



## Bob's Blog

### Bracknell Forest's Economic Skills & Development Partnership (ESDP)

October 2022

Welcome to the October 2022 edition of Bob's Blog. My Blog is aimed at keeping ESDP Members up to date with what's happening in the Partnership. Please feel free to pass these Blogs on to your colleagues and contacts if they are interested in the work of the ESDP.

#### ESDP Summer Event:

The ESDP held its Summer Event On 22 September (this Autumn!) at South Hill Park. The event "**Health in Work**" had been postponed from 19 July because of the heatwave - a day that turned out to be the hottest of the year with temperatures exceeding 36 degrees in the Bracknell Forest area. The rescheduled event was a great success with 60 delegates, including the Mayor of Bracknell Forest **Cllr. Ankur Shiv Bhandari** (right), experiencing normal temperatures, three great speakers, superb event stands and the opportunity to get involved in health at work on the day itself!



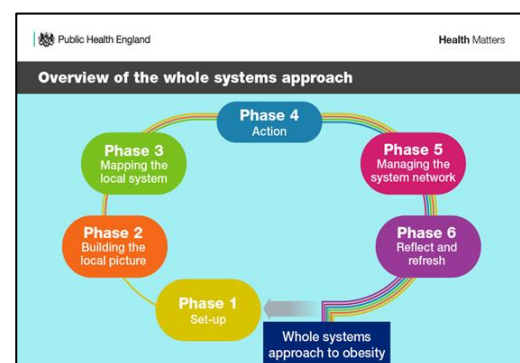
Event stands included displays from the NHS, Eco Rewards, Everyone Active, Solutions4Health, Stepping Stones Recovery College, Sustrans, The Office Massage, Sport in Mind, Everyone Healthy, The University of Southampton and Bracknell Forest Council. There was plenty of interaction with the stands, including the opportunity to have an Office Massage from Paula, test out the latest electric bike and, before lunch, take part in a 'light' exercise session on the South Hill Park lawn led by Alvin Simkins, Fitness Manager from Bracknell Leisure Centre. Many of

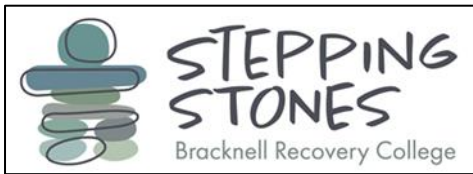
the delegates joined in, despite their office wear and (I think) we all came through it in one piece. Well done Alvin!

Earlier, **Heema Shukla**, Deputy Director Public Health, Bracknell Forest Council, had started proceeding by introducing Bracknell Forest Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026. The Council, with external support commissioned from Southampton University, is addressing obesity through a **whole systems approach**, which includes the setting up of a weight management service.

The Council is relaunching its **Community Map**, improving physical activity offer across all ages and abilities, promoting the **MindEd** training programme on eating disorders with professionals and developing a healthy 'whole schools' programme for promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

It is also developing a **self-harm workforce project** to better understand self-harm, offering mental health awareness training to non-NHS customer facing staff, developing a bespoke Bracknell Forest pledge to reduce mental health stigma and improving physical health of people with mental ill-health by developing an outreach service to reduce health inequalities and premature deaths from smoking and obesity. .





**Bernadette Fisher**, Stepping Stones Recovery College Lead and **Cathy Wilkins**, Business and Fund-Raising Lead, presented the work of the College through their presentation on Wellbeing in the Workplace. They took us through the **Mental Health Continuum** used in the assessment of levels of wellbeing. Seventy million working days are lost annually, costing Britain's employers an estimated £45 billion. Fifty one percent of

employees are not comfortable with talking about mental health concerns with their employer. One in five people take a day off due to stress, and presenteeism has become a major concern – costing businesses twice as much as absenteeism. Poor mental health leads to increased staff turnover, sickness absence, burnout and exhaustion, decreased motivation and lost productivity.

The College's services can help reduce return to office anxiety and provide a positive return to work experience, create positive wellbeing in the work place and build greater resilience, develop emotional intelligence among workforce, train staff in supporting mental health challenges, and provide psychological safety and emotional first aid in the workplace. Stepping Stones Recovery College is now an established part of the Bracknell business community and offers free courses at the college, as well as online, and are beginning to tailor courses to address your specific needs.

**Aaron Curtis**, EHS Lead at 3M, described how 3M had addressed the Covid-19 Pandemic by prioritising business-continuity through employee safety and well-being for all stakeholders. One of their key challenges was to ensure manufacturing employees and key workers were able to remain on site, whilst other employees worked at home. This was achieved through a combination of safety measure, office rotas and collaboration across global teams, and included the appointment of **Disease Prevention Coordinators**.



3M now has '**return to the workplace e-learning**', an employee assistance programme, as well as **Mental Health First Aiders**, flexible working areas, the '**Moments that Matter**' global initiative to encourage employees to return to the office through events such as BBQs, picnics and brunches. 3M has also introduced a '**Work your way**' programme enabling employees to choose where to work from, as well as **Occupational Health Support** for all employees. 3M has been working on its team building, including litter picking, and the re-opening of its gym.

**Sub-Group Activities: The Employment and Skills Sub-Group**, chaired by **Nancy Lalor** of Learning to Work, met on 15 September. The Group has reached a key stage in its flagship project to develop a proposal for a **Skills and Training Hub** to be located in central Bracknell with full-time staff experienced in engaging with businesses, training course providers and trainees. The proposal has now been submitted to Bracknell Forest Council for funding under the **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**. If successful and further funding can be found, the Hub would be set up in 2023 with support from the local authority, the ESDP and the private sector.

The **Infrastructure Sub-Group** met on 27 September. The potential for small businesses to better support the climate change agenda formed a main agenda item, with Bracknell Forest's Climate Change lead **Faith Everett** guiding the discussion. The group also spent time assisting **Victor Nichols** of Henley Business School and Reading University in providing input to a research project aimed at understanding the impact of the Lexicon on Local Businesses.

**Next Partnership Board Meeting:** The next Partnership General Meeting is scheduled to be held on **Tuesday 18 October 2022 at 9.00 am to 11.00 am**. The meeting will be held via **Teams**. Please get in touch with Paula Robertson on at [Paula.Robertson@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:Paula.Robertson@bracknell-forest.gov.uk) to register for the meeting and receive the Teams Link.

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