

FIGHTING BACK IN SUPPORT OF MALE MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health advocacy is something relatively new on my list of life priorities, inspired both by my own experiences of mental health systems in the United Kingdom, including three stays in an acute mental health hospital in Dudley between 2023 and 2024. I'm not a mental health expert. If I was, I'd be able to help fix my own head! I am however someone who can see where the cracks are in the system, and use some of the skills I do have to try and fight for better care for those who need it the most.

You see mental health care in the UK is beyond broken. To call it a postcode lottery would be an insult to lotteries, and in some cases, the only differences between prison and a mental health ward is the ability to smoke whenever you want, and the lack of a 'hard curfew'. Having experienced acute mental health wards, crisis houses, home treatment and community care services I can tell you that there are plenty of people who DO CARE about patients and their wellbeing, but they are stuck in a never-ending game of false assumptions, lack of funding, and a failure to see patient behaviour for what it sometimes is; a desperate cry for help.

If you go to a hospital in the UK because say: You got run over or had your appendix burst, you'll be cared for at the nearest appropriate hospital, only being moved closer to home out of convenience to patients and their relatives. If you have an acute mental health crisis, you're often kept in A&E departments waiting for a bed. Not at the nearest mental health hospital to you, but one in your local authority. See, NHS funding for mental health, a part of adult social care comes out of council tax, meaning that you are treated where you live. It doesn't take a genius to work out that poorer areas... Get less funding as a direct consequence of this.

I've been raising awareness for male mental health in particular for over a decade, starting with my work at RaceSpot TV, where we had CALM as our charitable partner for a UK specific Sim Racing series. I've worked with the NSPCC to highlight the links between child abuse and long term mental health, and I have just launched a podcast with a friend whom I met in Bushey Fields Hospital in Dudley, entitled "Breaking Down, Breaking Down".

Future planned work includes a comprehensive Sim Racing survey into how it affects mental health (Positively and negatively), investigative reporting into the state of mental health services in the West Midlands, and helping the third sector in developing effective peer support systems to empower active participation and sense of community. Stay 'tuned' for updates.

Current & Previous Projects

- 2024 - PRESENT

Breaking Down, Breaking Down.

This is a podcast with the primary focus being on male mental health. Started by two guys based in the West Midlands in the UK, who became friends working through similar mental health difficulties, and figuring out how to fight back against pre-conceptions.

Expect honest open discussion, guests, insight and food for thought. You're not alone.

- 2024 - PRESENT

Surviving an a World Designed to Make You Fail: Experiences of an Acute Mental Health Hospital in the UK.

An upcoming, tongue in cheek yet real exploration of some of the issues facing acute mental health hospitals in the UK, based on my three experiences of being on such a ward between 2023 and 2024.

With a focus on everything from dignity to a short term vision for long term recovery, this book goes beyond saying 'it's all bad', to highlighting specific areas of staff fighting against brick walls, and the circular - based nature of inpatient journeys through the system.

- 2010 - 2011

NSPCC Report - Child Abuse & Long Term Mental Health Impacts

I was a part of an extensive report by the NSPCC on hidden child abuse, and the impact it has on mental health in adolescence and adulthood.

I was anonymised as 'Andy' from the Home Counties, and alongside my contributions to the report, appeared on BBC Radio in the West Midlands, Three Counties & Berkshire, as well as various other media publications for the NSPCC to support the report launch.