



# SUSSEX MINDFULNESS CENTRE NEWSLETTER

*Issue#5 – March 2016*

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## Mindful Nation UK Launches in Parliament



On the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2015 the Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group (MAPPG), launched the Mindful Nation UK report in Parliament. The aim of the report was to discover how mindfulness could address issues in health, education, the workplace and the criminal justice system. This report gave a number of recommendations, which were based on current research evidence.

The Sussex Mindfulness Centre (SMC) was recognised in the report as a pioneering NHS Trust because the Centre conducts research, offers Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) courses to patients and staff and offers MBCT teacher training.

## Key Findings

The report cited a number of studies showing the effectiveness of MBIs for improving mental and physical health. This was particularly the case for depression. For example, mindfulness has been shown to reduce the risk of relapse by almost half for those with a history of depression and to reduce the severity of depressive symptoms for those currently experiencing depression.

Mindfulness has also successfully reduced stress, anxiety and depression for those with poor physical health. The report cited research that has found mindfulness based self-help material to be helpful for those without mental health problems, suggesting the potential for extending these interventions to non-clinical populations.

One study found that mindfulness resulted in improvements in anxiety, depression and distress in children with a range of mental health diagnoses. There was also an improvement in self-esteem and sleep quality. Three months later, those who practised mindfulness the most showed improved clinician ratings of anxiety and depression.

Comment from a Parliamentarian who attended the mindfulness classes in Westminster:

“For anyone looking to find a way of balancing the often competing demands of home, work, and not least, ourselves, it’s worth their checking out an introduction to mindfulness. Too often we overlook the basics in our lives and need to find a way of connecting with what really matters.”

## Key Recommendations

- More people with recurrent depression and with long-term physical health conditions should have access to MBCT
- There should be more training opportunities for people to learn how to deliver MBCT courses
- NICE should review the evidence of MBIs in the treatment of irritable bowel syndrome, cancer and chronic pain when revising their treatment guidelines
- Studies should investigate MBCT as a relapse prevention intervention for young people with a history of depression to see if similar results are found as those with adults
- Economic outcomes of MBSR for those with physical health conditions should be investigated
- The effectiveness of lower intensity MBIs as preventative interventions for those at a higher risk of developing mental health problems should be explored



### *Interview with Dr Bridgette O'Neill, Consultant Clinical Psychologist and Mindfulness Teacher and Supervisor*

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#### ***You co-wrote the health section of the Mindful Nation Report with Clara Strauss – could you tell us more about how you came to be involved with the Report?***

It was through Rebecca Crane, Director of the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice, that I came to be involved in the report. Becca was my supervisor and knew that I was moving into a transition period in terms of my work role, stepping back from working in a psychology leadership post so that I could focus more on mindfulness in my work.



Becca asked whether I might be interested in being involved in an initiative promoting awareness of mindfulness to policy makers in Westminster; this led to Chris Cullen inviting me to attend the launch of the Mindfulness All Party Parliamentary Group (MAPPG) in May 2014. Chris had been teaching mindfulness to Parliamentarians and their staff through the Oxford Mindfulness Centre since January 2013 and this experience inspired the establishment of the MAPPG, under the leadership of Chris Ruane, former Labour member of Parliament.

#### ***What was the process of writing the health section and what sort of information did you need to gather in order to write it?***

The Mindfulness Initiative (MI) was established to offer clerking support to the Mindfulness All Party Parliamentary Group. Madeleine Bunting, writer and journalist, co-directed the MI

and offered a clear vision from the outset of undertaking an inquiry into the helpfulness of mindfulness in different policy areas.

Myself, Clara Strauss and Kate Cavanagh worked on the health strand and organised two roundtables in Parliament, one focusing on mental health and the other on physical health and staff wellbeing. The roundtables heard evidence from experts in their field and personal testimonies from people who had been helped by mindfulness. These roundtable events served as a starting point to examine the evidence and explore examples of good practice in relation to mindfulness interventions and health.

One challenge of the report was to have a cohesive voice given that different people worked on each section; another was for the report to be grounded in detail and to offer a vision for the future. Madeleine Bunting was the overall editor for the report and worked tirelessly with us and members of the MAPPG to clarify the desired tone and focus of the report. I hope you'll agree that the end result is a high quality, balanced report making realistic recommendations that could make a real difference to people's lives.

***What was the role of the Sussex Partnership NHS Trust and the Sussex Mindfulness Centre in contributing to the report?***

Sussex Partnership and the SMC are considered as pioneering in terms of implementation of MBIs in the NHS. In the report the SMC's MBI programme was praised for its combination of mindfulness research, MBCT courses for service users and staff and its teacher training programme. At the roundtables, staff members and service users from the SMC provided evidence for the benefits of MBIs for wellbeing and mental and physical health.

***How do you see the report influencing local mindfulness services?***

The report offers a clear summary of the evidence for MBIs and specific recommendations in each policy area. This provides an opportunity to review local provision and consider developments. In relation to health, my hope is that the report gives confidence to local mindfulness services to continue to make MBCT available to those who can benefit and to work with commissioners, GPs and other stakeholders to increase the accessibility of MBCT, especially for people struggling with the psychological consequences of physical health difficulties.

Within education, work place and criminal justice settings locally, my hope is that the report inspires further interest in the potential of mindfulness and supports developments while highlighting the need to maintain quality through research and rigorous training of mindfulness teachers.

***What do you believe the next steps should be now for continuing the work of the Mindfulness Initiative and the APPG?***

The Mindful Nation UK report sets out clear recommendations in each policy area and the next steps for the MI and APPG are to work towards the implementation of these recommendations. This requires significant advocacy and awareness raising work.

### ***Finally, how do you think the Sussex Mindfulness Centre should respond to the Report?***

SMC is ahead of many Trusts nationally in terms of having established MBCT provision. The integration within SMC of research and teacher training with clinical practice also provides a level of rigour and integrity. However, relatively speaking, only a small number of those who could benefit are currently accessing MBCT courses locally. The report provides an opportunity for SMC to engage with key stakeholders including GPs and other local healthcare workers, commissioners, health educators and third sector organisations to consider existing provision and interest and opportunities for making MBIs more available to people locally who could benefit.

***Many thanks Bridgette!***

#### ***News and resources***

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You can read the full Mindful Nation UK report by visiting this link:

<http://tinyurl.com/pfsgx9c>

The UK Network Listing for mindfulness-based teachers is now live and you can find details of how to apply at on the UK Network website at: <http://mindfulnesssteachersuk.org.uk>. At that site you find the Good Practice Guidelines (GPGs) for teachers (and the associated FAQs) and the FAQs for the listing application process itself.

Upcoming SMC Master Classes:

- 5th of April 2016: Leading with Compassion with Andy Bradley
- 15th of April 2016: Contemplating Bodyfullness: Using Focusing to establish an 'inner relationship' and to engage the body's experiential response with Greg Madison
- 13-15th May 2016: Teach .b Foundations with Taravajra & Dominic Morris

Click on the following link for more details about the Master Classes

<http://www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/day-retreats-and-drop-ins>

Applications for our 2017 training to deliver MBCT/MBSR and to deliver mindfulness-based interventions will be available via our website in the autumn of this year

#### ***Contact***

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