

Dear Colleagues

I am in conversation with Carol Wilson, Head of Spiritual Care at Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust.

Carol is an instructor in Mental Health First Aid. This international initiative teaches people “how to recognise the signs and symptoms of common mental health issues, provide help on a first aid basis and effectively guide someone towards the right support services”.

The Trust website <https://www.bsmhft.nhs.uk/about-us/mental-health-first-aid/> says “This work was identified as a priority for the Community Engagement Team, as much can be gained from a ‘community asset’ approach, particularly in working with community and voluntary sector organisations, including faith-based organisations, to equip people with knowledge and skills to understand and manage their own mental health and that of those close to them. This is especially important within BME communities, since there are considerable inequalities for these groups in accessing information, support and services.”

Longer courses – one day or two days - are available but I am suggesting that I invite Carol to run a half-day course initially, with a focus on responding practically. This would take place in the meeting room at the Synod Office. There would be a small cost of £15 per person for such a course but ministers could apply for EM3 funding or the cost might be met by the local church or pastorate. Elders in local leadership can apply for support from the Synod training budget.

It would be helpful before going further with planning such an event to have an indication of likely response. (There is a minimum of eight and a maximum of sixteen participants.) Although Carol’s responsibility is for Birmingham and Solihull, the event would be open to all Ministers and Elders in Local Leadership in the Synod, recognising that Carol may not have detailed knowledge of local provision beyond the area in which she works.

Therefore, if you are interested in attending such a session I would be grateful if you would email me to indicate that as soon as possible and by Friday September 14th at the latest.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes

Stuart

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