

Organisations that can help

Age Concern Scotland

Causewayside House, 160 Causewayside
Edinburgh EH9 1PR. Tel: 0845 833 0200
E-mail: enquiries@acscot.org.uk
www.ageconcern.org.uk

CRUSE (Bereavement Counselling)

3 Rutland Square, Edinburgh
Tel: 0131 229 6275
www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

Depression Alliance Scotland

3 Grosvenor Gardens, Edinburgh EH12 5JU
Tel: 0845 1232320
www.dascot.org

EARS Advocacy Service

Forecort Leisure, Ashley Place
Edinburgh EH6 5PX. Tel: 0131 478 6030
E-mail: info@ears-advocacy.org.uk

Help the Aged

11 Granton Square, Edinburgh EH5 1HX
Tel: 0131 551 6331
www.helptheaged.org.uk

Minority Ethnic Health Inclusion

Project (MEHIP)
Springwell House, 26 Ardmillan Terrace
Edinburgh EH11 2JL
Tel: 0131 537 7538

Psychiatric Emergency Team

Royal Edinburgh Hospital, Morningside Terrace
Edinburgh EH10 5HP
Tel: 0131 537 6000

The Samaritans

25 Torphichen Street, Edinburgh EH3 8HX
Tel: 0131 221 9999 or 0845 7909090

VOCAL (the Voice of Carers Across Lothian)

8-13 Johnston Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2PW
Tel: 0131 622 6666
www.vocal.org.uk



MENTAL HEALTH and WELL BEING for OLDER PEOPLE

INFORMATION FOR STAFF



HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE



How fine are you?

Do you work with people over the age of 60?

Have you ever thought that a person in your care might be at risk of developing functional mental health problems?

Functional mental health is the medical term to describe various conditions such as depression, schizophrenia or bi-polar disorder. Mental ill health often goes unrecognised in older people and are more common than most people think. As people get older, the symptoms are sometimes mistaken for organic brain conditions such as dementia, including Alzheimer's disease.

How can mental health problems affect older people?

Growing older brings many life changes. Everyone deals with the changes associated with aging differently. However, some older people find situations such as the loss of physical health, bereavement, isolation and adjusting to retirement very difficult to cope with. Older people from minority ethnic backgrounds can feel particularly isolated due to cultural differences and feelings of displacement.

These changes might result in the older person feeling unusually low, feeling paranoid, feeling unusually elated, depressed, stressed or anxious. They may even talk about hearing voices. If this is the case, the person may be suffering from a mental health problem.

It's important that you are able to recognise these symptoms and give appropriate support. In some circumstances it will be necessary to seek specialist professionals.



What are the signs to look out for?

An older person may say they are 'fine' when asked how they are feeling. However, their behaviour might suggest otherwise. If you notice recent changes in a person's behaviour or lifestyle, this may be a sign that something is wrong.

Here are some things to look out for:

- changes in your mood
- hearing voices that are not heard by others, or seeing things that are not visible to others
- feelings of guilt, shame and worthlessness
- unusual irritability, tearfulness, agitation or anxiety
- loss of appetite, or eating more than usual
- waking early or altered sleeping
- poor concentration
- withdrawal and loss of interest in life, including sex
- feelings of hopelessness or suicidal thoughts

Although mental health problems can be serious, the majority of people can get better with the correct treatment.

What can you do?

Encourage the person to talk about their feelings

Try to be a good listener. Speak to your line manager if you feel it is appropriate.

Help the person to accept that this is a treatable illness Keep reassuring the person that they can get better.

Encourage a balance between regular exercise and rest In some cases it may be helpful to encourage social contact and reduce isolation.

Encourage a balanced diet Some people will not feel like eating or will eat too much and may require help with preparation of meals.

Encourage the person not to drink too much alcohol Heavy drinking can make mental health problems worse.

Take seriously any talk of self-harm or not wanting to live Suicidal thoughts are a clear sign that help is needed. Most people who feel like this are relieved when someone asks about it, so don't be frightened to ask. It's a myth that talking about suicide makes it more likely that someone will carry it out.

Encourage the person to accept professional help

If the person has two or more of the common signs listed above and their behaviour continues to cause concern, you should:

- discuss with him/her the importance of seeking professional help, this will usually be from their GP.
- discuss your concerns with your line manager in order that the appropriate professional help can be identified.
- You could also tell the person about advocacy services which can offer support to access services and give information about a person's rights.