

## Steve, A One Stop Shop for Mental Health

The Mental Health Information Station drop-in at Walpole Hall on Palmerston Place has been running every Thursday for two years.

The 'one stop shop' service, which is led by Occupational Therapists, is a joint initiative between NHS Lothian, Health in Mind, Volunteer Edinburgh and Penumbra adult education project, providing support, information and sign posting for anyone affected by mental health and wellbeing issues.



Over one thousand people visited the Information Station in its first year of operation – and the service has been even busier in its second year.

### The Value of Volunteers

Steve is a volunteer and has been involved with the project since the beginning.

An ex-serviceman, Steve helped to set up the veteran's peer support charity Veterans 1st Point (V1P) and was looking for new volunteering opportunities. He said: "...With the support of Volunteer Edinburgh I got started at the Information

Station. Initially I took on a stall – a physical activities table; walking, gym, social events ... and I have been able to develop that. It's a role I very much enjoy.

"Every week is different. It's an open door policy, and you never know who is going to come through the door, particularly with mental health; burly builders, young people, older people. We're fortunate that we have the people available here with a wide range of skills who are able to offer support."

### Teamwork

Steve believes teamwork is the key to making the Mental Health Information Station a success. He said: "Since the very start the Service Station has always been very

much a team effort.

“There’s no difference between professionals and volunteers, we work together as a team and I think that shows in the service we are able to provide.

“I always make it clear I am not a medical professional but often people just want to share things with someone. The feedback we receive has been very positive and it’s really good to know that the work we are doing is helping so many people. It certainly gives me a lift.

“I have done volunteering on and off for many years, but mental health is an issue that I have personal experience of, something I understand - and being part of the team here has changed my life direction.”

The Mental Health Information Station is getting more and more referrals from GPs, and numbers continue to rise.

Steve continued: “People who call in – whether referred by GPs or those who just see the posters outside and come in to have a look – are understandably nervous. Having the confidence to take that first step takes courage. When they do, it’s up to our team to help and support them make the next step.

“We all know about long waiting lists for mental health services. This hub is right in the centre of town and there is no appointment system here. You get to talk to someone when you walk through the door. We will help you – it’s a start.”

