



# Five Years On: Changing the conversation on mental health

A report from the  
Heads Together Charity Partners

THE MIX



contact



YOUNGMINDS



best  
beginnings



Anna Freud  
National Centre for  
Children and Families

THE  
UBELE  
INITIATIVE



shout  
85258  
here for you 24/7



TAKING  
ACTION  
ADDICTION



charity  
partners

# Introduction

In 2017, The Royal Foundation created **Heads Together**: an ambitious nationwide campaign to change the conversation on mental health. Led by The Prince and Princess of Wales (then Duke and Duchess of Cambridge) and Prince Harry, **Heads Together** brought together a team of inspirational charities, businesses and other organisations to tackle stigma and encourage people to talk about their mental health. It also generated a series of innovative new mental health services and practical tools to make talking about mental health easier.

The launch of Heads Together, culminating in the first ever Mental Health Marathon at the 2017 Virgin Money London Marathon, was a catalyst for change. Thousands of people had conversations about mental health, at work, with their families, and in their communities, many for the first time ever. But our research also showed that 37% of people found it difficult to start a conversation about mental health, and only a minority felt comfortable talking about their own mental health. People reported they were unlikely to talk to their employer about mental health issues, men and older people were less likely to have conversations, and the mental health of young people and of specific communities was of increasing concern. Following the initial campaign success, it was clear more was

needed to support people in the longer term with their mental health – so Heads Together and its charity partners developed a range of innovative legacy programmes, campaigns and tools to do just this.

**“If you’re lonely and struggling, it’s far easier to talk to someone [...] I can’t explain how much having an ear to listen reminds you of the light at the darkest of times, that someone truly cares about you when you feel so small, and the world feels so big.”**

– Feedback from a Heads Together charity partner service user



**“Too often people feel afraid to admit they are struggling with their mental health. This fear stops people from getting the help they need, which can destroy families and end lives.”**

– HRH The Princess of Wales, then Duchess of Cambridge

# Our impact five years on

Now, five years on, and within the context of Covid-19, we have seen big changes in the way people think, act, and speak about mental health. With continued support from The Royal Foundation, Heads Together charity partners have supported people to get the help they need to look after their mental health.

## OUR RESEARCH FIVE YEARS ON SHOWS THAT:

**53% of British adults are now talking about their mental health, which has increased from 42% in April 2017. This means an estimated six million additional people are having conversations about their mental health.**

**Over half of adults (54%) in Britain believe mental health stigma has reduced over the past five years.**



**More people are seeking help for their mental health, including through conversations, with the largest gains seen in men and people in lower socio-economic groups.**

**The proportion of British adults who report performing an activity to look after their mental health went up from 31% to 38%.**

**Large increases were seen in May 2022 in people feeling comfortable talking about their own mental health in the workplace.**

**Millions more people are now talking about their mental health – 11% of the UK adult population.**





# Our impact five years on

## At Work

### Mental Health at Work

A site to support employees and employers with mental health in the workplace – which has had almost 1 million unique visitors. 69% of respondents to a user survey reported that the website had helped them to support their team and colleagues more.

**MENTAL  
HEALTH  
AT WORK**

“The website has grown to be a shining window into addressing mental health in the workplace. These resources will be invaluable to businesses large and small.”



### Blue Light Together

A programme of work which supports UK emergency services staff, volunteers, retirees and families with mental health.



“It was non – judgmental. It was understanding. It has a nice tone to it, it feels right.”

– Emergency services worker, describing Blue Light Together

### Our Frontline

A programme for every frontline and key worker to access 24/7 emotional support during the pandemic.

“The line makes a difference. I have spoken to workers who have been bereaved, anxious, scared and frightened. They have been tired, frustrated, and to just have a voice on the phone to listen to them is hugely powerful.”

– Our Frontline call handler

### HeadFIT

A mental health and fitness platform for defence personnel, which provides tools to improve confidence, mood and stress.



“You saved my life and I am eternally grateful. The text service is so good because it allows people to be open and honest. Thank you, this saved my life so I can save others working as an A&E nurse.”

– Feedback from a Heads Together partner service user

# Our impact five years on

## For anyone that needs to talk

### Shout 85258

A free 24/7 instant text messaging service for anyone experiencing a mental health crisis, set up by **Mental Health Innovations**, a digital mental health charity that Heads Together established. Since 2018, Shout has held over 1.5 million conversations with 540,000 children, young people and adults in need of immediate support, including 18,000 active rescues – where Shout volunteers believe that a texter may be at imminent risk of harm but is not able to call for emergency assistance.

**“The volunteer I spoke to was fantastic. Calmed me down, listened to what I was saying, ensured I had the relevant resources before I left. They quite literally saved my life tonight. Thank you.”**



– Texter feedback



### CALM

Support to suicide prevention charity CALM to ensure that more men know where to turn in a crisis, including through the launch of a chatbot on CALM's website to help meet demand during Covid-19.



**“The service you're providing for people is something else. In a time where the world seems to have crashed, just having someone to talk to really helps.”**

– CALM service user

### Heads Up

A campaign to change the game on mental health, using football as a way to get people talking; particularly designed to encourage men to feel more comfortable talking about their mental health, and more able to support their friends and families through difficult times. This culminated in the landmark Mentally Healthy Football Declaration, signed by 13 major bodies and set to support 1.9 million people.





# Our impact five years on

## Helping the nation during the Covid-19 pandemic

“I’m constantly feeling helpless and frustrated, and hate the idea of anyone around me being hurt or dying. The lockdown is the biggest problem because I rely on being able to see the people I love as a coping mechanism for my anxiety and depression.”

– Mind survey participant, young person

### Heads Together

The Heads Together partners came together once more during Covid-19 to respond to the mental health emergency. Funded by the National Emergencies Trust and The Royal Foundation, 14 charities delivered 22 remote mental health support services. In 6 months over half a million people of all ages and all backgrounds were supported by these digital services.

“I felt listened to. And I felt as though someone was really caring about what I was saying. I didn’t feel rushed and they went at my pace.”

– Helpline user



### Bayo

Launched by new Heads Together partner **Ubele** during the pandemic, is a space to find collectives, organisations and services from across the UK – run by and for the Black community – to support Black people with mental health and wellbeing.



“Through our work with young people, emergency response, homeless charities, and with veterans, we see time and time again that unresolved mental health problems lie at the heart of some of our greatest social challenges.”

– HRH The Prince of Wales, then Duke of Cambridge

# Heads Together legacy

Our research and evidence highlights the nationwide legacy of Heads Together. It extends across our communities, workplaces, schools, armed forces, and wider society.

The support of The Prince and Princess of Wales – from reading stories on CBeebies in Children's Mental Health Week or uniting the UK's football family in a conversation on mental health, to launching **The Mental Health Minute** – a message from world famous voices, now broadcast by every radio station in the UK with an average listenership of 20 million people – has been public, deep and unwavering.

More conversations are being had about mental health, more adults are taking part in activities that help them look after their mental health, people's attitudes are increasingly positive towards mental health and there are more indicators that people will seek help if they need it. Millions have been supported to talk more about mental health, and hundreds of thousands of people have been supported.

However, we know from our research that more young people than ever are reaching out for support with their mental health, many of them acutely unwell. We know that almost half of the UK adult population are still unlikely to have a conversation about mental health. There is still **a lot of work to be done and more action is needed to help prevent a deepening of the mental health crisis facing our country.**

## We must:

- continue our work to break down stigma and show the value of conversations
- do more to understand the barriers that children and young people still face in speaking about their mental health
- do more to reach people that this message may not have reached, for example older men, and people from racially minoritised communities
- ensure that for those that do ask for help, the right support is in place. Our research found that more people are prepared to speak to mental health professionals than ever before; but access to these professionals can be very limited. It is essential that there are accessible and tailored services available for anyone, wherever and whenever they are, to access and benefit from.





# The next five years

**Heads Together – as a campaign, a movement, a collaboration and a long running partnership between mental health charities – has had a huge impact on the lives of people across the UK.** It has played a vital role in responding to ever increasing need. Much has been done, attitudes have been changed, and many people have been supported; lives have been changed and lives have been saved.

**But there remains much to do; the next five years will be as important as the last** in working towards a society where **everyone**, no matter their background, gender, ethnicity, or age, can get the support they need to have good mental health. There are still far too many schools, too many workplaces, too many communities, where people don't have the chance, the tools or the reassurance they need to have conversations about mental health. There are far too many places where people cannot get the support they need. There are still too many people falling through the cracks. Heads Together united the mental health sector to help close those gaps.



**Five years on, the Heads Together charity partners are committed to continuing this work to support every person in the UK, young and old, from every background, to talk about, look after, and get help for, their mental health.**

Click on the logos on the following page to see the ongoing work of the Heads Together charity partners.

## Technical note

On page one of this report and in the section 'Our impact five years on' data and information used is taken from surveys done of British adults, in 2017 and in 2022. In 2017, surveys of British adults were undertaken each month from February to May for the Heads Together campaign. With an average sample size of 2799, the surveys were designed and analysed by Sarah P. Jones of Mental Health Intelligence, with data collection by YouGov. Five years later, in May 2022, a survey of 2,099 British adults containing a subset of those questions was carried out with the aim of comparing results from 2017 to 2022. Data in specific sections (e.g. 'for children, young people and their families', or 'at work') is provided by Heads Together partners working in these specific areas, based on their own user engagement, monitoring, evaluation and research activities.

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Heads Together is a campaign coordinated by The Royal Foundation of The Prince and Princess of Wales,  
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