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

<https://groundswell.org.uk/westminster-hhcp/>

About Groundswell

We work with people with experience of homelessness, offering opportunities to contribute to society and create solutions to homelessness.

Participation is at our core because people have the right to be involved in decisions that affect their lives; this leads to better insight and better decisions.



Health Topic Guidance Tool



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Introduction

This guide has been designed to help you plan and arrange health and wellbeing sessions.

It's important to note that some of the key contacts and resources will change over time, therefore the HHCP will update this guide and have it available to download from the webpage.

This guide includes:

Suggested Wellbeing Topics

Suggested Content to Cover

Activity Suggestions

Key Contacts

Useful Resources



Arthritis

There are around 10 million people living with arthritis in the UK. It affects people of all ages including children. There are different types of arthritis; the most common of which are Osteoarthritis and Rheumatoid arthritis. Both types of Arthritis can be hereditary and can also be caused by injury or multiple injuries (including sports injuries)

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

The symptoms of arthritis vary depending on the type. The condition can be debilitating and clients suffering with its symptoms can experience:

- joint pain, tenderness, and stiffness
- *joint swelling* (indicating inflammation in and around the joints)
- restricted movement of the joints
- warm, red skin over the affected joint
- weakness and muscle wasting

Arthritis is not something widely considered amongst our clients. However, due to its debilitating nature it is worth raising awareness about this health condition with clients and encouraging them to see a GP if they have concerns.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- **What is arthritis?**
- **Types of arthritis**
- **Living with arthritis**
- **Support**

Useful Resources:

[Arthritis - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

<http://www.arthritis.org/>

Blood pressure

There are two types of types of blood pressure which can affect clients. High blood pressure (Hypertension) and low blood pressure (Hypotension). Approximately 16 million people in the UK have high blood pressure.

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

High blood pressure is the main risk factor for stroke and a major risk factor for heart attack, heart failure and kidney disease. There is also increasing evidence that it is a risk factor for vascular dementia. High blood pressure can be caused by a variety of factors such as; eating too much salt and not enough fruit and veg, not doing enough exercise, drinking too much alcohol or coffee, smoking, disturbed sleep and being overweight. By changing our lifestyles and highlighting this to your residents you can prevent the risk of high blood pressure or if a client already has high blood pressure you can support them to manage it and prevent major illnesses. One possibility is to buy an off the shelf monitor at your local chemist.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- **High blood pressure**
- **Low blood pressure**
- **Health checks**

Clients can arrange a blood pressure check with their GP or local pharmacy. **Alternatively, to check blood pressure and make changes to their lifestyle, the HHCP recommends making contact with the One You Health programme, who will support residents to adopt a healthier lifestyle. Details can be found below.**

Useful Resources:

[http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Blood-pressure-\(high\)/Pages/Diagnosis.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Blood-pressure-(high)/Pages/Diagnosis.aspx)

<https://oneyou-rbkc-westminster.org.uk/>

BBV's (Blood Borne Viruses)

Blood borne viruses (BBVs) are viruses carried in a person's blood that can be spread from one person to another. When infected with a BBV the person may show no symptoms or be seriously ill. BBVs can be transmitted from one person to another by various routes and over different time periods. The most prevalent BBVs are HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C.

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

To reduce the chance of being infected with a BBV and increase knowledge about how BBVs are spread. Intravenous drug users have a higher risk of contracting a BBV if they share equipment. The Find and Treat TB van visits most homeless services every 6 months and provides BBV testing if the client doesn't want to visit their GP.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- **Types of BBVs, their symptoms & how transmitted**
- **Explore how to reduce the risk of BBV transmission and the risks of poor injecting**
- **Guidance on testing and vaccinations**
- **Signposting to services**

Useful Resources:

<http://www.hepctrust.org.uk/>

Liver Health - British Liver Trust

<http://www.tht.org.uk/our-charity/Facts-and-statistics-about-HIV/HIV-in-the-UK>

Harm reduction

http://www.harmreductionworks.org.uk/safer_injecting.html

Understanding Hep C and assessing risks & causes

[Risks and causes - The Hepatitis C Trust \(hepctrust.org.uk\)](http://www.hepctrust.org.uk/)

Cancer screening

There are many types of cancers and symptoms of each will vary. However the 4 most prevalent types of cancer are; Breast, Lung, Prostate and Bowel. Residents should be advised how to check for signs and symptoms of cancer and supported to contact their GP if they have any concerns.

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

Cervical screening and checking for lumps in the breasts is really important for female residents to do regularly. If over 50, female residents can attend breast cancer screening appointments every three years. Not all female residents will know how to check their breasts for lumps and the HHCP suggests playing a 'Breast exam' video tutorial to clients to show them how to check. Cervical screening tests (SMEAR tests) are facilitated by the GP and female residents should be supported and encouraged to make an appointment when they receive notification from their GP that their test is due.

Testicular cancer: male clients should be regularly encouraged to check their testicles for lumps. Not all male residents will know how to check their testicles for lumps therefore the HHCP suggests playing a 'testicular cancer self-exam' video to show clients how to check.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- **Checking for lumps**
- **Prostate cancer**
- **Breast cancer**
- **Cervical cancer**
- **SMEAR tests and mammograms**

Useful Resources:

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Cancer/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

<http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/type/>

Diabetes

Diabetes is a lifelong condition that causes a person's blood sugar level to become too high. There are two main types of diabetes; type 1 diabetes – where the body's immune system attacks and destroys the cells that produce insulin. Type 2 diabetes – where the body doesn't produce enough insulin, or the body's cells don't react to insulin. Type 2 diabetes is far more common than type 1. In the UK, around 90% of all adults with diabetes have type 2.

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

Diabetes has become more prevalent, and it is important to encourage residents to get checked. Your project may have a qualified diabetes champion who will be able to offer advice and guidance about diabetes. If your project doesn't have a champion and would like one please contact the HHCP Coordinator to discuss this further.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- What is diabetes?
- How to prevent diabetes
- How to get checked

Useful Resources:

General information on diabetes is available at:

- <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/>
- <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/Professionals/Information-support-for-your-patients/Education-Information/>
- <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/Professionals/Diabetes-Risk-Score-assessment-tool/>

Emergency Services

There are several options available to residents who have a health emergency:

- NHS 111
- 999 Emergency Call Out
- Urgent Care Walk-In Centres
- Pharmacist
- GP

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

Clients are most familiar with 999 and often this is the first choice when they are accessing support for an urgent health issue. However, it is important to make residents aware of other services available and who to contact.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- When to call an ambulance/ NHS 111
- A&E or Walk-In/GP/Pharmacy
- CPR with parks police
- First Aid
- Guidance/ potential cost to NHS

Useful Resources:

- <http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/AboutNHSservices/Emergencyandurgentcareservices/Pages/NHS-111.aspx>
- <http://www.londonambulance.nhs.uk/Firstaidguide>
- When to call 999:**
- <http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/AboutNHSservices/Emergencyandurgentcareservices/Pages/responding-to-emergencies-FAQ.aspx>

Eye checks

Regular eye tests are important because eyes don't always hurt when something is wrong. A routine sight test is a vital health check that can pick up early signs of chronic eye conditions before signs of any symptoms - many of these conditions can be successfully treated if identified early.

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

Residents should be encouraged to get their eyes tested every two years. If they have any concerns or notice changes in their vision they should arrange an eye examination immediately. There are many ways of preventing eye problems such as; giving up smoking, becoming more active, eating healthily, drinking alcohol within recommended limits and protecting your eyes from the sun.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- **Sight loss: Conditions**
- **Getting your eyes checked. Physical health service directory [here](#)**
- **Looking after your glasses/contact lenses**
- **Looking after your eyes.**
- **Eyesight and Diabetes**

Useful Resources:

[Opticians and sight tests - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)
<http://www.visioncarecharity.org/>

Flu/Covid/Pneumonia Vaccinations

Flu and Covid-19 are unpredictable viruses that can cause mild or unpleasant illness in most people. It can cause severe illness and even death among vulnerable groups including older people, pregnant women and people with an underlying health condition (including those with an immune-compromised) - for example those with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or emphysema.

Certain people are more likely to develop potentially serious complications of flu, such as acute bronchitis and pneumonia. Thus, these groups are advised to have a flu jab each year and also a seasonal Covid-19 jab. For otherwise healthy people, flu can be very unpleasant. Most people will recover from flu within a week or two. The pneumonia vaccination is offered as part of the childhood vaccinations and to everyone over the age of 65 years. For the majority of adults it is a one-off dose and provides excellent protection for certain types of pneumonia (caused by the bacterium streptococcus).

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

Residents should be informed about the benefits of receiving a flu and Covid-19 vaccination and encouraged to get one from their local GP or pharmacies. At-risk groups (pregnant women and those with pre-existing conditions including COPD, emphysema or asthma) should be supported to make appointments.

Your local pharmacy should offer in-house flu vaccinations, so it worth getting in contact with them around August – November for your vaccinations. Generally, vaccinations are also available for front line staff and volunteers.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- [What is flu/pneumonia/ covid](#)
- **Treatment/ Prevention**
- **Getting vaccinated**

Health Goals/Aspirations

It's great to focus on specific health and wellbeing topics as these provide a great source of information for clients. However, it is also beneficial to host a session on client health goals and aspirations. The re-designed Community Health Assessment Tool form covers health goals and aspirations but hosting a workshop will encourage residents to share their ideas and inspire others. When hosting the workshop ensure residents stick to discussing health and wellbeing goals only (e.g., cut down on salt) and avoid discussions around general life goals (e.g. getting a job).

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

Our residents can become focused on employment/education and moving on and often health and wellbeing can become neglected. Asking residents to think about their own health and wellbeing goals will encourage them to shift their focus. This may empower them to make changes to lead a healthier lifestyle, therefore reducing the risk of long term health conditions such as diabetes.

Turning Point Health trainers are an excellent resource when it comes to supporting clients to achieve health and wellbeing goals. It's worth getting in contact with them and asking them to run a health aspiration session.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- Encourage residents to think about their own health goals and aspirations using a variety of media – competition/presentations.
- Use Healthy goal template to put together plans
- Set deadlines.

Key Contacts:

[One you health trainers](#)

Healthy Feet

Research from The College of Podiatry shows that nine in 10 of us experience some sort of foot problem with one in five admitting to suffering with foot pain often or constantly. This is because feet take the weight of our whole body, so foot problems can quickly lead to discomfort and affect the way we walk.

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

Residents should be encouraged to look after their feet as poor foot care can lead to knee, hip and back pain. It is easy for residents to look after their feet and it is worth sharing foot care top tips with residents to encourage them to do so.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- **Top Tips for healthy feet – cutting toe-nails, washing feet.**
- **Foot hygiene summer and winter / foot care and diabetes**

If you have the budget it's worth considering giving out new pairs of socks as an incentive or even hosting a foot hygiene session where residents can wash/soak their feet in their own bowls of warm soapy water and are shown how to cut their toenails. If you contact Lush (Oxford Street/Westfield) they may even donate some free foot wash/cream. Podiatry service details available in the **HHCP Physical health service directory** [here](#)

Useful Resources:

[The Royal College of Podiatry \(rcpod.org.uk\)](http://rcpod.org.uk)

[Foot care | People First \(peoplefirstinfo.org.uk\)](http://peoplefirstinfo.org.uk)

Healthy Sleep

One in three of us suffer from poor sleep, with stress and technology often blamed. However, the cost of sleepless nights is more than just bad moods and a lack of focus. Regular poor sleep puts you at risk of serious medical conditions, including obesity, heart disease and diabetes – and it shortens your life expectancy.

Most of us need around eight hours of good-quality sleep a night to function properly – but some need more and some less.

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

Residents should be informed of the long-term risks of poor sleep and should be encouraged to review negative sleeping patterns/cycles and amend these wherever possible.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- Importance of a good night's sleep
- Adapting your environment
- Sleep apnoea/snoring/insomnia and night terrors
- Relaxation techniques

Useful Resources:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/tiredness-and-fatigue/Pages/medical-causes-of-tiredness.aspx>

<https://sleepfoundation.org/ask-the-expert/sleep-hygiene>

<http://www.sleepeducation.org/essentials-in-sleep/healthy-sleep-habits>

General information about sleep can be found at: [Sleep problems - Every Mind Matters - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

Hearing Tests

The key to keeping your hearing healthy is knowing how much loud sound you're exposed to. A 'noise diet' can protect your hearing from future problems. Most cases of deafness are caused by damage to the tiny hair cells in the inner ear. This damage can be caused by too much noise, and it's permanent. Noise-related hearing loss is usually irreversible. It is important that we all take steps to prevent noise-related damage. The key to keeping your hearing intact is to avoid loud noise. The louder the sound, the less time you can safely listen to it. Just because a sound isn't annoying doesn't make it safe.

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

Residents who listen to loud music in their rooms or via headphones are more at risk of hearing impairment. Hearing loss is irreversible. Therefore, it is important to inform residents how to protect their hearing. If they are concerned about their hearing, they can access hearing tests via their local GP. Action on Hearing Loss is a national charity designed to help and support people experiencing hearing problems (more information available at: [Overview - Action on Hearing Loss - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)).

Remember one of the most common reasons for reduced hearing is impacted wax. Your local GP will have information about how to remove this – either using sodium bicarbonate drops or possibly a referral to local hearing specialists/pharmacies/specsavers who can also remove wax.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- Looking after your hearing
- Types of hearing loss
- Managing hearing loss
- Where to get your hearing tested

Useful Resources:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/hearing-problems/Pages/hearing-problems.aspx>

Heart Health

Coronary heart disease (CHD) is the UK's biggest killer, causing around 66,000 deaths every year. CHD can be prevented with a healthy lifestyle. Clients should be encouraged to; stop smoking, maintain healthy weight, eat a healthy and balanced diet and keep active.

There are some things that clients won't be able to change and that will put them at greater risk, such as: a family history of heart disease/ stroke, ethnic background (risk to African Caribbean is greater) and age, the likelihood of heart disease increases as you grow older.

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

Residents should be informed of the risks of leading unhealthy lifestyles and given tips and advice about how to prevent heart disease. Temporarily housed vulnerable adults are more likely to live unhealthy lifestyles, so should be encouraged to eat a healthy and balanced diet, get active and maintain an active lifestyle and maintain a healthy weight. The British Heart Foundation has lots of free online resources that can be used as interactive tools when hosting sessions about heart health.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- **Keeping your heart healthy**
- **Heart disease**
- **Local services;** Healthy Hearts, Health Trainers, British Heart Foundation

Useful Resources:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Healthyhearts/Pages/lifestylechanges.aspx>
[Healthcare professionals - BHF](#)
[Thrive tribe](#)

HHCP Monthly and Annual Events

The HHCP provides various methods to support clients to think about their health and wellbeing. These include the annual health and wellbeing conference and monthly health promotion session ran by the fantastic HHCP volunteers.

Annual Health and Wellbeing Conference: The annual health and wellbeing conference is organised and facilitated by the HHCP and is designed to engage and educate hostel residents and clients who are hard to engage. The conference hosts interactive health activities, quizzes, games and prizes to encourage clients to think more widely about their health and wellbeing.

Monthly Events: The HHCP coordinates health and wellbeing events at services – health promotion volunteers are recruited to support these. If your service currently does not have HHCP volunteers running monthly sessions and you would like them to start, please contact Anna Midgley.

Key Contacts:

Anna Midgley, HHCP Coordinator: anna.midgley@groundswell.org.uk

Liver Disease

There are more than 100 different types of liver disease, which together affect at least 2 million people in the UK. Liver disease doesn't usually cause any obvious signs or symptoms until it's fairly advanced and the liver is irreversibly damaged. At this stage, possible symptoms can include loss of appetite, weight loss and jaundice.

There are 5 specific types of liver disease; Alcohol related liver disease, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, hepatitis, haemochromatosis and Primary Biliary Cirrhosis. Alcohol related liver disease is the most common amongst our clients, therefore it is important to address this with clients.

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

Death rates linked to Alcohol Related Liver Disease (ARLD) have risen considerably over the last few decades. Alcohol is now one of the most common causes of death in the UK, along with smoking and high blood pressure. It is important to bring this to the attention of our clients, especially those who are alcohol dependent and not engaging with support services. Once ARLD reaches the cirrhosis stage it is generally irreversible and as there is no specific medical treatment, the main intervention is to stop drinking.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- **Alcohol and the liver**
- **Stage of alcohol related liver disease**
- **Treatment and Prevention**
- **Getting Checked** – signpost to services

Useful Resources:

[Liver disease - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)
<https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/alcohol-facts/health-effects-of-alcohol/effects-on-the-body/alcohol-and-liver-disease/>
[Alcohol and drug advice and info from Change Grow Live](#)
Telephone: 0800 014 7440 (Change Grow Live)

Mindfulness

Mindfulness means knowing directly what is going on the inside and outside ourselves moment by moment. It's not for everyone but it can help us become more aware of the stream of thoughts and feelings we experience. It also helps us to see how we become more entangled in negative thought patterns which is detrimental to our wellbeing. It is a good idea to discuss relaxation techniques when conducting a session on mindfulness as these complement one another well.

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

Most residents will have issues that they find hard to let go and mindfulness can support them to deal with these issues more productively. It is important to encourage residents to recognise negative thought patterns. Awareness of this kind can help to notice signs of stress and anxiety earlier and help residents deal with them better

Suggested Content to Cover:

- **What is mindfulness?**
- **How mindfulness helps mental wellbeing**
- **How to be more mindful**
- **Mindfulness practices and top tips**

Useful Resources:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/mindfulness.aspx#helpful>
<http://www.backontrack.nhs.uk/workshops/mindfulness-meditation/>

[10 top tips for good mental health | People First \(peoplefirstinfo.org.uk\)](#)

Nutrition/Healthy Eating and Cooking

Good nutrition is vital for the health and wellbeing of our residents. It's particularly important for someone recovering from an illness to ensure they have a healthy balanced diet. It's important to note that clients who are not getting enough nutrients may not respond well to medical treatment.

There are lots of useful resources available to our clients. The British Heart Foundation healthy plate or the Eat Well Guide is an excellent visual tool to show clients a balanced diet. Public Health England have also produced an eat well guide which is accessible via the links below. Cooking healthy meals with clients is an excellent way to encourage healthy eating whilst keeping the session fun and interactive.

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

Good nutrition is key to a healthy lifestyle and good health. Due to the number of fast-food options available to our clients and the ease of ordering rather than making, clients often opt for fast food which is full of fats, sugars and ultra-processed foods (UPFs). Some clients don't have confidence to cook and some residents simply don't know how.

It's important to discuss the importance of healthy balanced diets with residents to ensure they are leading healthy lifestyles and to prevent risk of long-term health conditions.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- 5 a day / healthy food plate
- Healthy cooking / healthy meal ideas on a budget
- 3 meals a day/ keeping hydrated
- Eating Disorders – Symptoms and Treatment

Useful Resources:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide>
<https://www.bhf.org.uk/heart-matters/healthy-eating-toolkit/eatwell-plate>

Oral health / Dental registration

Taking care of your general health and your mouth is the key to making the most of your smile. Brushing teeth twice a day with toothpaste and having regular check-ups with a dentist can help to keep your teeth healthy. Diets, smoking and drinking alcohol can affect dental health. Poor oral health can lead to gum disease and other health conditions. Gum disease (periodontitis) may increase your risk of all kinds of other health complications, including stroke, diabetes and heart disease. Gum disease, which has a genetic component, has even been linked with problems in pregnancy and dementia.

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

Dental registration is on the decline and the reasons clients refuse to register or go to the dentist range from fear of the dentist to resident's not viewing oral health as a priority, as well as the continuing difficulties in finding an NHS dentist. Therefore it is important clients are made aware of the importance of registering with a dentist. The CLCH community dental team are available to deliver key oral health workshops within your service, as well as addressing client fears.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- How to brush teeth properly
- What happens when you don't look after your teeth
- Oral health quiz
- Free toothbrush/toothpaste samples
- Addressing fears

Useful Resources:

<http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/dentalhealth/Pages/Dentalhome.aspx>

Key Contacts:

Alison Fraser, CLCH Community Dental Services

Alison.Fraser@clch.nhs.uk

Respiratory Health / Smoking Cessation

Cigarette smoke, air pollution (vehicle fumes) and occupational dusts and fumes damage our lungs. If lungs are damaged it can lead to breathlessness. Certain chronic conditions like asthma can already affect how the lungs function. Many of our clients smoke or use addictive substances therefore putting their lungs at risk of further damage. Our lungs are not just effected by the air we breathe outdoors but also by the air we breathe indoors, therefore it is important to keep rooms well aired, treat damp immediately, use an extractor fan when cooking and wipe down windowsills daily to keep condensation down.

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

Poor respiratory health can lead to various lung conditions ranging from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease to lung cancer. Clients who smoke should be encouraged to access smoking cessation services and remember it is never too late to stop smoking.

If they're cutting down they should be asked to smoke outside of building/rooms. The British Lung Foundation has lots of useful information about lung conditions and keeping lungs healthy. It is important to teach residents the risks of not looking after their lungs and encourage them to take the breath test (found on the BLF website, link below).

Suggested Content to Cover:

- Healthy lungs – how to look after your lungs
- Respiratory health conditions / Take the breath test
- Smoking cessation
- Local services
- Stop smoking advisor training

Useful Resources:

<https://www.blf.org.uk/>

[Free stop smoking service in London \(kick-it.org.uk\)](http://kick-it.org.uk)

Sexual Health

Sexual health is a large and varied topic and many clients will not consider their sexual health a priority. Some residents inevitably are not sexually active so don't need to attend sexual health awareness sessions. This may be true but sexual health doesn't just cover safe sex, STDs and contraception, it also covers respect and relationships, genital hygiene and genital health. If you have a client who has concerns, we advise you to refer them to their GP in the first instance. For those needing a more specialist service – Dean Street may be more appropriate ([Welcome to 56 Dean Street - STI Screening, PrEP and HIV Services](#))

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

Sexual health is still a rather taboo subject amongst some client groups and can be the hardest topic to tackle. However, it's extremely important. A great way of breaking the ice with clients/starting off a workshop is showing short video clips of TV programmes such as 'Naked Attraction' or 'Embarrassing Bodies'. There may be a few giggles but it gets people talking and allows you to guide the conversation towards more serious content.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- Genital hygiene
- Signs and symptoms of STD's/ How to prevent them
- Respect and relationships
- [Signposting to services](#)

Useful Resources:

[Sexual Health & HIV Services — Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust \(chelwest.nhs.uk\)](#)

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Sexualhealthtopics/Pages/Sexual-health-hub.aspx>

<http://dean.st/>

Sickle Cell

Sickle cell disease is the name for a group of inherited conditions that affect the red blood cells. Sickle cell disease mainly affects people of African, Caribbean, Middle Eastern, Eastern Mediterranean and Asian origin. In the UK, it's particularly common in people with an African or Caribbean family background. People with sickle cell disease produce unusually shaped (like a sickle) red blood cells that can cause problems because these cells have a shorter natural life, so on breakdown – they cause clots and result in poor oxygen supply to end organs (causing much pain). The 3 complications of Sickle cells disease are anaemia, infection and painful episodes ('crises'). Sickle cell disease is a serious and lifelong condition, although long-term treatment can help manage many of the problems associated with it. Importantly, since 2022 there is a new form of treatment designed to reduce crises and more information about this is available at

<http://sicklecellsociety.org/>

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

A large percentage of our clients groups are of African, Caribbean, Middle Eastern, Eastern Mediterranean and Asian origin. It is therefore important to discuss sickle cell disease with our clients, informing them of signs/symptoms and advising them to request a routine test from their GP if they have concerns.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- What is Sickle Cell Disease
- Symptoms/Causes
- Screening/testing
- Treatments

Useful Resources:

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Sickle-Cell-Anaemia/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

<http://sicklecellsociety.org/>

SPICE

Spice is a type of synthetic cannabis, which is sold under names such as 'Kronic', 'Blue Cheese', 'Black Mamba', and 'Pineapple Express'. Under the Psychoactive Active Bill (2016) it is an offence to produce and supply Spice, however, it is still legal to consume for personal use. Spice is highly addictive (a problem not normally associated with cannabis) and the side effects can be dangerous and even deadly (including heart palpitations, chest pains, hallucinations and physical aggression). There is currently no treatment available for Spice addiction.

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

Spice is prevalent in the homeless sector, particularly Westminster and Camden. There is no consistency between the potency of the batches of Spice – use of the same brand can result in variable and unpredictable effects. Although there isn't a specific treatment available for Spice, local substance use services can work with individuals if they wish to stop using Spice.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- What is Spice?
- Signs and symptoms of Spice use
- [Videos illustrating the effects](#)
- Advice for people who use synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists
- [Local substance-use services](#)

Useful Resources:

[Information on The Effects & Causes of Spice Addiction | UK Rehab \(uk-rehab.com\)](#)

[Synthetic cannabinoids \(Spice\) | NHS inform](#)

Key Contacts:

Peter Burleigh, Drug and Alcohol Wellbeing Service

Peter.Burleigh@turning-point.co.uk

Stroke

A stroke is a serious, life-threatening medical condition that occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off. The best way to help prevent a stroke is to eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly and avoid smoking and drinking too much alcohol. If you have been diagnosed with high blood pressure (hypertension) and given medication – it's really important to keep on taking the tablets. Untreated hypertension is a major cause of stroke in the UK. Strokes can be fatal and 1 in every 4 people who has a stroke will die. New treatments are available for those suffering an acute stroke and if suspected – an ambulance should be called since these treatments are strictly time-dependent. If identified early and taken to a centre where such treatments are available the results can be astonishing. Without such treatments – there may well be long term health problems and patients are likely to have to go through a long period of rehabilitation. The Stroke Association also has lots of information and useful resources, so it is worth getting in contact with them (see other links below).

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

Clients often associate strokes with old age, but they can happen at any age. Therefore it is important that clients take steps to prevent the risk of stroke. It is important to advise clients to maintain a healthy balanced diet, exercise regularly and avoid/cut down on smoking and drinking wherever possible.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- What is a stroke
- Risk factors
- Reducing the risk of stroke
- Effects and treatment

Useful Resources:

[Stroke - Causes, signs & symptoms - BHF](#)
[Stroke - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)
[Home Page | Stroke Association](#)

Stress Less

Everyone will experience stress at some point of their life. Anxiety is a normal reaction to the fight or flight response – the biological reaction to feeling threatened. When experiencing high levels of stress over several months it may be suitable to discuss this with a GP or another health professional to get extra support. Alternatively, advice on how to manage anxiety levels maybe suitable.

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

To increase knowledge of self-help methods to reduce stress and signpost to support organisations.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- Causes of anxiety
- Symptoms of anxiety and anxiety behaviours
- Anxiety disorders and panic attacks
- Self-care for anxiety
- Treatments and signposting

Useful Resources:

<http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/anxiety-and-panic-attacks/about-anxiety/?o=6272#.V6xvuxH2bcs>

[About Anxiety - Anxiety UK](#)

<http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/anxiety.htm>

<http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/AnxietySelfHelp.pdf>

<http://www.cnwltalkingtherapies.org/>

[Mental Health and Homelessness Resources | Homeless Link](#)

Great Chapel Street Homeless Counselling Service:

<http://www.greatchapelst.org.uk/opening-times/>

Other mental health services:

<https://groundswell.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Mental->

Substance Use Services

The links between drug and alcohol abuse and homelessness are well established. Drugs and alcohol are both known to be a cause and consequence of homelessness. There are many potential harms associated with substance use including; impairing the person's ability to safely and competently make decisions, deteriorating health and accidental death.

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

Substance use services were restructured in April 2016, therefore it is important to provide the correct signposting to new services (Change Grow Live and Drugs and Wellbeing Service). If service users are not ready to address their addiction a harm reduction approach may be appropriate. Although research illustrates most homeless people who have a substance use issue and want support seem to be receiving it, around 30% of homeless people that receive support said they would like more.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- [Substance use services](#)
- [Impact of alcohol use on mental health](#)
- [Impact of drug use on health](#)
- [Harm reduction for alcohol use](#)
- [Basic harm reduction for drug use \(see Spice section also\)](#)

Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) is a bacterial infection spread through inhaling tiny droplets from the coughs or sneezes of an infected person. Symptoms of tuberculosis include a persistent cough (including coughing blood), weight loss, night-sweats and a loss of appetite. It is a serious respiratory condition that can be cured with treatment – so long as it is identified. The longer it takes to identify, the more damage done to the lungs and medication may be needed for longer than the routine six months (close monitoring is always required – usually by a specialist in TB).

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

TB finds its niche in poverty and its associated features – for example substance-abuse, poor housing and chaotic lives. Having a low standard of living and a weak immune system increases the chance of the infection. The Find and Treat TB van visits most homeless services every 6 months and it is important that clients are screened as they live in a high-risk environment.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- Key facts
- Symptoms of TB
- For any cough lasting longer than 3 weeks – please consult an HHCP or your GP
- Types of TB
- Treatment and drug resistance
- Getting checked on the Find and Treat Van every 6 months

Useful Resources:

[TB facts](#)

<https://www.blf.org.uk/support-for-you/tuberculosis>

[TB incidence and epidemiology in England, 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGZLkRN76Dc>

Key Contacts:

TB Outreach Nurse: Juanita Juanita.Hector@imperial.nhs.uk

UTI's (Urinary Tract Infections)

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are common infections that can affect the bladder, the kidneys and the tubes connected to them. Anyone can get them, but they're particularly common in women. Some women experience them regularly (called recurrent UTIs). UTIs can be painful and uncomfortable, but usually pass within a few days and can be easily treated with antibiotics.

UTIs occur when the urinary tract becomes infected, usually by bacteria. In most cases, bacteria from the gut enter the urinary tract through the urethra. This may occur when wiping your bottom or having sex, for example, but often it's not clear why it happens.

The following may increase the risk of getting a UTI; conditions that obstruct your urinary tract such as kidney stones, difficulty emptying your bladder, using a contraceptive diaphragm or condoms coated in spermicide, diabetes, a weak immune system, a urinary catheter, an enlarged prostate gland in men.

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

If left untreated, upper UTI's can spread to the kidneys causing damage and, in some circumstances, can spread to the blood stream. Symptoms of UTI's can sometimes be hard to spot and clients will not always associate their symptoms with a UTI. It's important for clients to be made aware of the symptoms of UTI's and how to access treatment.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- What is a UTI
- Causes and Treatment
- How can I prevent one

Useful Resources:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Urinary-tract-infection-adults/Pages/Introduction.aspx>
<https://www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org/bladder/>

Winter Health

Keeping warm over the winter months can help prevent colds, flu or more serious health conditions such as heart attacks, strokes, pneumonia and depression. The chances of these problems are higher if you're vulnerable to cold-related illnesses because of one or more of the following:

- you're over 65
- you're on a low income (so can't afford heating)
- you have a long-term health condition, such as heart, lung or kidney disease
- you are disabled

Why it's important to talk about this with clients:

It's important to advise clients how to take care of themselves during the winter period to prevent colds, flu or more serious health conditions. The NHS live well has some excellent hints, tips and advice on how to keep well over the winter period. Health authorities in the form of integrated Care Boards (ICBs) also host a keep well this winter campaign so it is worth keeping an eye out for notifications about this. We also advise clients and staff to get a flu vaccination, you can find more information about this on the flu/pneumonia vaccination page in this leaflet.

Suggested Content to Cover:

- Keeping warm
- Vaccinations
- Keeping your room warm
- Healthy winter foods

Useful Resources:

[British Heart Foundation's tips](#)
[Groundswell's Winter Health guide](#)