



Media Release

Emotional wellbeing support from the comfort of your own home

2 June 2020

There were over 1,100 visits to the Surrey Virtual Wellbeing Hub on Healthy Surrey in the first week after launch. Over 70 people expressed an interest in wellbeing sessions available on the Hub in the first 10 days.

The Hub has been created for Surrey residents who want to access additional mental health and emotional wellbeing support, particularly during the COVID-19 when feelings of isolation and anxiety may be running high. From the comfort of their own home they can view, register and access online activities, including virtual coffee mornings, group chat sessions and tailored exercise classes.

The Hub is a joint partnership between Surrey Heartlands Health and Care Partnership, Surrey County Council, Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and the Community Connections lead providers – Mary Frances Trust, Richmond Fellowship and Catalyst - and Surrey Coalition for Disabled People. Working together they managed to get the website up and running in just five weeks.

It is designed to be a 'one-stop-shop' for connecting people to appropriate online mental health and emotional wellbeing support, either through self-referral or referral from a third party. One resident who has been accessing the Hub said:

“As a person who is totally blind and who lives alone, getting out in normal time, let alone during this period of lockdown, can be an immense challenge, I miss out on a number of social activities and support.

“Many people in my situation find themselves spending a great deal of time on their own, I am currently shielding so I am unable to go out for some time to come.

“The ability to have access to so many virtual group activities levels the playing field and allows those activities to be on offer to people like me. I have participated in shared conversations and all manner of stimulating activities at the touch of a button!

“Even having the opportunity for some simple gossiping is hugely beneficial for my wellbeing and feeling of being connected to others.”

Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council said:

“The positive response and feedback received from residents who have used the Hub highlights the importance of collaborative working and the positive impact technology can

have on a person's mental health. I'd like to thank all partners for their support and involvement to help support our residents during what is a very unsettling time for many."

Stephanie Isherwood, Transformation Manager from Surrey and Borders Partnership said:

"The positivity and determination to succeed from everyone involved and the refusal to let the usual barriers be barriers shows you what can be done when there is a collective will and desire for creativity.

"To meet timescales we developed a minimum viable product - the bare bones of what's needed technically. We're now working on improving it and building a more ideal solution that will give us a robust website for the long term.

"I'm proud about how we have been reaching out and making a difference to new people. Enabling people who have not been able to join face to face sessions, even before COVID-19, to connect and join in. During the first week alone around 20 - 25 new people joined sessions".

To visit the Hub visit: virtualwellbeing.healthysurrey.org.uk/

Notes to Editor

1. Surrey Heartlands is a partnership of health, care and local authority organisations working together across most of Surrey – with staff, patients, their carer's, families and members of the public – to transform local services and support people to live healthier lives. Together we are known as an 'Integrated Care System' – partnerships where health organisations, the local authorities and others take a *collective responsibility* for improving the health of the local population, managing resources (including money) and making sure services are high quality.
2. The Surrey Virtual Wellbeing Hub is hosted on Healthy Surrey by Surrey County Council. Mental Health and Wellbeing providers and their partners manage and host each virtual session, promoting each session via the Hub. Some of the key third sector organisations involved are:
 - a. Catalyst - www.catalystsupport.org.uk (Guildford and Waverley, Surrey Heath and Farnham, Spelthorne, Woking, Runnymede, West Elmbridge)
 - b. Richmond Fellowship - (east Surrey including Redhill, Reigate and Tandridge) www.facebook.com/RFEastSurreyCC
 - c. Mary Frances Trust - www.maryfrancestrust.org.uk (Mole Valley, Epsom and Ewell, Banstead, East Elmbridge)
 - d. Surrey Coalition for Disabled People – www.surreycoalition.org.uk
3. Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust is a provider of mental health, learning disability and drug and alcohol services for people of all ages in Surrey and north east Hampshire. Our high-quality care focuses on enabling people and their carers to live well. More information at www.sabp.nhs.uk