

The British Society for Mental Health and Deafness (BSMHD) are pleased to announce that they have been awarded a three year grant of £224,156 for their **'Hear Deaf Mental Health in Wales'** project through the Big Lottery Fund's People & Places programme in Wales (Cronfa Loteri Fawr).

The project will provide mental health awareness training for the wider deaf community in Wales. The training is based on the Mental Health First Aid programme which is franchised worldwide and will be adapted to make it more accessible for Deaf people, and delivered by an accredited Deaf Instructor. The programme will offer deaf people and those who are involved in the deaf community such as social workers, interpreters and advocates, skills to recognise the signs & symptoms of mental health problems and respond appropriately by offering peer support.

In addition to the mental health first aid training, BSMHD will work with Deaf partner organisations in Wales by offering training and support to deaf people to become peer mental health advocates which, in turn, will allow them to offer support and guidance to deaf people experiencing a mental health episode.

Roger Hewitt, General Secretary of BSMHD said;

"In recent years, we have managed to train over 200 people in Mental Health First Aid throughout England, but this is the first time, apart from a small pilot project, that we have obtained funding specifically for Wales. We look forward to seeing the Deaf community having the same opportunities to access the course on par with their hearing counterparts. The issues of mental health is fast rising up the health agenda with the ultimate aim of being on par with physical health. Deaf people must not be sidelined or left out altogether".

Paul Redfern, BDA Cymru Senior Community Development Manager, Community Development, Wales commented;

"This is an exciting pioneering venture in Wales. For far too long, Deaf BSL users in Wales have been unable to access information about Mental Health which means that they have also been unable to take measures to safeguard their own wellbeing. The Mental Health First Aid training will ensure that Deaf people can make informed decisions about their own wellbeing. BDA Cymru is delighted to work with BSMHD on this project and we look forward to improvements in wellbeing amongst the Deaf community in Wales".

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