



AMH – leading the way in mental health community services

We are a voice for one of the most marginalised and vulnerable groups in our society. We welcome the positive steps that have been taken and the progress that has been made in the field of Mental Health and Learning Disability by the Executive in the past 4 years. It is essential to maintain momentum for change and it is important that AMH plays a part in building upon this to develop modern, responsive mental health services.

Harness our experience, expertise and capacity for innovation by investing and supporting our organisation and our work.

Within Northern Ireland:

“One in six of the population have a mental health need at any one time”.

(NIAMH 2009 “A Flourishing Society: Aspirations for Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Northern Ireland”).

Action Mental Health aims to enhance the quality of life and the employability of people with mental health needs or a learning disability. At AMH we provide our clients with many opportunities. We encourage them to adopt a healthier lifestyle and to widen their social networks. We also provide them with the skills to build a better future, set personal goals, develop coping skills, re-engage with society and become more employable.



"We are a voice for one of the most marginalised and vulnerable

- We are committed to promoting positive health and wellbeing.
- We are supporting our clients to lead independent lives by providing services that meet their needs.
- We are enabling them to build a positive and meaningful future.
- We are promoting the positive links between health and work and helping people with mental health issues to find and stay in employment.
- We create opportunities for our clients to develop confidence and skills in a work environment through employment programmes, volunteering and supported placements.
- We continually challenge the stigma which surrounds mental ill-health.

groups in our society."

Action Mental Health is calling on the Northern Ireland Executive to:

1. Help us sustain our future

Uncertainty about funding makes it impossible to plan for the future and to determine what level of services AMH can provide to some of the most vulnerable people in society. We need secure and certain funding streams to continue to deliver vital services. Give us that certainty and help us sustain our future.

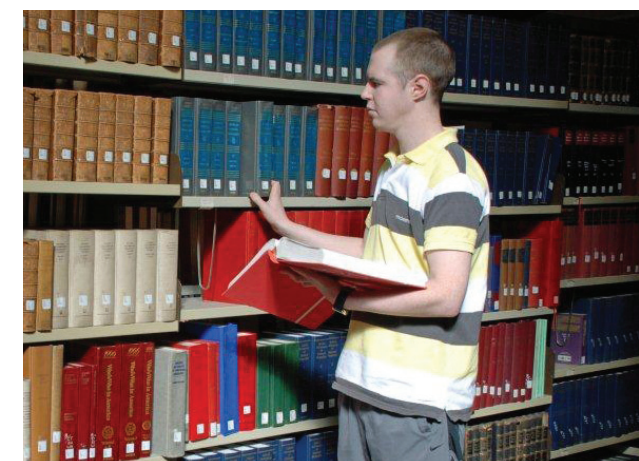


2. Let us do what we do best

Action Mental Health can provide life-changing services to people with mental health difficulties in a professional and cost-effective way. Let AMH do what it does best in supporting the recovery of people with mental health and learning disability needs.

3. Lead by example

The public sector, including Government Departments, needs to lead by example in promoting positive mental health at every opportunity. They need to lead the charge in combating stigma, putting in place mental health awareness programmes and policies in the workplace and offering work placements to people with mental health needs.



Who are Action Mental Health?

We are Northern Ireland's leading mental health charity, in existence since 1963. Our mission is to enhance the quality of life and employability of people with mental health needs.

Everyone has mental health. Mental health is perhaps best explained as how well we cope with daily life and the challenges it brings. Early in 2011, Minister Michael McGimpsey estimated that 280,000 people in Northern Ireland are affected by mental health problems.

Action Mental Health works on the front line with individuals suffering from mental health problems, providing people with the support needed in their recovery. We provide personal development programmes, vocational training and employment opportunities to more than 1,700 people each year.

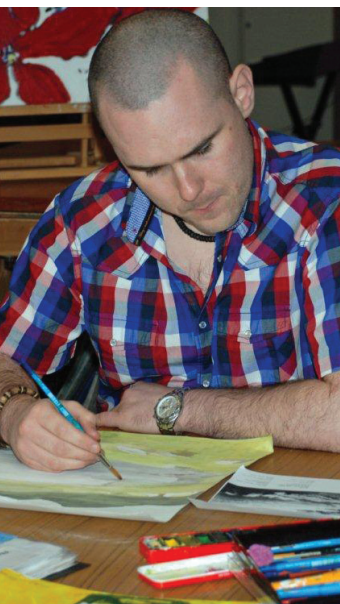
Our services change lives, as demonstrated in these quotes from our clients:

- "I'm now back living with my family, in paid employment, and most importantly I look forward to each day".
- "I am able to go into work and enjoy it again. To be able to do a good job is really fulfilling".
- "AMH has transformed my life".

Our services are cost effective:

- Our New Horizons project costs almost 39% less than the Northern Ireland average daily costs for statutory day care per participant.
- In 2008-09 AMH helped 73 people with mental health problems gain competitive paid employment, saving the exchequer almost £350,000 in benefit withdrawal and contributing over £880,000 to the economy in wages.

Mental health is not just a health issue. It demands attention across all Government Departments.



Help us sustain our future

Much of the funding which allows us to deliver services, and enables many of our clients to recover and find employment, comes from the European Social Fund (ESF), through DEL. This funding has in previous rounds been matched by our local HSC Trusts.



The recent 25% reduction in ESF funding could result in 500 fewer mental health clients accessing training and employment services; 1,000 fewer accredited qualifications will be awarded and fewer clients will get into employment. We have yet to hear how the shortfall in the health budget will affect our match funding, but this could be reduced as well.

The impact of the recession on AMH services is already being felt, with an increase in referrals. Many of the effects of recession – repossessions, money problems and unemployment – are well known triggers for mental health problems. The belief among social care, the NHS and voluntary sector organisations is that this demand will only continue to increase.

Despite an increase in demand, cuts to our services will mean we will have to turn more people away. These people will be living with mental health conditions without the help and support they need.

If we are to continue to work for the growing number of people affected by mental ill-health, and provide the level of services we pride ourselves on, we need support, and we need certainty.



"AMH has transformed my life."

Let us do what we do best

Since 1963, AMH has focused on the link between work and good mental health. Our strapline almost 50 years ago was “through work to health”. Over the years we have maintained that ethos, whilst developing our services to reflect the changing needs and aspirations of our clients.

Through advocating a ‘person-centred’ approach to mental health, AMH ensures the highest quality of service and best outcomes for clients. Our commitment to high standards and continuous improvement have been consistently recognised with numerous awards. More importantly, we consistently see people pass through our programmes and return to work and positive mental health. Our services are streamlined, efficient and cost-effective.

*“We must work better together
if we are to deliver modern*

Independent research by the University of Ulster (2010) has shown that out-sourcing day care to AMH has saved DEL and the HSC Trusts almost £7.5m in the past three years. AMH programmes can reduce the impact on acute mental health services. Our services also allow people to overcome mental illness and go back to work, reducing economic inactivity and the benefit burden on the state.

We must work better together if we are to deliver modern mental health services. AMH is committed to working in genuine partnership across all sectors to ensure that this is achieved.

Given our extensive experience and passion for our work, we at AMH believe that we are well placed to meet the changing needs of people living with mental ill health.

Let us do what we do best.



Lead by example



Action Mental Health are calling on the public sector, the largest employer in Northern Ireland, to take the lead in promoting positive mental health in the work place.

Every day, one worker in six will be experiencing a mental health difficulty, most commonly depression or anxiety. Mental distress is a fact of life and it can affect anyone in any workplace.

Misunderstandings about mental ill-health remain a major barrier to equality and action must continue to tackle stigma throughout our society. Challenging the stigma of mental health has long been a priority of AMH, and nowhere is this more important than in the workplace.

mental health services.”

Anxiety, depression and stress are estimated to be the cause of more working days lost than any other work-related illness, leading to significant operational and financial problems for employers. What Northern Ireland needs is a more proactive, preventative and supportive approach to mental health. We need effective mental health awareness programmes to ensure that our workplaces foster positive mental health, and positive attitudes towards mental health. This will encourage people to seek the support they need early, and avoid the potential long-term impact this may have if they remain unsupported.

AMH run training schemes and work-based placements with a view to helping people re-enter the workforce, helping more than 1,700 people each year. With the cooperation of the public sector, these schemes could be extended at little cost, with huge benefit both to the people involved and to the wider economy.



Elaine's Story

It is hard to believe when I look back over the past 5 years where my journey has taken me. I have been in a very dark, black hole, and now, with incredible support from AMH, my life is positive and focused once more.

After spending some time in hospital following a breakdown, my Community Psychiatric Nurse referred me to AMH. At that time I was very fragile, and could not leave the house. I started going to Personal Development courses one morning a week, and at first I had to force myself out the door. I had lost my confidence and faith in everybody and everything. The Personal Development courses became my lifeline and I slowly began to understand my depression more, and learnt how to think about my life experiences in a different way. My attitude became more positive and I began to see change as a good thing. My three daughters, who have been wonderfully supportive throughout, could not believe the change in me. I even did my ECDL which gave me a wonderful sense of achievement.



My decision to go back to work was not an easy one. One of my daughters said "Mum, are you sure you can do this?" and all I could reply was "No, but I'm going to try".

So, I started the Pre-employment course at AMH and, not really knowing which direction I was going, began attending the Job Search Group. Throughout my job search, my Employment Officer supported me; helping identify job opportunities, phoning employers and keeping me focused and my spirits up. It all happened so quickly in the end! I saw an ad in the paper for counter assistants for a new café. AMH made arrangements for the café manager to interview me in AMH, and ran through possible interview questions and techniques. Despite quaking in my boots about the interview, being in the familiar surroundings of AMH helped put me at ease.

I could not believe it when I received a phone call offering me the job!

I love my new job. I enjoy meeting people and chatting to the customers... a far cry from being afraid to go out! What keeps me going? I have no doubt that, in the large part, it is the support I get from my Employment Officer at AMH.

When I have bad days, which I do from time to time, I phone AMH just to talk things over. Just having the security of knowing that I have this support reduces my stress levels greatly and I am holding it together.

I have no doubt that returning to work has been the best thing that has happened to me in quite some time. I have two friends who I met in AMH who, like myself, are back working and they both feel like new women. I don't know what the future holds, but I feel more confident and positive because I have AMH's support, and they are there in the background should I need them.



"The Personal Development courses became my lifeline and I began to understand my depression more."

For more information and contact details: www.amh.org.uk

Our services are part funded by the European Social Fund and The Department for
Employment and Learning under Priority 1 of the N. Ireland ESF Programme 2007 - 2013

