

# The OCD Newsletter



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## **Welcome to the OCD Service Newsletter**

This newsletter is the first from the OCD services in Cardiff and Vale University Health Board. We hope that the newsletter will give people an idea of the range of OCD services available locally. We also hope that the newsletter will give a space for people with OCD to share their stories and connect with one another.

In this edition of the newsletter, we discuss the different forms that OCD can take, we introduce current OCD services available within Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and hear from service users and staff about some of their experiences. We also provide some resources should people be struggling with the additional pressures of coronavirus at this current time.

Thank you to everyone that has contributed to this edition!

## **Where to find us!**

We hope to put together a newsletter twice a year and plan to distribute the newsletter in Community Mental Health Teams, GP surgeries, Primary Mental Health Support Services and online:

<https://cavuhb.nhs.wales/> (use this link and search 'OCD pathway')

Hello from Sam 😊

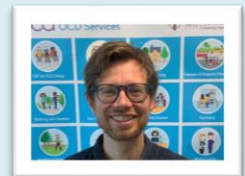
Hello, my name is Sam and I am an assistant psychologist working with the OCD service for one day per week. I will be putting together the newsletter for the OCD Pathway.

If you have any ideas or want to get involved, please don't hesitate to contact me 😊



Hello from Will 😊

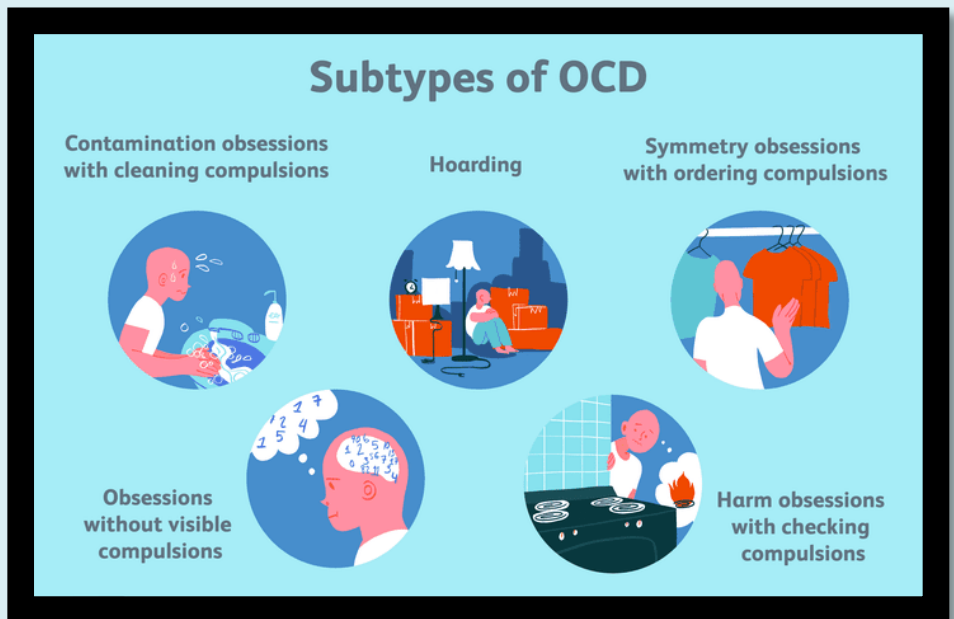
I am a clinical psychologist working in OCD services. I have a long interest in helping people with anxiety disorders and am also assisting Sam with the newsletter. I am always keen to learn more about the experiences of people with OCD and hope we can use this newsletter to give people with OCD a voice on this.



## Subtypes of OCD

In this first newsletter we thought it would be useful to describe some of the different forms OCD can take. This information may be particularly beneficial for people who are new to services and are unsure whether the difficulties they experience are part of OCD.

\*Copied from Verywellmind.com



If you think you have OCD and are struggling with this, please contact your GP. You may also find our self-help booklet useful.

<https://cavuhb.nhs.wales/> (use this link and search 'OCD self help')

### **Obsessions without Visible Compulsions**

This subtype relates to unwanted obsessions surrounding sexual, religious or aggressive themes. The person may avoid situations for the fear they could act on obsessions or use mental rituals such as reciting words and counting to relieve anxiety.

### **Symmetry Obsessions with Ordering, Arranging and Counting**

When experiencing this type of OCD, people feel a strong need to arrange and rearrange objects until they are "just right." This can also involve thinking or saying sentences or words over and over again until the task is accomplished perfectly. Sometimes these ordering, arranging, and counting compulsions are carried out to ward off potential danger.

### **Contamination Obsessions with Washing or Cleaning**

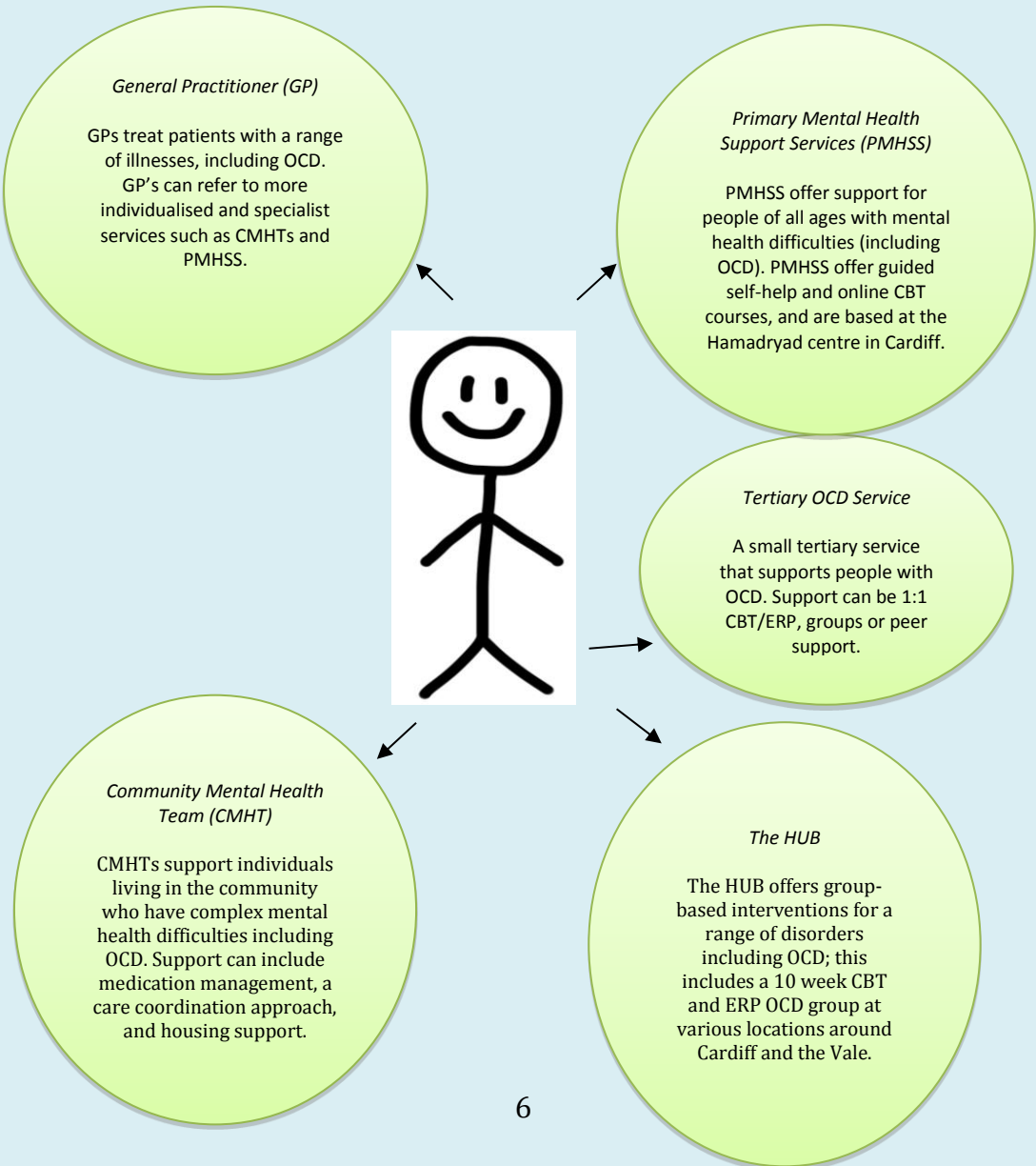
The person will usually focus on feelings of discomfort associated with contamination and wash or clean excessively to reduce these feelings of distress e.g. someone may feel they are going to contract HIV/aids.

### **Harm Obsessions with Checking Compulsions.**

The person will often have intense thoughts related to possible harm to themselves or others and use checking rituals to relieve the distress.

## OCD Services

Below is a diagram that explains the different OCD services available in Cardiff and Vale University Health Board:



*Your GP can refer you to PMHSS or the CMHT who can then refer to the hub or tertiary OCD service.*

### **Glossary of Terms**

#### ***OCD – Obsessive Compulsive Disorder***

A common mental health condition in which an individual may experience obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviours.

#### ***CBT – Cognitive Behavioural Therapy***

A widely used approach that helps people challenge the thoughts that keep problems going.

#### ***ERP – Exposure and Response Prevention***

Refers to a technique where a person exposes themselves to a thought, object or situation which causes anxiety whilst choosing to *prevent* themselves from engaging in their usual behaviours.

## ***The HUB OCD Group***

The Therapies Hub run a 10-week CBT for OCD group at various locations across Cardiff and Vale. The group usually consists of around 8-10 people, has very good outcomes and also provides links into additional supportive networks (e.g. a follow-up Peer Support Group).



Helen's experience of the HUB OCD group ☺

"I have suffered with OCD and intrusive thoughts since I was five years old. This consisted of fairly horrible nightmares that persisted into my waking hours and lots of rituals. I was scared that bad things would happen to the people I loved if I didn't carry out these rituals. This carried on into my adult life, until one day I saw a TV programme about OCD. The presenter said that unless it impacted your daily life, it wasn't really classed as OCD. Great, I thought, I can still work, go out with my friends. Not affecting me at all.

I then lost two dear friends in the space of two days in 2018 and subsequently had a breakdown. I knew the OCD was getting worse as a result but I had lived with it for thirty years and I had no reason to believe it would ever get better. I sought counselling which helped with my other issues of anxiety and self-worth but still the OCD persisted.

I was finally diagnosed with OCD by the GP in late 2019 and referred to the mental health team. I had no idea what to expect, other than that there would be a group of us. There were six of us, plus two therapists and a trainee. We looked at the process of OCD, did group tasks and weekly exercises to help us stop our rituals.

I honestly didn't think it would work. Once you've lived with a condition for thirty years, you can't even imagine what life will look like without it. But to my amazement I found that the techniques really did work. It was hard work, don't get me wrong, and sometimes it felt completely futile. But I persisted, and in combination with making changes in my life, have managed to get rid of most of the rituals I had. In fact, I had a day where I managed to get to 11pm without having an obsessive thought and having to complete a ritual, something I thought would never happen. I'll keep on with all the good things I'm doing but for now, I've got my life back and it feels brilliant".



## Mark's experience of running a group 😊

"I have been a mental health nurse for 20 years and several years ago I got the chance to help out in the Psychological Therapies HUB OCD group. I found the group very powerful, quite a challenge and really enjoyed it. I realised this kind of work was where I wanted to be and now work full time in the HUB.

It took me a while to 'get' how OCD can present in so many complex ways but now on about my 4<sup>th</sup> run it is making more sense. I find it extremely moving to hear how OCD has impacted people's lives, sometimes for many decades. To watch these same people picking up the group ideas and making more and more positive changes is always such a pleasure. I think something special happens in groups, they are often so much more than the sum of their parts. I find listening to stories of recovery such a privilege that sometimes I can't believe this is my job!

Often it seems people are quite nervous about the idea of groups but my experience is once they start we rarely get anyone dropping out. In fact most people seem quite sad when they end. I share this sense!"



## Peer OCD Recovery Group



### The Peer OCD Recovery Group

People who have completed the CBT for OCD Group in the previous year under the HUB are invited by letter to attend the OCD Peer Recovery Group. The Peer group is a 'post-therapy' group which is designed to support people to continue to practice the tools they learned during the CBT for OCD group. The group is peer led, which means that the members of the group work collaboratively with the facilitators to design the sessions and take the lead on certain elements of the group; that could be anything from leading a mindfulness exercise, to writing up ideas or time keeping.

The group usually runs one evening a month in Cardiff and sessions last for an hour and a half. Typically, members are invited to attend one 'cycle' of the OCD Peer Recovery Group, each cycle runs from September to April and group members are encouraged to attend every session.

**\*\*Please note\*\*** Due to Coronavirus the ability to run groups is limited. However, we aim to give an update on the Peer Support Group in the next newsletter.

*“Thank you so much for all your support and the safe atmosphere you created in this OCD Peer Recovery Group, which allowed each of us to open up and tell our story. The atmosphere also allowed other participants to chip in with their views and suggestions which made us all feel a two way flow of 'get help and give help' - to everyone's benefit”. (Tony, Peer Support Group Attendee)*

*“Thank you to C&V OCD Service for sending a clear message of support to OCD sufferers; that our recovery matters enough for you to take action by creating this peer led group.” (Rachel, Peer Support Group Attendee)*

informal  
 understanding  
 express  
 inspiration  
 share  
 value  
 decision  
 open  
 listen  
 mind  
 non-judgemental  
 motivation  
 talking  
 safe  
 opportunity  
 students  
 honesty  
 positive  
 health  
 support

### **Amy's Story**

“Hello, my name is Amy and I am an Assistant Psychologist in the Cardiff and Vale Specialist OCD Service. I have been with the team since March 2019 and one of my roles has been to develop and co-facilitate the OCD Peer Recovery Group. As this was a new group, I really didn't know what to expect as a facilitator. We knew that we wanted the group to be peer led, with group members deciding how the group was run, what activities would be most meaningful, and how members wanted to carry on their learning from the CBT for OCD group, but we knew this might be quite different from people's past experiences of groups. Walking into a new group, with a lot of new faces was quite daunting for everyone, but the all group members were so willing to get involved and really help to shape the group from session one. They were able to tell us what was helpful for the previous group, and how they wanted to be able to use this group to keep practicing ERP and come together as a group to problem solve and offer support. And so that's what they did! No matter how difficult the month had been for members or how tired they were, the group was always full of support and compassion for one another. I loved the way members of the group were able to find opportunities to inject laughter and joy into the sessions, even when talking about really difficult and challenging experiences with OCD. I have learned so much about living with OCD and life beyond the CBT for OCD Group from the members of our Peer group. I feel very grateful to have had the opportunity to hear about the experiences of the group members, not just around OCD but also about accessing and leaving services.”

## ***Coronavirus and OCD***

For some people with OCD, Coronavirus has been a big challenge. This may be particularly the case if you struggle with contamination concerns.

The information below is from [OCD.org.uk](https://www.ocd.org.uk). We hope the information below will be of help. However, we would also be very keen for people to write in with any personal coping strategies, helpful tips and stories about how to cope during these difficult times.

If you struggle with thoughts of harming others:

- Remind yourself that no one can protect themselves perfectly from Coronavirus.
- Remember that trusted health organisations aren't thinking about people with OCD/perfectionism when setting the public health guidelines. It might be more useful to talk to a friend, family member or therapist to establish a routine that is appropriate to you.

**If you struggle with contamination fears:**

- Disinfect surfaces a maximum of once a day. Focus on the surfaces in your home that are frequently touched and think about whether it is truly needed. This process shouldn't take more than a few minutes per day.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds after being outside, before eating, after going to the toilet. Follow sensible and measured government advice during the pandemic.

**If you struggle with perfectionism:**

- Be mindful that your OCD may take advantage of Covid-19 fears by telling you that you might have infected someone or that you are going to infect someone in the future, whether accidentally or on purpose.
- If you're noticing intrusive thoughts or that you're doing compulsions related to these thoughts, check in with your therapist and let them know your symptoms might have changed.

## **Useful Resources for Coronavirus and OCD**

### **OCD – UK Blog Post from Ashley Fulwood**

<https://www.ocduk.org/ocd-and-coronavirus/>

### **Top tips for coping with OCD**

<https://www.ocduk.org/ocd-and-coronavirus-top-tips/>

### **Mind**

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

### **BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy)**

<https://www.bacp.co.uk/news/news-from-bacp/2020/28-february-coronavirus-anxiety-how-to-cope-if-you-re-feeling-anxious-about-the-outbreak/>



## Self-Care during Coronavirus

Coronavirus can impact on your life, whether you have OCD or not. Below are some helpful tips to cope with the impact of this.

Be gentle with yourself and those around you.

Limit your social media and Coronavirus coverage intake.

Stay Calm.  
Mindfulness, mediation and breathing exercises may be helpful.

Develop a self-care emergency box.  
Include sensory items (touch, smell, taste, sound, sight) that make you feel calm and relaxed.

Focus on the things that are in your control.

Remember this is a 'new normal', but is a temporary normal.

Set a routine for you and your loved ones to ensure consistency.  
A planner is useful for this. Importantly- make sure you do things you enjoy 😊

Stick to (or create new) healthy habits.  
Ensure you have a balanced diet, exercise regularly, and ensure sleep hygiene.

Reach out to your support networks. Socialise with friends in safe ways such as Skype and Facetime.

BE KIND TO  
*yourself*

**MOST IMPORTANTLY: BE KIND TO YOURSELF!!**  
😊



## COPING PLANNER

The Coping Planner is a themed calendar relating to activities that can help us cope during this time. This is an example of activities we can do to cope. It could be useful to use some of the ideas and structure of this planner to make your own! ☺

### COPING CALENDAR: KEEP CALM. STAY WISE. BE KIND

30 actions to look after ourselves and each other as we face this global crisis together. Please use & share 🙌

- |  |   |  |  |  |  |   |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|---|
| 1 Make a plan to help you keep calm and stay in contact          | 2 Enjoy washing your hands. Remember all they do for you!         | 3 Write down ten things you feel grateful for in life and why  | 4 Stay hydrated, eat healthy food and boost your immune system   | 5 Get active. Even if you're stuck indoors, move & stretch | 6 Contact a neighbour or friend and offer to help them     | 7 Share what you are feeling and be willing to ask for help   |
| 8 Take five minutes to sit still and breathe. Repeat regularly   | 9 Call a loved one to catch up and really listen to them          | 10 Get good sleep. No screens before bed or when waking up   | 11 Notice five things that are beautiful in the world around you | 12 Immerse yourself in a new book, TV show or podcast      | 13 Respond positively to everyone you interact with        | 14 Play a game that you enjoyed when you were younger         |
| 15 Make some progress on a project that matters to you           | 16 Rediscover your favourite music that really lifts your spirits | 17 Learn something new or do something creative  | 18 Find a fun way to do an extra 15 minutes of physical activity | 19 Do three acts of kindness to help others, however small | 20 Make time for self-care. Do something kind for yourself | 21 Send a letter or message to someone you can't be with      |
| 22 Find positive stories in the news and share these with others | 23 Have a tech-free day. Stop scrolling and turn off the news     | 24 Put your worries into perspective and try to let them go  | 25 Look for the good in others and notice their strengths        | 26 Take a small step towards an important goal             | 27 Thank three people you're grateful to and tell them why | 28 Make a plan to meet up with others again later in the year |
| 29 Connect with nature. Breathe and notice life continuing       | 30 Remember that all feelings and situations pass in time         |  <p>“Everything can be taken from us but one thing: the freedom to choose our attitude in any given set of circumstances” ~ Viktor Frankl</p> |  |  |  |   |

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS



www.actionforhappiness.org

Find out more about the Ten Keys to Happier Living, including books, guides, posters and more here: [www.actionforhappiness.org/10-keys](http://www.actionforhappiness.org/10-keys)

## Self-Soothe Box

If you struggle with feelings of anxiety or panic, a self-soothe box is a great way to help manage these feelings encouraging you to feel more grounded and relaxed.

Below is some ideas of what you could include in your self-soothe box.

**WHAT SHOULD I PUT IN MY SELF-SOOTHE BOX?**

Self-soothe boxes are to be used in crisis situations to alleviate distress. They are personal to each individual and there is no right or wrong for what you should put in.

Here are some possible ideas...

<p><u>Sight</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photos</li> <li>• Quotes</li> <li>• Postcards/letters</li> <li>• Colouring book</li> <li>• A comedy DVD</li> </ul>		
<p><u>Touch</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stress ball</li> <li>• Teddy</li> <li>• Lip balm</li> <li>• Hand cream</li> <li>• Fidget toy</li> <li>• Play dough</li> </ul>		
<p><u>Taste</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mints</li> <li>• Tea bags</li> <li>• Chocolate</li> <li>• Boiled sweets</li> <li>• Individual fruit juice carton</li> </ul>	<p><u>Smell</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oils</li> <li>• Candle</li> <li>• Dried lavender</li> <li>• Bar of soap</li> <li>• Perfume</li> <li>• Jar of spices</li> </ul>	<p><u>Sound</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headphones</li> <li>• Ear muffs</li> <li>• Rain stick</li> <li>• Singing / meditation bowl</li> </ul>

## What's going on?

We hope to keep you updated with what's going on locally for OCD and more widely.

- CAVAMH Latest Newsletter. This is a great way to get involved in service development. This page outlines the running of services and lets you have an input into service reviews and development.  
: <http://www.cavamh.org.uk/>



## What's coming up...



- COMING SOON: Family and Friends Booklet. We hope to have this finished by the next Newsletter.
- OCD UK Annual Conference- Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> October in Chester, England. (To be Confirmed)
- OCD Awareness Week- October 2020 (Date to be confirmed)

### Suggested Reading:

Cardiff and Vale OCD Self-Help Booklet. This can be found by searching 'OCD Self-help booklet on: <https://cavuhb.nhs.wales>

# RESOURCES

## USEFUL WEBSITES:

[www.ocduk.org](http://www.ocduk.org)

[www.ocdaction.org.uk](http://www.ocdaction.org.uk)

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

[www.cardiffandvaleuhb.wales.  
nhs.uk/ocd-pathway](http://www.cardiffandvaleuhb.wales.nhs.uk/ocd-pathway)

<http://www.topuk.org/>

## GET INVOLVED!

We would like to encourage everyone to get involved with OCD Services. This could involve volunteering to run part of a support group or idea for the newsletter!



Speak to your therapist, or group facilitator if you would like to get involved!

## Contact Us!



If you have any ideas about the newsletter please contact Samantha Brownhill:  
[Samantha.Brownhill@wales  
.nhs.uk](mailto:Samantha.Brownhill@wales.nhs.uk)