



Boost mental health awareness and suicide prevention with 'Walking Out of Darkness'

Monday 06 March, 2017



[West Midlands Combined Authority \(WMCA\) Mental Health Commission](#) today (Monday 6 March) announced plans for [Walking Out Of Darkness](#) – an awareness raising charity event for mental health and suicide prevention.

The 10 mile walk starts in Eastside Park in Birmingham and follows the canal network to end at the Mental Health Festival in Cannon Hill Park, where information and support organisations will be exhibiting.

The Birmingham walk, on Saturday, May 6, and another in London, the following Saturday, May 13, mark the start and finish of Mental Health Awareness Week.



People can register now to join in Walking Out Of Darkness

Supt Sean Russell, WMCA Mental Health Commission implementation director, said: "We're hoping for a big turn-out for this event, following the launch of [THRIVE West Midlands](#).

"The aim is to raise awareness about mental health and suicide prevention, show our support for each other and end

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the stigma which makes these issues even more difficult for people to deal with.

"It is a great opportunity to promote all the wonderful work already taking place in the region and share experience and ideas.

"Together we really can make a difference."

People are invited to take part and raise money for any local or national mental health and suicide prevention charities.

It is an opportunity for everyone to walk together in support and unity for individuals and families suffering from mental health difficulties and those who have lost loved ones to suicide.

Over the last three years these events have inspired and motivated thousands of people, businesses, charities and services across the country to unite to end the stigma surrounding mental illness.

Norman Lamb MP, chair of the West Midlands Mental Health Commission, attended last year's London event.

He said "I'm thrilled that 'Walking Out of Darkness' is coming to the West Midlands. Having taken part this year in the London event I know how positive it can be and I will be joining the walk in Birmingham this year.

"Most families are touched by mental ill health in some way or other - and ours is no exception.

"We need to talk openly about the challenges people face - together, we can confront the stigma of mental ill health and of suicide".

The events are also supported by Business in the Community, who recent survey of mental health at work across the UK found thousands of people with poor mental health are suffering in silence, unable to share their condition or illness with colleagues or managers at work.

The survey found that 77% of employees have experienced symptoms of poor mental health at some point in their lives and 62% of employees attributed their symptoms of poor mental health to work, or said that work was a contributing factor.

Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce chief executive Paul Faulkner said: "We are pleased to be supporting 'Walking Out Of Darkness'.

"Mental health issues can affect any person, from any background and at any stage of their life.

"It is important that the local business community does its bit to ensure a greater understanding of the subject and combat the stigma that can surround mental health."



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The National Institute of Health & Care Excellence (NICE) found that, of the 6,233 people who took their own life in 2014, more than 70% were not known to mental health services or the NHS, and suffered in silence due to the stigma surrounding mental illness.

Mental illness and suicide can touch anyone in every walk of life, not only families but the wider business community – with every suicide by someone of working age having an overall cost to the UK economy exceeding £1.6 million.

One in four people in the UK is directly affected by poor mental health wellness.

People who want to register for the walk or organisations interested in exhibiting at the Mental Health Festival on the day can find details at www.walkingoutofdarkness.com

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