Stories

These are true stories illustrating how churches have helped people affected by their own or their loved one's mental illness. Names have been changed.

Are there ways that your church can respond? If you are involved in offering support, formal or informal, ask people to share their experiences (being sensitive for the need for confidentiality). If you have people in church who work in health care and community projects to do with mental health ask them to talk about what they do.

Offer prayers of thanksgiving for all that is done and intercession for those who need more help and support.

Jean's Story

Jean is a member at our church. She would disappear for weeks on end and we really worried about her. She did not answer her door and we assumed that she had gone away. Eventually we found out that Jean was suffering from agoraphobia and couldn't leave her home or cope with visitors. We kept praying for Jean and putting church newsletters and notices through her door. The times when she is well enough to be with us she tells us how much this matters. We are learning to give her space and try to be sensitive in the questions we ask.

Sally's Story

Sally was very happy when she found she was pregnant with her first baby. Things seemed to go really well but a few weeks after Olivia was born Sally didn't seem to be coping. Our Minister wondered if she was suffering with post natal depression and was able to spend time with Sally offering support and encouraged people at church to help baby-sit from time to time. We couldn't help deal with the medical cause of Sally's depression but we were able to help out whilst she had treatment and began to get better. The baby's baptism was a really special time and included thanksgiving for Sally's health.

Winston's Story

Winston has a son called Wes who is very unwell. He's been diagnosed as suffering from schizophrenia. Winston didn't tell anyone at church for ages but finally felt able to tell his pastoral visitor. It turns out that there are a lot of families in our neighbourhood with children coping with this illness. So we've set up a club called 'Time Out'. There's a lot on offer in our community for those with mental health problems but little support for their families. So we open our church for a morning and an evening a week, serving coffee and providing space for people to share how things are for them.

Not Alone