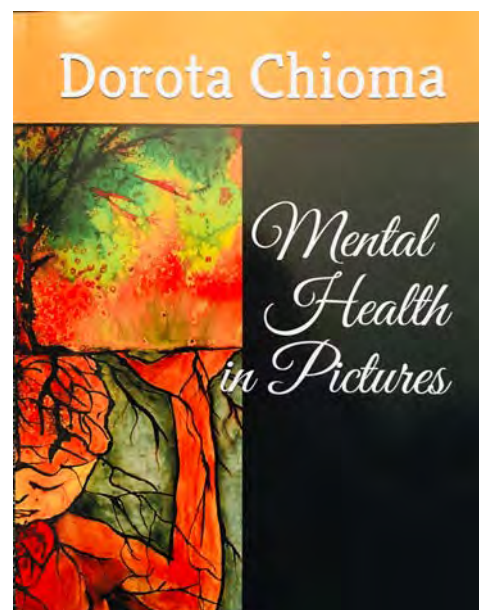
Please join me on the tour through my first solo exhibition captured in the book titled:

## **Mental Health in Pictures.**

It presents over 30 pieces of artwork accompanied by the narratives and my poetry that explore the thought provoking and insightful journey into a life with mental illness.

### **Follow me on:**

**Instagram @dorota.chioma.art**  
**or Facebook @DorotaChiomaArt**



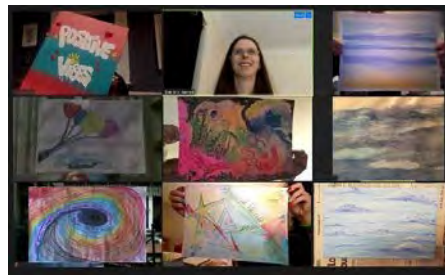
Mental Health in Pictures is available on Amazon: [https://www.amazon.co.uk/Mental-Health-Pictures-Dorota-Chioma/dp/B08LQVQYQX/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?dchild=1&keywords=dorota+chioma&qid=1607713943&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Mental-Health-Pictures-Dorota-Chioma/dp/B08LQVQYQX/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=dorota+chioma&qid=1607713943&sr=8-1)

With all of the above in mind, it is no surprise that I explored what Kingston has on offer in terms of art therapy. Through an internet research, I have come across Mind Kingston and information about the Tele-Art Therapy Group which offers on-line art therapy sessions. Just Brilliant!

**Art Therapy in Kingston**



Join this weekly **Online Art Therapy Group** to help you through difficult times and enhance your resilience through art-making in the group.



- Experience the meditative and soothing effects of art-making to relieve stress and build resilience
- Learn to use the art materials to promote personal growth and transformation, catharsis and wellbeing
- Express yourself creatively in a non-judgemental, supportive and confidential space
- Discover your creative potential
- Develop insight, coping strategies and self-care for yourself and others
- Connect and engage with others in the therapeutic group through sharing your experience

You will also be encouraged to make art between sessions, supported by weekly themes.

**Who is it for?** - The group is open to all adults experiencing mental health difficulties whether you have a diagnosed mental health problem, such as depression, anxiety, stress-related issues or experiencing difficulties in your life that needs attention such as coping with the effects of the pandemic. Or you may be joining the group to support your overall wellbeing or to prevent a mental health issue from developing.

I encourage anyone interested in exploring their feelings through art-making to join. You don't need technical art skills to benefit from group Art Therapy.

#### Joining the group

Please, contact me on [edit@mindinkingston.org.uk](mailto:edit@mindinkingston.org.uk) to book an assessment. You need to commit to eight sessions. We will provide art materials. **Fee:** you pay what you can afford  
**Start date and time:** TBC

For more information about Art Therapy, please visit the Art Therapist's website on [www.editbiro.co.uk](http://www.editbiro.co.uk).

**You will need** a computer or laptop with a camera and a good internet connection and access to Zoom.

**Issues with digital technology?** - If you have issues accessing digital technology, please get in touch. We might be able to provide you with equipment for the duration of the programme.

And here I am. In unfamiliar surroundings. Frantically searching for something that could help me to feel less alien.

As an artist who uses art as daily medicine, my first urge is to find people like me. Artists and creative souls who make the world more beautiful, services which make the world a better place.

Therefore, I decided to take a long walk around the neighbourhood and hunt for some beauty which could lead me to people like me.

Where should I start from? A railway station. After all, it is where most visitors to the town would start from.



Straight away, my attention got attracted by the **Malden Manor Mosaic** under the railway bridge, end of Sheephouse Way, by the Hogsmill. A quick google search and ...Bingo!

**Save the World Club** (STWC) popped out.



This organisation has 25 years working experience creating award-winning beautiful mosaics with the help of the local community, artists and the main town. I loved the motion mosaic of the person doing a cartwheel, down the side of the Rose theatre which was dedicated to Eadweard Muybridge.

But there is so much more they do.

STWC stores a vast quantity of rescued goods that would otherwise be landfilled, for redistribution, re-use, repair, and up-cycling projects. The Circulatory, as it is named, is open to all makers, creators, up-cyclists, artists, etc. who wish to pick up any item they can find there and use it in their creative projects for just a donation. It is rightly referred to as the Aladdin's Cave. Casting my eyes on it, they just sparkled with excitement.





I hit the 'Get Involved' button, and the choir in my brain starts to sing 'Hallelujah'.

STWC runs mosaic workshops at Kingston Environment Centre, involves local youth and offers volunteering options. As a mother of two teenagers, both being quite artistic, I might have just found a gold mine.

On the top of all this STWC feed the hungry! - through distributing the disposed food from supermarkets and exhibitions to local charitable groups for their clients to use. The Save the Food Club supplies this service to vulnerable people, using mainly zero carbon pedal power. It is currently investigating how to expand this assistance to more client groups such as the elderly and single parents.



I've reached out and had a chat with Des Kay, a person who started this all. His story is amazing and his dedication to make the world a better place is not only admirable but extremely inspiring.

When asked how he perceives the services provided by STWC impact mental health, he underlines the current circumstances of the pandemic and its challenges, and says:

***“if providing food to the vulnerable helps ensuring survival and satisfies a basic need, then if that worry is taken away, and people can then focus on other needs.”***

The artistic projects make the surroundings more attractive and the power of that on the mind is so amazing. Engaging the general public and local artists builds a sense of belonging, while the outcome is a legacy which stays within a community for generations.

***“The youth who were involved in one of the first projects I have delivered, are now adults and often have their own children, who are shown around the outcomes their parents co-created and these children are being empowered by their parents' pride and achievement to engage in current and future projects.”*** - Des said.

That made me feel so honoured to be able to share a piece of THE SWTC legacy with you, my readers.

Would you like to know more about Save the World Club, or better still get involved, then please head to their website:  
**<http://savetheworldclub.org>**

## Professor Kayoss

Known also as Des Kay, is “a master of the dustbin, the skip, the yard sale, the school jumble, the odd looking pile of stuff in the road.” Intriguing, isn’t it?

Exploration of the mosaics in Kingston created by Save the World Club led me to this amazing person (more info in the previous article).

Personally, I have always considered carefully all the items identified as not being needed any more, from the perspective of their potential service to others. I also love to ensure that I can exploit items as long as possible and often amend children’s clothing to prolong its life and function.

It’s no surprise then, that I got extremely curious about Professor Kayoss.

He is a man of Renaissance!

The range of his talents and activity in the Kingston community is breathtaking. He is an entertainer, artist, poet, rapper, sculptor, archivist, enabler and an inspiring educator of the recycling and environmental message. Therefore, he “*prides himself on minimal purchasing with maximum recycling.*”



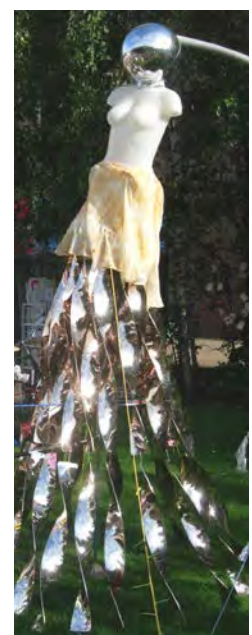
Professor Kayoss not only creates amazing art from recycled materials - for example, kinetic sculptures - but also widely supports local arts such as donating useful items to the Kingston College of Art for degree sculpture courses, and engages children and youth in different projects - the local children of Kingston and Professor Kayoss made an album of raps calling out to save our planet. You can listen to it via the link:

<http://savetheworldclub.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/rap.mp3>

When I asked Des how all these support his and others’ mental health, he did not hesitate to point out so many aspects of his story and activity that directly or indirectly impacts the mental health scene. Des is a humble man who by doing good and being helpful to others and our planet, fulfils his need of a life purpose. His projects engage community and young people in particular and they benefit from doing something to change existing practices into better approaches. Engaging our youth gives them not only a chance to do something good, useful or meaningful, but it also boosts their self-

Would you like to know more about Professor Kayos, please do check his website: <http://www.professorkayoss.co.uk>

worth which in turn supports their good mental health. The aspect of legacy that each project leaves behind in which each participant takes pride cannot be overlooked either. And rightly so!



## Looking for Creative Souls...

My patchwork family is very diverse and my children differ in age with the biggest gap in between the eldest and the youngest of 16 years. This means that I have a toddler. Well, a toddler in the phase of “terrible twos” (yes, I know, at times it is scary for me too;).

It is typical for this developmental stage that she is a challenge at times.

Therefore, I am keen to find some peers for her to play with, and for me to have an adult-like conversation with another mum, and not necessarily about the children, their dietary needs, or developmental milestones, although these are also the topics of importance as who else can understand me better than another mother? But you know what I mean. I need friends in this new town too.

I met **Rasha Barrage** virtually at first via the Time to Change Kingston Hub meeting and was attracted to her as she mentioned that she is pursuing a writing career and uses the art of poetry, painting and drawing in her daily life to support her mental health.

I was fascinated by her story and similar approaches she takes to ease life challenges. She shared with me so much on many levels to ensure parenting a toddler in Kingston is a bit easier.

This is what she told me in her own words.



*I moved to the Kingston area in 2017. Where I am in my life now to where I was back then are quite different, due in large part to one thing: creativity.*

*At the time of relocation, I was coming to the end of my maternity leave, my son was turning one and I was returning to work four days a week. I had no friends or family nearby, so my one day off per week was usually spent alone with my son and we slowly got to know the local surroundings. I adjusted to the new routine and was coping fairly well with juggling life as a new working mother.*

*Inevitably, the calm and routine turned out to be short lived. After a few months, life got steadily more complicated.*

*The commute to and from work and the demands of my job were increasingly taking their toll. I was also pregnant with my second child and feeling duly exhausted. To say I was “stressed” would have been an understatement.*

*Fortunately, I was entering the second year of a part time course at Richmond and Hillcroft Adult Community College. The course was a Foundation Diploma in Art & Design. It was something I had wanted to do ever since I was at school and I was delighted to finally have the opportunity, support and financial means to do it.*



*The Foundation Diploma is traditionally studied after completing school and is a pre-requisite for most university art degrees. Thankfully, I wasn't doing it as a way to apply for university; I had no grade to aim for and no one I had to impress. While there was pressure to meet deadlines, and the workload proved greater than I expected, my objective for doing the course maintained my motivation. Even if I were to fail, it didn't matter. For the first time in my life, I was studying something for the sheer joy of it, without achieving anything in particular.*



*The joy of the course lay in the process and the experience itself. I was able to try lots of different creative techniques such as ceramic and print making. My mind was stretched to new ways of thinking as I was introduced to artists and theories along the way – all allowing me to discover and learn new things about myself too. I met some wonderful students and teachers that also taught me so much about creativity.*

*When it came, time to prepare my final project, I basked in the opportunity to release my frustrations and worries onto canvas, collage and photography. And I felt so much better for it.*

*By visually depicting my feelings and explicitly writing the ideas and thoughts that kept repeating in my mind, I was able to gain greater perspective and enjoy a sense of calm that seemed impossible otherwise.*

*The course ended in 2018 but it's lessons have stayed with me. I need to express my feelings and ideas otherwise my thoughts can easily spiral and descend into feeling overwhelmed or worse, depressed. I don't necessarily need an audience and what I make does not need to be perfect or of a certain quality. The importance lies in the expression, not in the reaction it might entail.*

*I now write this article as a full-time mother of three children under the age of five. Unsurprisingly, I have little time, energy or space to create artworks of any kind at the moment.*

*But - I have a mobile phone. This one tool can provide limitless options to create, learn and essentially feel better when life gets challenging. The following are some strategies I have adopted in my daily life, which you may also find useful if you are a parent with young children.*

- *There are cycle/walking routes in the area which I take full advantage of. I often listen to TED talks and podcasts when I take my baby for a walk, so she can sleep and we both get some fresh air. I recommend Blank, How to Fail and Ctrl Alt Delete podcasts.*
- *I have the Nourish app on my phone and I receive their newsletters.*
- *I follow only uplifting or thought-provoking accounts on social media, including accounts by psychologists or illustrators that are directed towards parents (such as Dr Emma Hepburn 'the psychologymum' and Suzy Reading).*
- *I use my phone as both a journal and a notepad for writing whenever I get the opportunity. I write poetry, daily thoughts and inspiration, book ideas and even segments of books on my phone.*



*Creativity comes in many forms, but I believe its benefits are universal. When time, space or finances limit the creative options, there may still be an opportunity to adapt your everyday habits and fulfil this primary need.*

You can find Rasha on Instagram and Twitter **@rashabarrage**

**“A creative act such as crafting can help focus the mind, and has even been compared to meditation due to its calming effects on the brain and body. Even just gardening or sewing releases dopamine, a natural anti-depressant. Creativity reduces anxiety, depression, and stress... And it can also help you process trauma.”**

(Ashley Stahl, Here's How Creativity Actually Improves Your Health, Forbes accessed Online at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ashleystahl/2018/07/25/heres-how-creativity-actually-improves-your-health/?sh=26235d8b13a6>)

## Doodling Buddy...

The power of social media... I made a post about looking for like-minded artists in Kingston who use or have used art to support their own or others' mental health. My mission at the end of the day was to find my tribe amongst the Kingstonians.....and that it is how I met **Jo Kheir**. Jo replied to my post and shared her story with me. She told me how sketching helps her to deal with stress. I instantly felt connected as I personally doodle all the time. Doodling helps me to listen (yes, you have read it correctly). People often take it as disrespectful as I often doodle during meetings. I have been challenged so much on this that I decided to research this topic to prove that there is some logic and science behind it:

**"In 2009, psychologist Jackie Andrade asked 40 people to monitor a 2.5 minute dull and rambling voice mail message. Half of the group doodled while they did this (they shaded in a shape), and the other half did not. They were not aware that their memories would be tested after the call. Surprisingly, when both groups were asked to recall details from the call, those that doodled were better at paying attention to the message and recalling the details. They recalled 29% more information!"**

Source: S. Pillay, "The thinking benefits of doodling", 2016, [Online at: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/the-thinking-benefits-of-doodling-2016121510844>]]

But let's get back to Jo's story:

### 100 Days of Lockdown

*I have always felt strongly about the importance of art therapy. Having studied and completed a foundation course in Art Psychotherapy, I am fully aware of the power art has in enabling people to have a voice. I have taught art in a sheltered housing unit, for over a year and have seen the emotional release it can give people. Recently, I've realised how much art means to me.*



*All geared up for my new venture as an artist this year, I was faced, like the rest of the world, with the pandemic. I had worked hard for a year putting together my first oil painting & photography exhibition named 'Surbiton from a Different Angle.' Needless to say, I was forced to cancel my exhibition as lockdown struck and forced to embrace the unknown. My situation*

*was compounded with the momentous task of home educating my two children. There seemed no end in sight for me.*

JOKHEIRDESIGN.COM

JO KHEIR - GRAPHIC DESIGNER, PHOTOGRAPHER &amp; ARTIST

You can find Jo and her art:  
website: [www.jokheirdesign.com](http://www.jokheirdesign.com)

Instagram: [@jokheirdesign](https://www.instagram.com/jokheirdesign)

Etsy: [www.etsy.com/uk/shop/JoKheirDesign](https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/JoKheirDesign)

**Art Gallery:** Salon No.13, Victoria Road,  
Surbiton KT64JU

*During lockdown my only creative outlet was when the kids were in bed or brief moments between preparing snacks and teaching! I began to sketch how I felt every day. A diary, if you like, with a cartoon 'me.' Documenting this extraordinary moment in history, I drew 100 pictures over 100 days of lockdown.*

*I jumped onto social media for the first time in my life and hoped that people could relate to my emotional roller-coaster! I tried to be honest and transparent with my drawings, but I had to admit my experience seemed less like a 'family bonding opportunity' (as some others expressed) and more like a stress bubble likely to explode! I love my family with all my heart, but teaching, starting a business, being mum, a wife, worrying about my health and the potential threat of Covid, was such a strain.*

*I realise everyone has had very different experiences and challenges, but this was me expressing mine - art helped me to deal with each new day. But there was a silver lining: I managed to set up my art business, explore social media, create a website, open an Etsy shop and an art Gallery, plus 100 sketches that all my family are really proud of.*

## 100 DAYS OF LOCKDOWN 2020



## Looking for Creative Souls continues...

I met with **Cheryl Carter** virtually because of the pandemic restrictions. I found her story very inspiring and her creativity contagious:); this is what she told me in her own words.



*My life journey has been marked with trauma. Although some of it is personal, a fair amount of it seems more second-hand, taken on from close family and friends, who have experienced periods of poor mental health. Living within the same household as someone with a mental illness caused the rest of us such distress, fear, anxiety and depression and has dramatically changed our lives forever. As did the fact that being deprived of seeing my parents, who I love dearly, left me feeling bereft.*

*Poor mental health will affect everyone at some stage in their lives; it has no prejudice. In my case, as in many others, we never saw it coming. All too quickly, the lives that we had built together and filled with such love and happiness suddenly changed for the worse. It was heart-breaking.*

*Severe depression is disabling and can manifest as self-neglect, suicidal tendencies,*



*manipulation, and both physical and mental abuse. The insidious nature of depression is such that all too often, individuals live in denial of having it or – just as bad – in denial of needing help to manage it. This was so true for a person that I know, and it was such a struggle not knowing where to go to get help.*



*The impact was immense, particularly as the individual's illness affected their ability to*

*work and reduced a main source of income in the household causing a financial strain.*

*Out of nowhere, I was not only looking after an ill person and keeping a household running, but also working to keep a roof over our heads and food on our table. The burden of managing everything soon went from heavy to insurmountable; like*

*running on a continuous treadmill... What a shock to find that everything around me had fallen into chaos and spiralled out of control.*

*My own experiences served as the basis for setting up my business, **Every Home Matters**, around 8 years ago.*

*The aim of our services is to create a better living environment, nurture physical and mental well-being, reduce loneliness and isolation and give clients a sense of belonging, particularly when maintaining the home becomes the least of their priorities, because motivation and being able to focus becomes increasingly difficult. Our bespoke services are always adapted to meet the individuals' needs. We cover a wide range of household support, from decluttering and home maintenance to downsizing and moving, with many social workers and other allied professionals working alongside us. I work with many clients experiencing trauma or loss of any kind including independence or mobility, through circumstances such as illness, divorce, employment and empty nesting. These factors coupled with pre-existing mental health conditions can bring on circumstantial hoarding and self-neglect, which represent serious safeguarding concerns.*

*Personally, I found meditation and walking in nature helped immensely with my own trauma and created a sanctuary for me to escape to. Then, 3 years ago, my GP suggested bereavement counselling. The counsellor loved the way I described my emotions and suggested that I should get them down on paper in whatever way.*

*It was not until lockdown in April of 2020, when the pace of life slowed down and I could follow my bereavement counsellor's advice. Apart from doing a bit of crafts at home with my sons when they were little, I had not painted for over thirty years. I decided to rekindle my passion when my eldest son was disposing of all his old GCSE art materials. Painting has brought a new lease for life and I am now*



*hooked. I find the process therapeutic and it acts as another form of meditation. I get so engrossed that I can paint all day long. Expressing the thoughts in images is a way of releasing them and letting go.*

*Maybe you have a long-forgotten pastime that you could indulge once again? It doesn't have to be painting; gardening, cooking and music are just a few other examples of creative outlets that you can use. I hope that by reading about my experience, you too might consider some new and practical ways of therapizing yourself!*

You can find more info here:

[www.ehm-uk.com](http://www.ehm-uk.com)  
@cherylbery167

## Not So Rare...

As a mother of a teenager who battles depression, I am always very fond of young people being open about their mental health. Talking about the struggles is a very important step towards recognising the problems that throw hurdles in their way, and the first step to finding help. Young people in receipt of early enough interventions can prevent issues escalating, and this is very high on my agenda. I have experienced many meaningful conversations with young people who were triggered by my art. I believe artistic avenues are very special and natural ways to involve young people in these conversations.



Therefore, when I was introduced to **Corin Bateman**, I instantly took interest in her amazing artistic skill in portraying mental health issues through the lenses of her photo camera. I am even quite tempted to collaborate on ideas I have developed recently through watching her journey.

Corin has recently delivered some events providing insight into her on-line gallery event called “Not Rare”. It showcased photographs taken by her, portraying people struggling with mental health problems. Corin planned, edited, and took images that demonstrate the ways people may experience mental health to underline that everyone experiences mental health differently and to break stigma and discrimination around it. Corin plans to use the photos she has taken to make posters and display them across the Kingston Upon Thames borough.



When chatting to me, **Corin** shared a bit of her story and reasons behind her advocacy:

*My name is Corin. My life has been full of change through moving 10 times to 7 different countries during my lifetime. I am a highly creative person and have studied photography A level, achieving an A grade. I love media, music, art, design, pageantry and basically anything creative, and I am Miss Teen Surbiton, Great Britain 2020/2021.*

*I have a passion for photography and want to use my skills to help people with mental health problems, and break stigma and discrimination attached to mental*

*health. I would like to have an impact on people, to push them out of their comfort zone through engaging with my images, and question their beliefs of what mental health really is!*

*I became a champion for Time to Change to share my story and meet other people with similar mindsets as me and to support a cause I really believe in.*

*I have suffered with anxiety for my whole life, but recently the stress from my A levels and doing three creative subjects, Media, Photography and Art & Design, which contained a great deal of course work, made me spiral into severe anxiety. Although this experience was rich in distress, I managed to turn it around and it provided me with the inspiration for my platform and it gave me the drive to help others in similar situations.*



Should you find Corin's photography intriguing as I do, or would you like to witness her journey or even get involved in her upcoming projects, you can reach her out through her Instagram: **@corinsphotography** or Flickr account: **<https://www.flickr.com/groups/notraregallery/>**



The nervous feeling before an important life event or during a difficult situation is a natural echo of the original 'fight-or-flight' response. It is an essential survival mechanism but –the duration or severity of an anxious feeling can sometimes be out of proportion to the original trigger, or stressor. Physical symptoms, such as increased blood pressure and nausea, may also develop. These responses move beyond anxiety into an anxiety disorder.

A person with anxiety disorder have recurring intrusive thoughts or concerns. While a number of different diagnoses constitute anxiety disorders, the symptoms of **generalised anxiety disorder (GAD)** will often include the following:

- restlessness, and a feeling of being "on-edge"
- uncontrollable feelings of worry
- increased irritability
- concentration difficulties
- sleep difficulties, such as problems in falling or staying asleep

While these symptoms might be normal to experience in daily life, people with GAD will experience them to persistent or extreme levels. GAD may present as vague, unsettling worry or a more severe anxiety that disrupts day-to-day living. (NHS, Medical News Today, Mind)



## Create, create...

There are so many aspects of the mental health scene in Kingston which I need to explore. One of my teenage children struggles with depression too. Therefore, I had to search what there is available for young people in the area.

What would I do without the power of the internet? I searched and found....

This immediately sounded very interesting and is the sentence that attracts your attention on the

**[www.create4mentalhealth.com](http://www.create4mentalhealth.com)**  
homepage.

**“Engage, create and share messages of hope and encouragement to improve the mental health of young people everywhere”**

From what I have read and watched on the website, it is clear that it’s a “growing online community, delivering positive mental health advice to those who need it. Giving young people a platform to explore their creativity”. Sounds perfect.

I loved reading their short stories, watching their videos which they do all by themselves and they are amazing and professional. I particularly liked the Self Care First Aid Kit, serving as a lovely reminder to me.

Their volunteering section says: “We want your help, and in turn we want to help you. We have a wealth of knowledge in film, television, music and the arts. Help us create films that support and engage, get industry skills and experience and together we can get creative. As a result of becoming a volunteer you will get hands on training in film and sound techniques”.

That really looks like a win-win situation !!



I have spoken to one of the founders of this charity, **Justin Howard**, and when I asked him why he does what he does and what new ventures Create4MentalHealth are engaging with, he told me:

*“We want to make a difference because we lost someone who struggled and we all felt we could have done much*

*more to help. Understanding that we all have some good days and some bad days and that's totally normal.*

*We looked at what is available on-line for people like us and there is lots of help out there but it's not always easy to find.*

*So we set up create4mentalhealth: engaging, creating and sharing advice, support and help that really can make a difference.*

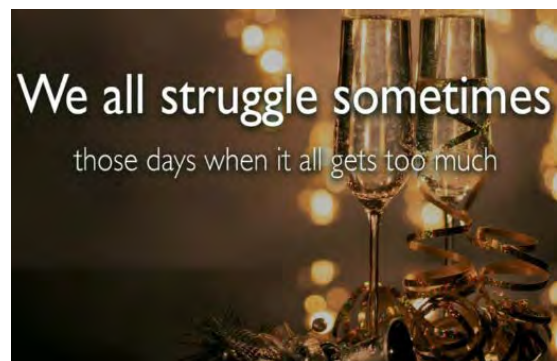
*No box ticking here, just honest, kind and creative people who want to produce creative content that makes a difference in people's lives. Supporting not only people who struggle, but those friends and family who, like us, did not know what to say or do.*

*Our principles are of equality, honesty, understanding and being kind and that's what makes us who we are. We are not here for personal gain; we are here to make a difference. Our values are reflected in the content we create, the campaigns we run, as well as those organisations we engage with.*

*We currently collaborate with Mind Kingston, Time to Change Kingston, and RBK mental health.*

*We are mainly local university and graduated students in the age range from 18 to 26. However, we are supported by our family members; this means that we easily relate to young people and understand their circumstances, as we often live through them too, but we also have access to the perspective from our parents age range too.*

*Our recent production can be found on our website – it's a video referring to Christmas time and is based around not doing so great. I don't think many of us are doing great this year, but together we can all feel a bit better. Supporting each other through these difficult weeks and months is so important, especially around Christmas."*



I have seen the video, and it is absolutely beautiful with some great music and vocal.

Please have a look at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yAz-W2chBso>  
or on their Instagram account **@create4mentalhealth**



*“...resilience, strength, and fortitude is built within everyone who is experiencing a social issue. Channeling a positive dialogue through the art of fashion, helps us to be one step closer to abolishing stigmas and misconceptions on what can be uncomfortable and challenging topics.”*

This is a mission statement on **www.sarahhollebon.co.uk**, the website of a young and talented fashion designer -



### Sarah Hollebon.

Sarah is an amazing personality whose mission is to normalise conversations on social issues. Each collection produced by her highlights people's real experiences and challenges, where some are extremely deep rooted.

Her garments are handmade in-house, constructed to the clients' individual shape, using 18 body measurements. With a background in traditional bespoke tailoring and trained by a Savile Row waistcoat tailor, Sarah understands the importance for quality and for precision in every garment.

I have reached out to Sarah as she is like myself, a keen advocate for mental health while using art as the channel to opening up meaningful conversations. She campaigns and



volunteers for Time to Change and gives talks covering a broad range of mental health topics. She has spoken at Creative Voices Mind and What's Going on in Your Head, to name a few.

Sarah creates her collections by interviewing people with specific mental health problems turning their experiences to a sculptured artwork. The theme which interlinks the garments is asymmetry to underline that each of us experience mental health issues in different way. Her creations are truly stunning!



**Anxiety**



I personally love her idea of the hand made Miniatures which work well as display pieces in the home, workplace, and for opening up the conversation on mental health.

To purchase a miniature please contact:  
**[info@sarahhollebon.co.uk](mailto:info@sarahhollebon.co.uk)**



**Obsessive Compulsive Disorder**

While I am writing Zine, Sarah is extremely busy with her upcoming exhibition, therefore, to get a bit of insight into her creative soul, I have asked her friend and mentor - Steve Loft - to tell me in a few sentences about Sarah:

*Sarah and I met just over a year ago when I saw a dancer, dancing to music in one of her garments at a mental health event, and I was immediately affected by the garment and with such an original way to open up conversations. However, I was more struck when I met Sarah in person – she radiates light and a positive energy that is very hard to describe. It was clear quite quickly we had similar values and beliefs, especially on social issues, and I offered to help her progress in her public speaking with the connections I have made from my own experience. She was also very keen to get involved with Time to Change too, and has since been a very active champion in Kingston. I can only see bigger and brighter things coming into Sarah's life because she has a lovely way of being and a good heart.*

As a mother, I feel so guilty sometimes. My eldest child was recently diagnosed with depression. Does he take after me? Did I provide him with a faulty gene? Or with him growing up and seeing my suffering, was it somehow projected onto him? Will I ever know? I do not think so.

We are quite open about mental health in my household and I have a great bond with my son, hence he speaks to me about most things; that is so rewarding for me. But what if there is anything that he does not want to share? Will he be able to find other men in Kingston who are open to talking about it? He is now 18 years old and an adult according to the law and he has his own journey to travel, but if there is anything that could help him, why not try it out?

My boy loves reading as I do, so finding some literature he could relate to might be the way forward. So when somebody tells me about a book written by a Kingston resident, who is a man and has co-written the book that features 60 stories from men, I really feel the need to meet him.

**Fabian Devlin**, Kingston resident and a Time to Change Kingston Champion and his old school friend Patrick Addis, have published a new men's mental health book,

### Big Boys Don't Cry?

They have collected 60 stories from men - and partners of men - from a range of backgrounds who share their lived experience of mental illness and offer lots of top tips for others who may be struggling.

Here, Fabian shares his story about work-related anxiety that led to a complete loss of self-confidence, followed by depression and, ultimately, thoughts of taking his own life. Facing and fighting his fears is a constant battle and he shares his own self-care tips.

**\*TRIGGER WARNING: this story mentions the topic of suicide\***

### Fabian's Story

*I'm planning to take my life. A suicide note to my wife and nine-month-year-old daughter sits on my lap. This is it; this is what it's come down to. What a loser and waste of space I am.*

*This is how I found myself 12 years ago, aged 32,*



*in 2008. It feels surreal writing it now, but thankfully I'm still here to tell the tale. So how and why did it come to this and what lessons have I learned?*

*Well, I've suffered from anxiety and depression from an early age. We have a history of mental illness in the family and it's a constant battle. The usual sequence of events for me is that I start feeling anxious about something – nine out of 10 times it's triggered by work – I quickly and completely lose confidence in myself and then it spirals into a deep depression.*

*I also suffer from what I've now learned is called the 'imposter syndrome' where I feel like a fraud who's going to be found out at any moment. Despite 19 years' experience in my work, I constantly live in fear that someone will call me out and say: "This guy is absolutely hopeless at his job. You are so busted!"*

*That overwhelming, all-consuming, debilitating fear has led me to want to take my own life on several occasions. And what stops me? Quite simply, the love I have for my wife and my daughter.*

*The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche said:*

He who has a way to live  
can bear almost any how.

*I've realised that we all have a 'why' – mine's my family – so if you can find your purpose and keep it in mind, you can live a much happier, more peaceful life.*

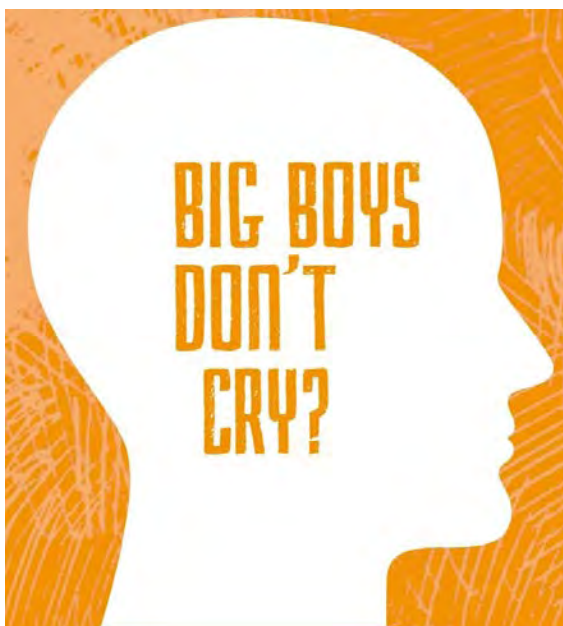
*A real turning point, for me, came in 2018 when I took the step to speak openly to my local GP, who really took the time to listen to me. I was very resistant to taking any kind of medication but the doctor made a helpful comparison, saying, "If you had a physical illness like diabetes, you wouldn't think twice about taking insulin." He also pointed out that half the town was taking some sort of medication. So, I decided in the end to try an antidepressant called Citalopram (later moving on to Vortioxetine) which helped lift me out of the depression, ease my anxiety and enable me to start helping myself. Since then, I've explored a wide range of tools and techniques – from mindfulness, running and reading, to yoga, boxing and 'cold therapy' (that didn't last long!) – to help look after my mental health.... some things work for me, some do not. The point is to be open to anything that might help you and to have as many weapons in your armoury as possible.*

*I hope this story helps you – together, we can fight this illness and show everyone just how strong we really are!*

**If you have been affected by this story, you can call the Samaritans 24-hour helpline on 116 123, email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) or visit [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)**

**Top Tips from Fabian**

- You're only human and you're an amazing human.  
Be kind to yourself and treat (and speak to) yourself as you would to a good friend.
- You're so not alone. One in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year.
- It's good to talk. However hard it feels and however much you just want to shut yourself away from the world, try and find someone – a partner, friend, family member, GP, professional counsellor, the Samaritans – who will listen and not judge, and share with them what you're going through. You will feel loads better.
- You're not weak – quite the opposite – you're incredibly strong to cope with what you're going through. As the author Michael Rosen wrote, "You're sad, not bad". Give yourself a break and tell that inner critic who basically lies, constantly, to shut the f@&k up! I find that mindfulness, in particular, really helps me identify destructive thoughts and weakens their power over me.



To **order** a paperback copy of **Big Boys Don't Cry?** at a special discount rate of £7.50 (usually £10) + £2 postage, please email **[bigboysdontcrybook@gmail.com](mailto:bigboysdontcrybook@gmail.com)** and quote the reference 'Time to Change'.

The 'Moving to Kingston' agenda has to include the wellbeing of my 2 year old daughter, and also my sanity as a mum of the 'terrible twos'. I was searching for a network of mums who could 'adopt' me and my little one, and let's be honest, provide me with some escape from the frustrations evoked by my child's egocentric phase.



I discovered Kingston Baby Talk via Instagram and contacted the founder. We instantly connected and talked a lot about the current circumstances and challenges they pose to the majority of mums. She provided me with an insight into her initiative, which I personally think is amazing. This is what she had to say:

*Unfortunately, us new mums in particular, have been hit hard by Covid. We struggle to get out of the house at the best of times, now a global pandemic, coupled with limited classroom spaces (honestly, getting a space on some of the local classes that are running in lockdown is like getting a Glastonbury ticket!), and it is so easy to find little motivation to seek that much needed social contact when we might be feeling isolated.*

*Having experienced the challenges (and not to forget the silver linings!) of being pregnant, giving birth and spending my first months as a new mum in uncertain and changing times, it became evident that there was so much more that could be available to new mums in the local area...*



### Kingston Baby Talk

Kingston Baby Talk is a space dedicated to mums and their babies in Kingston and the surrounding areas. We want to connect local mums, facilitate meet-ups and communicate what's on for pre and postnatal women. We recognise the importance of mindfulness and self-care, and have set up local activities where restrictions have allowed (these have included post-natal fitness, yoga and Pilates).

We also want to connect and collaborate with local businesses who provide a service for mums and mums to be, as we recognise that times are not easy for them either and we want them to know how much we value what they are doing for us!

## What's next for Kingston Baby Talk?

We are working alongside Time to Change Kingston in the New Year to run a series of free online wellbeing activities for new mums and mums-to-be. This series, running throughout January, aims to provide women with the tools to help them manage their mental health throughout pregnancy and their child's first year.

Further details will be released on our social media accounts, (Instagram **@kingstonbabytalk** and our Facebook group **Kingston Baby Talk - Find your Mum Crew**). Sign up will be available in the New Year!

## PN Mental Health

*A campaign by petitioners on the impact of Covid-19 on maternity/parental leave has resulted in the Government updating its guidance to exempt baby and toddler groups from gathering being limited in all tiers (recognising that such groups were vital for the mental health of new parents) since many venues insurance providers have not enabled such baby groups to continue to run during lockdown.*

*The impact of Covid on parents is becoming clearer...*

According to the recent IPSOS Mori and The Royal Foundation of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge report: UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO THE EARLY YEARS:

- Only 10% of parents mentioned taking the time to look after their own wellbeing when asked how they had prepared for the arrival of their baby;
- 90% of people see parental mental health and wellbeing as being critical to a child's development;
- Parental loneliness has dramatically increased during the pandemic, from 38% feeling lonely before to 63%;
- Over a third of all parents (37%) expect the COVID-19 pandemic to have a negative impact on their long-term mental wellbeing.

## Let mindfulness embrace us...

The constant chatter in my brain is difficult to live with. Several times in my life I have tried meditation but... I just can't seem to silence that chatter. My thoughts wander and jump from theme to theme. Breathing calmly is not possible and instead I hold my breath or hyperventilate. Is there a way to find some calm?



They say 'seek and you will find', hence **Shannon McBride** came my way and told me about her story which greatly resonated with me.

*When I first found mindfulness I had no idea what it was. I came across it by chance, and to this day I am glad I did. It has shifted my and my children's entire life.*

*Back in 2018 a typical day for me was rushing around to get ready, zooming from the school to the nursery in order to drop the kids off, and then sitting in traffic with a million things on my mind before arriving at my student placement at a local authority. Rushing from the car with the paperwork and laptop in hand to arrive and begin my day as a student social worker.*

*The days were always busy. I was in the children and families team where so much of the work was intense and some days took their toll emotionally. The amount of paperwork required for the assessments and cases was overwhelming at times and I would often find myself stressing at night about all the things I hadn't completed. On the top of that I had university coursework, and as the deadlines got closer my anxiety increased.*

*I would collect the children feeling guilty as they were often the last ones picked up at 6pm. At home I would rush around getting dinner, homework and housework done; I felt like I was on a non stop hamster wheel. Evenings I found especially hard as my children were full of energy while I was lacking it. I was prone to losing my temper over little things or being triggered by noise or mess. I knew this wasn't good, but I felt as though I couldn't help it.*

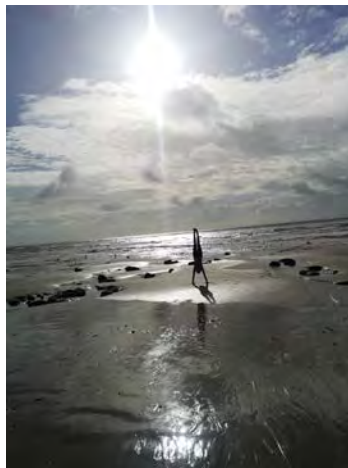
*I wasn't looking after my wellbeing at all, I would get caught up in cycles of depression and completely neglect my own needs. In the mornings, I would leave no time for breakfast. By the time I got home after smoking, and drinking loads of coffee in the day, I'd have no appetite for food. I'd snack on the kid's leftovers or a quick toast. My anxiety made it impossible for me to relax or sleep. I had read about the benefits of mindfulness but decided it wouldn't work for me.*

*I'd tried to have relaxing baths but wouldn't be able to switch my mind off and felt even more stressed afterwards. I hated being on my own. Instead, I'd spend any*

*alone time either on my phone, watching TV or going out. This would then drain me further.*

*All this changed when I came across a book called 'Mindfulness for Depression: Freeing Yourself from Chronic Unhappiness' I randomly found it on the shelf in the post office one day, feeling drawn to it. I read the back and instantly I knew it was for me. It felt as if the author was speaking directly to me, I was hooked.*

*I decided to follow the 8-week programme it provided, including the guided meditations and workbook style activities. I desperately wanted to get well and felt like this was the answer to my prayers. I struggled with it for a while, I didn't have the energy most days and struggled to focus. Meditation was hard for me. My mind*



*was rushing and I would get flashbacks that made me feel uncomfortable. It took a lot of practice, but from reading the book and learning not only about the benefits of mindfulness for myself but for my children too, I was determined to complete it.*

*Over the next 6 months I worked it into my routine as best as I could. I took the TV out of my room and read each night instead. My sleeping pattern improved greatly, which gave me much more energy each day. I went without a smart phone for 3 months and came off all social media, I noticed how much less anxiety I had during that time and how much more time I spent being present with the children.*

*Problems were solved easier. My mood improved. We would go on many nature walks discussing things we found along the way. It felt as though life had calmed down. Mindfulness colouring sessions became our evening 'quiet time' instead of TV. Before bed we would do creative activities before doing 10 minutes of meditation.*

*I noticed how much calmer our daily routine was, I was up earlier and had time for breakfast and meditation. I stopped smoking unintentionally and cut out meat from my diet. I began to do yoga more. My appetite returned. I began to naturally want to take more care of myself and this has been followed by a boost in my self-confidence and outlook on life. My brain fog was gone along with my anxiety.*

*Another activity that has become a regular thing in our house is something called 'moon boarding' which involves using magazines, free books or leaflets from shops and any other resource*

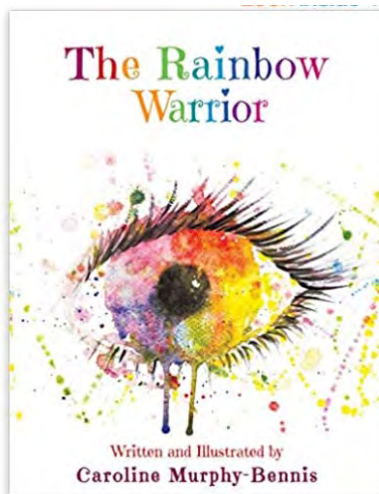


*you can cut pictures out to create vision boards of our dreams, wishes or appreciations.*

*After seeing the impact on my life, and understanding the importance of mindfulness, I completed a youth mindfulness teacher training programme with the aim of teaching as many children and parents as I can to help improve their mental health and wellbeing to families.*

Shannon has so much knowledge and experience to share and I am cheerleading her venture into delivering her programmes to children and parents. Shannon kindly agreed to be my guest in a Zoom event I am planning to host in January 2021. She will kindly provide a bit more light into her plans and some strategies you can implement in your daily routines to ensure mindfulness is spread from you to your offsprings.

Stay tuned to advertisement of the event on **@ttckingston** social media channels.



## Rainbow Warrior

Following such an important topic of mindfulness, I would like to share with you an excellent read for youngsters, a beautiful book which not only provides amazing pictures but also teaches about important aspects of mindfulness.

And although the author is not a 'Kingstonian', I think it is an important contribution to the Zine because:

It has been a challenging year not only for adults, but even more for children who may lack ability to fully understand the changes and restrictions inflicted on us

by the outbreak of pandemic.

Looking after our minds and mental health could not be ever more important. Children need to be taught how to practice a self-care in this area.

This book: **'The Rainbow Warrior'** by **Caroline Murphy-Bennis** could serve as a great tool in starting conversations on this subject. It introduces the need of looking into self to find and cherish the good energy within us.

"The Rainbow Warrior is an ancient warrior princess whose mission is to build an army full of potential. Her army's aim is to protect and enrich our beautiful planet. She has been resting for thousands of years. Now she has awoken and wants to awaken the rest of humanity but needs your help!"

This book hopes to heighten our conscious awareness that every single person is uniquely important in the fabric of existence. If we endeavour to empower ourselves, we can become a force for the enrichment of our civilisation and a healer of our planet.” (Quoted after [www.amazon.co.uk/Rainbow-Warrior-Caroline-Murphy-Bennis](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Rainbow-Warrior-Caroline-Murphy-Bennis))

I had a pleasure to interview Caroline and find out the amazing story which led her to writing this book. Some insight into our conversation:

#### How the idea was born and why?

*There is a long story of my childhood and creative callings behind it, but to cut the long story short: ...after an*



*experience at the children's summer camp where I saw many children dealing with feelings of fear. I began thinking of so many other children having similar challenges holding them back. These different fears are always in our lives sabotaging our full potential. The Rainbow Warrior character was born in a flash of inspiration. I wrote the book in a flow of consciousness. I wanted everyone to be able to connect to their inner warrior, no matter how young or old. I wanted to encourage people to train to overcome the illusion of fear and to fulfil their full potential. The Rainbow Warrior is a symbol of joy, creativity, understanding, protection, interconnection, courage, and love which is the true nature at the core of humanity. The Rainbow Warrior is full of the pure energy of life, but we often forget about it when facing difficulty. The book is a reminder and a tool to raise awareness of this amazing energy within us. It is also a conversation opener. I came to realise that it is very much a mindfulness book, but the process of creation was more my journey of acknowledging the importance of creativity and positive inner energies.*



*Another aspect of the story behind this book is the fact that my father was a Psychiatric Nurse. Throughout my childhood, I witnessed his involvement in providing care for people with mental health problems. I recall events of his intervention helping to pull people from the local river, hence the term suicide was not foreign around me. I heard stories of people locked up for 30 years in mental health institutions just because they had a breakdown. I have always felt deep compassion towards our shared mental health challenges. Also having witnessed so many wonderfully creative and sensitive people suffering from depression and anxiety. This issue is especially important during these difficult times.*

**What is the biggest value of your book to the reader?**

*Connection to your inner self is the most important to ensure a proper grounding in the present moment. It is also the gateway to our hidden unique purpose. Investment in connection to your true self has never been more necessary for a balanced life. This is possible when we each commit to a daily practice of mindfulness and interacting with nature. I hope that “The Rainbow Warrior” will help us to understand this in a very simple way.*

**What is your biggest dream for the Warrior?**

*That everybody becomes a Rainbow Warrior. The more people who raise their consciousness, the more we co-create a better world for ourselves, our children, and our planet. When we heal ourselves we become compassionate warriors who help others to become empowered too and overcome fears in order to achieve their dreams.*

**What are your next steps? any other book in making?**

*I have a poetry book in progress involving the community input. I have asked people from Ireland to collaborate by sending landscape images taken during lockdown 2020. These images will accompany poems I wrote during my introspection. The outbreak of the pandemic forced a movement back to our roots, to nature, to beauty, to ourselves, back to simplicity, the journey I had already taken. Ireland is calling us home, for healing. It will be titled: ‘Declare a Republic, A Free State of Mind’ and will be available soon. I also write a monthly newsletter called ‘A Question of Truth’ promoting potential focused, mindful & sustainable living for an Evolving World. Encouraging Ethical Design Thinking by promoting companies who are producing products that harness not harvest nature.*



You can subscribe at [www.rainbowwarrior.world](http://www.rainbowwarrior.world). You can follow Rainbow Warrior on Facebook and Instagram: [@rainbowwarriorworld](https://www.instagram.com/rainbowwarriorworld)

**"Look deep into nature, and then  
you will understand everything better"**  
—Albert Einstein



Photos embedded  
with the credit to  
and kindness of  
Tony Williams



I absolutely love nature. It is my escape. My safe harbour. A preferred scenery where I can relax and unwind. The fact that Kingston borough consists of over 1,000 hectares of open space, is a balm to my soul.

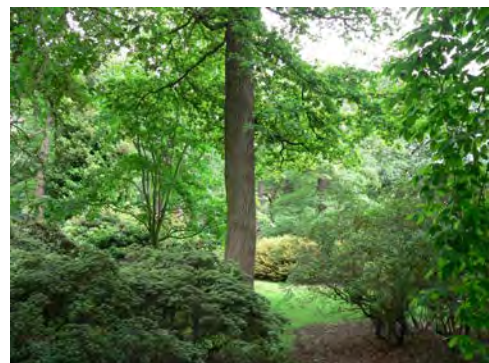
Research has shown a strong connection between time spent in nature and reduced stress, anxiety, and depression, stating that, for example, calming nature sounds and even outdoor silence can lower

blood pressure and levels of the stress hormone cortisol, and this calms the body's fight-or-flight response (*Health Harvard*).

Nature has enormous influence on creativity and is a source of inspiration for many artists.

The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames is located along a stretch of the River Thames where the Hogsmill River joins the former at the town of Kingston. The local Council is responsible for over 500 hectares of public open space, including 43 parks, 22 allotments and 30 playgrounds across the borough ([www.kingston.gov.uk](http://www.kingston.gov.uk)).

The Kingston list of spaces providing an opportunity to indulge in nature seem to be endless.





However, if you are unable for any reason to interact with nature in person, then you could join a Facebook Group (part of Kingston Library Service) which explores the green spaces of Kingston. Each week on Monday there is a new episode in the series called **“Reading Nature”**.

Each episode explores a different topic which might awaken your curiosity to the natural world available at your doorstep.

You can find the first episode here:

[https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=387631999074501&ref=watch\\_permalink](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=387631999074501&ref=watch_permalink)



### **It Can Help Decrease Activity in Areas of the Brain Linked to Depression**

“A study published in PNAS in 2015 found that participants who walked for 90 minutes through a green park on campus, versus strolling next to a loud nearby highway, exhibited “quieter” brains and dwelled less on the negative aspects of their lives (vs. how they felt pre-walk) in follow-up brain scans and questionnaires. They also experienced decreased activity in the subgenual prefrontal cortex, an area of the brain associated with depression. Basically, walking in nature was shown to have an almost immediate positive effect on overall mood.”

(Sanam Yar and JR Thorpe, 5 Ways Being In Nature Changes Your Brain, According To Science, accessed Online at: <https://www.bustle.com/p/5-ways-being-in-nature-changes-your-brain-according-to-science-15827469>)



## Parents well cared for

Arriving in a new borough, moving home, workplace, organising a living space and being a parent on the top of that, is a huge challenge. Having children with big age gaps between them, often requires seeking help and support from a range of organisations as most of them usually look after a particular age group.

Therefore, when I approached WelCare I was positively surprised that my children's ages did not matter; I have found a service for parents.

**Kingston WelCare** is a parenting charity operating from WelCare House where the facilities include a purpose built playroom, a child-friendly garden, a resource room with access to computers, a cafe, a purpose designed and built kitchen, local information and children's books as well as other meeting rooms for parents. It employs staff qualified in child-care and parenting support, and operates as a community building.

WelCare continues the policy begun in 2011 of expanding its offer of free use of its facilities to other agencies or parents wishing to set up family groups or activities compatible with its key aims.

There is a lot on offer:

- Monday mum's - peer support craft group
- Weekly Stay and Play
- Storystorks - a weekly interactive story telling session
- A school holiday activities programme
- Regular lunch clubs
- Well-being workshops through the year and Parent Volunteering, with training opportunities

For more info visit:

<https://welcarekingston.org.uk/>



WelCare House is a place for local families to meet, connect and support each other. It has a long history of being a friendly and open place where parents and children can build confidence, support each other, and get advice. The ethos of understanding the challenges of parenting emanates from this organisation.

There is drop-in service for parents who need advice and support, including support should parents experience mental health issues. The Families Connect project assists parents in reducing the impact of their mental health issues on their children. In the circumstances of the pandemic, many of the services are offered remotely.



For past 11 years I have been working in the adult education sector, initially training those wanting to engage in a career in childcare, and

then for last 6 years managing a department delivering programmes in that field. The subject of neurodiversity has been always a little obsession of mine and has led me into extensive studies on the topic. For that reason, when I met a FASTMINDS representative I needed to know more about what they do, and I was not disappointed. FASTMINDS provide such a lovely range of support services and resources, and you can read below what they offer:

## FASTMINDS Adult ADHD Support Group

Our peer-led support group offers assistance to individuals aged 18+ and their families in Kingston-upon-Thames and the surrounding areas.

FASTMINDS is an acronym for common symptoms that are often seen in ADHD - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (also known as ADD) – *see the picture on the right.*

### Our aims are to:

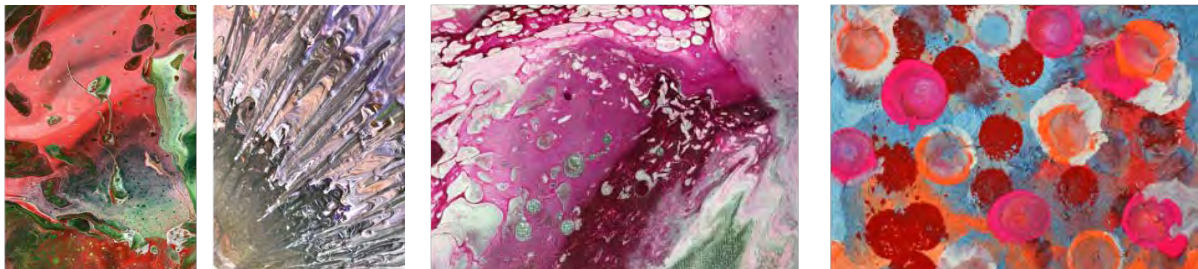
- Promote and protect the physical and mental health of adults affected by ADHD (whether formally diagnosed or not) in Kingston and surrounding areas, and improve their quality of life
- Promote social inclusion among adults with ADHD (whether formally diagnosed or not) in Kingston and surrounding areas, by:
  - o Providing education and information
  - o Providing advocacy and general support
  - o Providing recreational facilities and opportunities for those with ADHD
  - o Raising public awareness of the issues affecting those with ADHD
  - o Any other benevolent means.



## Meetings

FASTMINDS meet via Zoom at 11.00am every Thursday, and at 7.30pm on the 4th Monday of the month (unless it is a Bank Holiday, then its 3rd Monday). Post-COVID-19 we look forward to meeting up again in person at the Kingston Quaker Centre. **All donations to support the group are appreciated.**

**Neurodiverse art therapy** – Neurodiverse folks often find it easier to express themselves through creativity, which is why we enjoy our art therapy sessions at the charity Hestia in Kingston. Many of our members have kindly donated their creations so that we can raise money for our group. You can **buy our greetings cards** at [www.weallsendcards.com](http://www.weallsendcards.com) (a shop for Greetings Cards run by Designer), and then select “Fastminds”. Or please contact us directly if you would like to **purchase original artworks** or know more about our art sessions.



### Life's too short for your health to be ruled by clutter or disorganisation

Our creative over-active minds can sometimes become so overwhelmed that we end up with cluttered or disorganised homes as a result, which can be

extremely stressful and affect our health and wellbeing. The **Hoarding Ice-Breaker Form** (which was created by one of our members) is a great way to start a conversation with a GP, so they can talk you through the types of treatment, help and support that could **empower you to feel better**.

You can download the form from here:  
<https://hoardingicebreakerform.org>

**For more information** about our support group, or to discuss being referred for an ADHD assessment, contact: Sheena Crankson (07946 903201) - [www.adhdkingston.org.uk](http://www.adhdkingston.org.uk)



## Finding help with mental wellbeing

Looking for help with mental wellbeing can be a bewildering business. I could write a book about some experiences, which will include some extremes from both ends of the spectrum. Therefore, I looked for someone who could tell me a bit in approaching that item on my agenda. I had a real pleasure to come across Tony Williams, who is a Time to Change Kingston Champion, a person who understands a lot due to lived experience of mental health, and who is also a counsellor at:

<https://www.fairfield-counselling.co.uk/>



All I need in full package:)

I have presented Tony with many questions and he has provided me with below resolution and guidance. If you are looking for help it is a 'must read':)

*What does the state provide? What else is there? When you find help, does it meet your needs? What do you do if it doesn't? The first of these questions sadly seems to be a journey everyone travels. But all too often, we travel the other journeys as well. Sometimes we make that journey for ourselves, and sometimes we make it for people we care for.*



*The first two questions lead you to a constantly changing map. Your guide in interpreting this map is often your local GP. GPs historically have been official custodians of our physical health; attending to how we feel has been the realm of bedside manner. Most GPs will tell you today that mental wellbeing is a major factor in a high percentage of the issues they treat – albeit perhaps not always the presenting issue. Given that 1 in 4 of us may be living with a mental health issue at any one time – and another 1 in 6 may have an issue that does not merit a diagnosis – means that more than 4 in 10 of us will have some kind of problem with our mental health. And given the relationship between mental and physical health – really closely interlinked – it's no surprise that GPs see so many of us in distress.*

*Your GP may be in a continuum from really well informed about mental health to, well, not so well. Things are better than they were, but the response is still patchy. In all cases, that response is likely to involve some form of medication and a referral to another part of the state system. That state system does not live in their practice, usually (some offer a counselling service), but elsewhere in or off the borough.*

*How that state system locally works is a changing map because the health system in Britain is now a marketplace. Indeed, increasingly, what constitutes the state, or just state money, is increasingly a blurry picture. It's also a picture which is getting smaller in real terms (the last 10 years). So the reality is that picture implies lots of (re)letting of contracts, novel solutions, and measurement. A great deal of the focus of state provision nowadays is on the business of just keeping things running while getting smaller. So as a consequence, things change quite often, and they get called something else quite a lot.*

*As the money has got less, so the lot of the voluntary sector (that means charities, mostly, and social enterprises) has got harder, and not all of it has survived. A lot of money that the voluntary sector relied on is now given out not in grants, but through "commissioning". This means in practice it has attracted the attention of bigger fish, from out of town. And yes, they change now and again, and of course, they are called different things, too. And community groups, well they generally have no money, but they never did have any, so not much change there.*

*Which all sounds pretty depressing, really. So here are a couple of positive things.*



*Despite all the foregoing, there is help out there. Kingston Council has recently introduced a way of finding what is out there through a thing called*

*Connected Kingston - <https://www.connectedkingston.uk/>. This opens in a browser and lets you find help of all sorts using words, or by making choices. It includes the things the state provides, what the voluntary sector provides, and some, at any rate, of what community is doing.*

*Another really useful resource if you have decided you are specifically looking for counselling is the Directory of Counselling Services in Kingston. This is published by the Council's Public Health department, and it will help you to find this kind of help if you are on a tight budget, and sometimes if you have no budget at all. Online version available at: <https://www.kingstonccg.nhs.uk/Directory%20of%20Counselling%20Services%20in%20Kingston.pdf>*



*And, if you can afford it, you might want to find a counsellor in private practice. In Kingston you are probably going to spend upwards of £50 per 50 minute session for this. There are two websites which check on the credentials of the counsellors they promote, and all should be members of either the BACP or the UKCP – this means they meet standards for ability, but also comply with the necessary ethical standards to work with you safely. They are:*

*<https://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/> and*

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb>



Both will allow you to specify where they are in geographical terms (assuming you will see them face-to-face) and whether they provide online or telephone counselling options. You might want to check what they say about what qualifications and experience, and if necessary, any specialisms they work in. And, it can't be said too often, try out a few counsellors before you commit. The interpersonal chemistry between you and the counsellor is a very important factor. Find one that feels right for you. Any good counsellor will help you find an alternative if you choose not to work with them.

Next, to deal with the question of what happens if it all does not go well. There are a couple of avenues you can take for this:-

POHWER (<https://www.pohwer.net/kingston-upon-thames>) will help with advocacy if you need it.



MIND in Kingston have a mental health Parliament, which is run by people with lived experience of poor

mental wellbeing. <http://www.mindinkingston.org.uk/mental-health-parliament.asp>. They will hear you and try to combine what you say with evidence given by others, and seek to improve the system.



Kingston Mental Health Carer's Forum <https://kmhcf.org.uk/> offer information and advice for carers of people with poor mental health. They also offer a supportive community of peers, and advocate for members.

HealthWatch Kingston <https://www.healthwatchkingston.org.uk/> exists to champion the needs of people who use the health and social care system in Kingston. They have statutory powers to inspect services and to make recommendations for improvement; they will also provide information and signpost services. HealthWatch Kingston has a Mental Health Task Group which is formed of people with lived experience of poor mental wellbeing. Over the past years the Task Group has reviewed the acute, elderly and community services at Tolworth Hospital, led the development of the mental health strategy for Kingston (Thrive Kingston) and reviewed the iCope service in Surbiton.



Last, the statutory, voluntary and community sector in Kingston are trying to have a regular, joined up conversation about mental health in the Borough and you are welcome to join in. Write to Kezia [kezia@healthwatchkingston.org.uk](mailto:kezia@healthwatchkingston.org.uk) to get an invitation.

## **If the mountain will not come to you, then you must go to the mountain** - Francis Bacon quote - adapted

Talking therapies can work wonders but accessibility is a barrier if you cannot afford a private service. The Centre for Mental Health think tank estimates that 8.5 million adults and 1.5 million children will need new or additional support for mental health problems as a direct result of the pandemic. I always dream that one day speaking to a counsellor will be easy and available immediately, at the moment when the need presents itself; similar to accessing a GP appointment.

I met with John Ng, Director at *YourSpaceTime CIC*. We explored the social enterprise's options in Kingston and his project stole my heart.

## **WHERE CHANGE COMES TO WORK**

### ***A local counselling service for you and your community***



*At the beginning of 2020, John piloted a two-month mobile counselling service in Kingston for vulnerable residents who were finding it difficult to access talking therapy. It was supported by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation's Ideas & Pioneers programme and acknowledged by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). With follow on funding from The School of Social Entrepreneurs, and with assistance from Akhtar Shah and Lewis Campbell of Dreams Lab,*

*John has set up YourSpaceTime, a Community Interest Company for counselling.*

***YourSpaceTime CIC (YST)*** wants to bridge the financial therapeutic gap. YST provides a counselling service for everyone by offering sessions to workplace employees and individuals who can afford the service, as well as those who would otherwise not be able to access support, due to financial constraints or long delays within the NHS and other charitable organisations. YST's approach is to use revenue generated from the private sector to help subsidise the free counselling provision for those who are usually more reliant on the public sector for support. YST provides face-to-face, phone and online counselling. In addition to this and due to the success of the pilot, YST will be launching its innovative and bespoke mobile counselling pod. It will provide a convenient, neutral and confidential space for the workplace, but also a beacon of hope that will allow for travel into communities and deliver what is, essential work to the people who lack the resources and need it most (Covid restrictions dependent).

### ***Increasing levels of mental ill health amplified by Covid 19:***

*The nation is facing record levels of anxiety, stress and loneliness. Symptoms of mental ill health are indiscriminate, affecting people of all ages and from all walks of life. The overall statistical narrative is that funding gaps and the wide, growing need for talking therapy have brought the nation into a mental health crisis.*

- *In 2015/2016 43,602 UK residents waited over 90 days for NHS talking therapy, in 2018/2019 this rose to 94,305 (BBC, 2019)*
- *New evidence suggests a 65% increase in demand for private counselling services since 2016, after studies show that mental health trusts are receiving less funding in 2016 than they did in 2012. There will be thousands of people in the UK that can't afford to pay privately for help. (Mental Health Today, 2018)*
- *An investigation found that patients with serious mental health issues leading them to self-harm or attempt suicide are being left to wait as long as two years for specialist support because of an NHS "blind spot" on waiting times. (Independent, 2018)*
- *Over two-thirds of adults in the UK (69%) said they were very or somewhat worried about the effect that the coronavirus (COVID-19) was having on their life now. (Office for National Statistics, 2020)*

### ***How YourSpaceTime can help:***

*YST's carefully selected counsellors can enhance the wellbeing of employees and thereby positively affect levels of absenteeism and morale in the workplace, whilst*

*improving productivity and profitability. YST is also proactive in delivering our free community service and identifying the areas greatest needs. YST believes in the longevity of collaboration and we are working with local third sector organisations to help source and screen the eligibility of community clients for those who need it most. We aim to benefit the community as early as possible, providing people with access to the support they need at a time when they want it. We are looking at ways of creating a system that reduces the time it takes for a client to be seen.*

### **The benefits of our mobile service**



Convenient



Flexible



Confidential

### ***What have you learnt through your pilot?***

*In terms of feedback, I learnt that 100% of clients who entered the mobile service thought the space was welcoming. One client commented, "It was easy to find and cosy". Others preferred the space to their previous experiences with one lady noting*

You can visit YST website:  
**WWW.YOURSPACETIME.ORG**

*the, “More comfortable environment”. 82% of service users rated their experience 5 out of 5, with no one rating it less than 3, which was still being helpful.*

*I’ve learnt more about my own determination, resilience and hope throughout the entire process. When I experience awareness in life, it can often lead to common acts of kindness and a common feeling of gratitude. Common is the key word here that applies to us all.*

*The stigma around counselling is lessening. We are seeing a gradual shift in attitudes with more men and a greater diversity of people seeking out counselling as a positive and significant source of support, moving away from more rigid and traditional views of therapy.*

*People who have accessed counselling can feel the need to access support again. Life after all is a continuous process and in some cases, an abrupt change in circumstances can be enough to knock us off our equilibrium. Those that return realise the idea and the reality of counselling is often dissimilar. They are more familiar and less concerned with the experience. They understand the holistic benefits counselling can have in the shared experience within a space that exists between two people; that self-awareness and healing can be garnered by working alongside a non-judgemental and caring therapist. Whether its work related stress, bereavement or unresolved issues, they appreciate the psychological, emotional and physical affect it can have on their overall wellbeing. Therapy is effective as a preventative measure as well as an intervention. Perhaps the former is where our long terms goals should be prioritised. However, due to private practice’s high costs and a lengthy wait for NHS services, it seems unlikely for many that a timely need is met. There is certainly an excess demand for counselling and as a collective; we must sound a call to action, in which together we should all aspire to meet.*

### ***What are YourSpaceTime’s aspirations for 2021?***

*YST wants to collaborate with more individuals, businesses and organisations that are trying to create and sustain meaningful change in our society. YST is about inclusivity and equality and will focus on assisting marginalised groups who often feel neglected. YST also wants to reach more people who have not had the opportunity to experience the benefits of counselling and will continue to help destigmatise the concept of what is ‘normal’, in terms of seeking help and what it means to be okay or not okay. YST is about to launch a strong marketing campaign to facilitate this movement.*

*When we do arrive at some sort of normalcy and we have an opportunity to recalibrate what it*

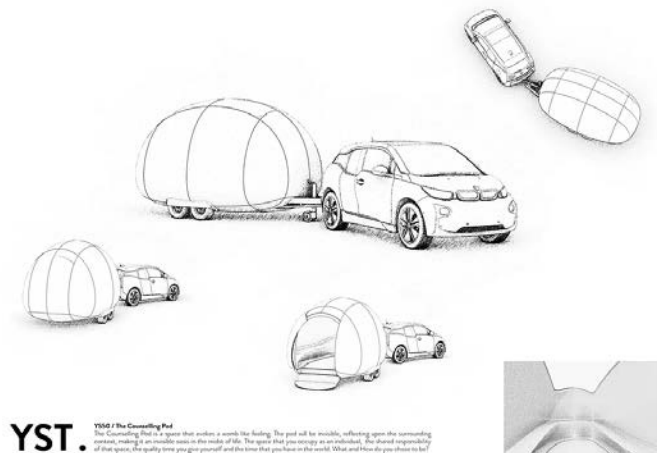
**Twitter:**  
**@nowistnomad**

means to be at a safe distance from each other, there will be many waiting in line to sit with a counsellor, since never has there been a time when human connection is more valued.

### **How can we the public support YST?**

YST is seeking both business and community partnerships with organisations and individuals who want to actively support our initiative of investing in the mental health of workers and wider communities. We are also looking for sponsors to help with the build of our first counselling pod, **Capsule 1**. Business and individual sponsors who contribute financially to the cost of Capsule 1 can be highlighted on the pod, in our materials and on our website as a sponsoring entity.

**contact us: [John@yourspacetime.org](mailto:John@yourspacetime.org)**



**YST.** YST / The Counselling Pod  
The Counselling Pod is a space that makes a work-life feeling. The pod will be mobile, reflecting upon the surrounding context, making it an invisible unit in the middle of life. The space that you occupy as an individual. The shared responsibility of that space, the quality time you give yourself and the time that you have in the world. What and how do you choose to be?



It is such a great idea, I love the pod already and although I cannot offer much, I would like to donate a Giclée print of my artwork to decorate the space in the pod. I will provide my donation to you after the New Year. The image of what I have chosen is embedded. (see on the left)

This artwork is titled: Just Sit With Me In The Darkness and I think it will fit into the pod's purpose perfectly.

I am pretty sure that many artists would be interested in offering donations to the pod too.

Should you be interested in donating your art to YST Pod, please email:

**[zine.mental.health@gmail.com](mailto:zine.mental.health@gmail.com)**  
**with the title: Art for YST**



2020 has been such a challenging year for everyone.

The pandemic outbreak, the isolation, the restrictions and as a result the mental health of so many people is declining.

Therefore, when I was told about the **Calendar of Hope**, I had to give it a go. And WOW, my image got selected for the calendar! What a joy it brought to me which I cannot describe fully.

The image that has been chosen is of real importance to me. It is illustrating the month of July and coincidentally it fits in so well as it was actually taken in that month back in 2018 (see the image on the left)

I'll give you some insight into how this amazing idea came about.....

Time to Change as a social movement invests a lot of energy and passion into changing the way mental ill health is perceived, and in turn aims to break the stigma associated.

Time to Change Hub Co-ordinator at Waltham Forest, Chris O'Sullivan, developed and proposed the idea of a calendar after working with two local Time to Change Champions and keen photographers – Pete Mirow and Rosalind Stephens.

The calendar contains a collection of photographs that were selected from entries to a competition open to all Time to Change Champions across London on the theme of “hope”; hence the name, “Calendar of Hope”.

In the light of national Time to Change coming to an end in March 2021, the calendar is a great legacy and a lasting reminder of what Time to Change Champions and Hubs have achieved across London. The theme of hope has never been more important than now.

The Calendar of Hope Judging Panel consisted of: Jon, Steve, Chris, Pete and Justin. I was fortunate to be able to speak to one of the panelists and a London Time to Change champion, Steve Loft, who shared about the work that went on behind the scenes:



*“The window of opportunity to submit entries was only a few weeks and we were so pleased to get 25 quality entries. The selection of images for the calendar was made by a panel of 4 independent Time to Change champions including myself. We were not allowed to enter, and were also unaware of the names of the people who submitted the images. The standard was so very high and it was a very difficult decision; we had to have a long Zoom meeting between us to decide and agree on the final 12. We really hope everyone enjoys these images and the stories around them throughout 2021.”*

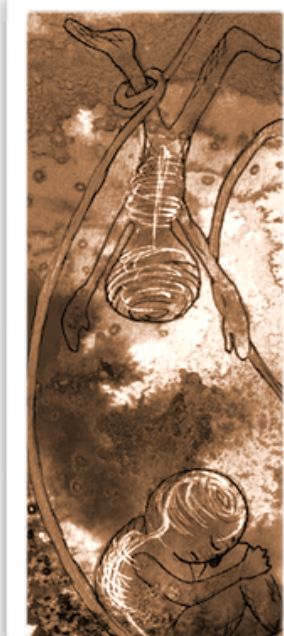
The selected pictures for the calendar can be seen on Instagram under the account name: **@ttc\_calendarofhope**

## Time to Talk

I have suffered in silence for many years. As a teenager, I had no idea what was happening to me. Everybody always perceived me as a bit anti-social, very shy and a geek. I was a high achiever, and although it did not make me very likeable amongst my peers, it helped to overshadow my inner struggles because there was no concern about my academic abilities and achievements. At some point I was convinced that I was going insane, hence was hiding my limitations under the umbrella of needing to study, whilst I was crying my eyes out without an apparent reason. Suffering from insomnia, I got very irritable and on edge, even engaged in some activities that were far from safe as this was the only way of giving me some sense of being alive. This adrenaline rush was something I could finally feel, a self-confirmation of being alive.

However, it never lasted long enough and always led to self-loathing. It was a vicious cycle. I like to state that I have made some life choices which turned out to be the consequences of my behaviour. Now, after two decades I can see that, but it is better late than never, and I have learnt from them.

When my first child was born, I easily rolled down the hill into a postnatal depression. Of course, it was not recognised as such, even by me. I was convinced that I was extremely down and emotional as a natural consequence of the hormones surging through my body and the fact that my relationship was far from perfect or supportive.



In between my first and second child, there were many life events and some trauma, which always justified my state.

Then my second child arrived along with a second round of postnatal depression! My baby also had a few health concerns, and with that came the worry that drove me to the edge; the professionals were quite convinced of that.

I've lived on a see-saw throughout my life.

In 2006 I paid London a visit and never returned home (not by choice, but that's a different story).

This brought isolation, a new environment, difficult adjustments to a new culture, betrayal, domestic violence and I hit rock bottom, including a suicidal attempt.

I climbed out of this void, not without difficulty, and not quickly..... but I climbed and it took me several years.



Then when I thought all was better, I gave birth to my third child and I almost died due to postpartum complications. All my past trauma was triggered by this experience. As a result, I spiralled down into depression again. But this time round, it was recognised, and since then I have received professional help, which also led a rediscovery of my creativity and I have followed an independent artistic journey ever since. This doesn't mean of course that my life is like a rainbow, but I am dealing with the monster of depression much better and have found some joy and fulfilment in my life.

But do you know why it was possible? Well, my life is better now because I found the courage to **TALK ABOUT IT.**

I have opened up about my mental health; I have stopped being ashamed of it and I have stopped undermining my worth. I have stopped being humiliated by admitting that I am taking antidepressants. And now, I actively advocate breaking the stigma around mental health by sharing my story and my own experiences of mental illness.

Should you identify yourself as struggling with any mental health issue, something not being quite right and affecting your day-to-day life, please find someone to talk to and who will really listen. Perhaps at the beginning a trusted friend, or perhaps a professional, but please do not suffer in silence.

There is also another side to this story, perhaps you know someone who might be suffering in silence? Perhaps you could be that friend who is willing to listen? To enable you to do just that, to let someone know that you are around, I have included in the hard copies of the zine, a card I have designed myself to help others reach out to their beloved ones.

The card features two human figures sitting on a mobile phone and with the description which says:

*"I am just a phone number away....."*



### One Small Action

On **Thursday 4th February 2021** the national campaign, **Time to Talk Day**, takes place. I would be really touched if you could participate in it by performing this one kind gesture - send this card to someone who you know may need it. Thank you in advance.

Should you at any point need any more cards of this kind, you can find me on Instagram **@dorota.chioma.art**



- quoted after Time to Change  
(<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/get-involved/time-talk-day>)

"A small conversation about mental health has the power to make a big difference.

We know that the more conversations we have, the more myths we can bust and barriers we can break down, helping to end the isolation, shame and worthlessness that too many of us with mental health problems are made to feel.

Time to Talk Day is the day that we get the nation talking about mental health. This year's event might look a little different, but at times like this open conversations about mental health are more important than ever.

We need your help to start the conversation this Time to Talk Day - together we can end mental health stigma."

Ask a question... Can others guess your answer?

**sussed?**  
CARD GAMES

**I'd rather have the power to...**  
A. Fall asleep whenever I want  
B. Solve any maths equation in my head  
C. Read the emotions of others

**I'm stuck on a long coach trip, sitting next to a stranger. If they start making small talk with me, I'd rather it be about...**  
A. TV shows  
B. Sports  
C. Current affairs

**Which would take me further outside my comfort zone?**  
A. Taking an improv class  
B. Going on a silent retreat for the weekend  
C. Eating in a restaurant by myself

**If I wanted to talk about my mental health with someone, I'd rather have that conversation...**  
A. Over text  
B. Over a phone call  
C. In person

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proud to support **time to change**  
let's end mental health discrimination

Ask a question... Can others guess your answer?

**sussed?**  
CARD GAMES

**Which small gesture do I do more often?**  
A. Tell people I love them  
B. Tell people I'm proud of them  
C. Tell people I miss them

**Given only one week, which do I feel more confident I could learn to do?**  
A. Solve a Rubik's cube  
B. Train a poorly behaved dog  
C. Master a Fortnite dance

**I'm more likely to get nervous when I...**  
A. Go places I've never gone before  
B. Do things I've never done before  
C. Meet people I've never met before

**Over the past few years, I've found that the people around me...**  
A. Are more comfortable discussing mental health  
B. Are less comfortable discussing mental health  
C. Are as comfortable talking about mental health as they ever were

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Time to Talk cards are a great way to break the ice. You can cut them out.

How to play:

1. One player picks up a card and reads out a scenario
2. Everyone else guesses how the reader would most likely respond
3. The reader reveals the correct answer and everyone chats about who chose what and why

Ask a question... Can others guess your answer?

**sussed?**  
CARD GAMES

**If I could have one wish, which would it be?**  
A. To always have positive dreams  
B. To see the best in every situation  
C. To never get embarrassed

**I think a stranger would learn more about me if they read...**  
A. A diary of my dreams  
B. A diary of my nightmares  
C. My calendar

**Which is more likely to keep me up at night?**  
A. A mistake made  
B. An argument unresolved  
C. An opportunity missed

**Where would I like to see the biggest change in how mental health is discussed?**  
A. In the news  
B. In workplaces  
C. In schools

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Ask a question... Can others guess your answer?

**sussed?**  
CARD GAMES

**Which small thing do I find most satisfying?**  
A. Admiring a beautiful piece of art  
B. Digging my feet into warm sand  
C. Tearing the crust off a fresh baguette

**Which is my more spy-worthy quality?**  
A. My instinctive curiosity  
B. My powers of observation  
C. My ability to adjust to any circumstance

**Which would I say has had more of an impact on me?**  
A. The shows I've watched  
B. The books I've read  
C. The places I've visited

**When it comes to mental health, I feel more at home...**  
A. Taking care of my own mental health  
B. Talking to other people about mental health  
C. I feel comfortable doing both

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let's end mental health discrimination

#TimeToTalk

time to change  
**time to  
talk day**  
04/02/21

# Let's start talking

Together we will end mental health stigma

The  
power  
of small

**Ask questions  
and listen**

Show you want to know  
how someone is  
really doing

**Don't try and fix it**  
Often just listening  
is enough

**Keep it simple**  
Chat over a cuppa,  
send a text  
or go for a walk

**You don't have  
to be an expert**  
Just being there  
means a lot

**A small conversation  
about mental health  
has the power to make  
a big difference**

Funded by



Run by

