

NATION URGED TO RAISE A CUPPA TO MARK 73RD ANNIVERSARY

Big thank brew to NHS

By **Giles Sheldrick**
Chief Reporter

BRITAIN will give thanks to its NHS heroes by coming together over a cup of tea.

Our health service turns 73 on July 5 and raising a mug is seen as an apt way to celebrate as half of Britons say tea breaks have helped them get through the pandemic.

The NHS Big Tea will be a chance to raise cash for NHS Charities Together, the UK-wide network of organisations looking after staff and patients.

Ruth May, chief nursing officer for England, said: "The NHS Big Tea is a great reminder that it is important to look after ourselves and I want to thank NHS Charities Together for helping everyone to take a moment to reflect."

Money raised will increase the practical and emotional sup-

Pictures: ADAM GERRARD & DAVID VENNI / CHILLI MEDIA

I'm not ashamed for seeking help



Nature's remedy... Julia takes her children, right, outside every day to boost their mental well-being; inset, Ruth May

JULIA Bradbury was inspired to teach her children about the importance of mental health by her own brush with depression.

The ex-Countryfile and Watchdog host struggled in her 30s and had professional counselling.

Julia, 50, said: "I needed help. There is absolutely nothing shameful in that at all."

So she makes mental well-being a top priority for son Zephyrus, nine, and six-year-old twin girls Xanthe and Zena.

She said: "I talk a lot to my children about feeling happy and feeling sad and communicating those feelings."

"Childhood shouldn't be burdened with enormous problems, but that doesn't mean you have to shelter them – you can teach them about resilience."

As well as chats over how they are feeling, Julia involves them in nature every day, describing it as "the best medicine available".

She said: "I was bullied at school, but when I came home I could escape."

"In today's world that is no longer the case. Kids are bullied even in

EXCLUSIVE By Giles Sheldrick

the sanctuary of their own homes. We live in extremely anxious times. Social media is exposing children to a barrage of information.

"Our 24-hour-a-day lives and being constantly switched on gives rise to anxiety."

Julia found help for her own struggles with three months of talking therapy. She said: "My doctor said to me, 'You might be depressed. Go and see somebody.'"

"I felt I could talk to someone who was disconnected from my life, who could give non-judgmental and unbiased advice."

Julia is one of several celebrities opening up about their difficulties to smash the stigma around mental ill-health.

Experts say the pandemic's effect on mental health will be felt for a long time to come, prompting calls during this Mental Health Awareness Week for the Government to focus on the issue in its recovery plans.

Julia said: "Outdoors has been my best therapist. I can absolutely guarantee getting outside helps."



COMMENT

ELLIE ORTON
NHS Charities Together
chief executive



AS IT was for many others, the kettle took on a central role in my life during the lockdowns.

Regular tea breaks helped me through all the challenges of the past year and I know I'm not the only one.

That's the same for the NHS. When you think about the equipment hospitals need to be stocked with, it is unlikely a kettle would feature prominently. But it is an essential part of the first-aid kit for staff and volunteers.

When the pandemic first hit and staff were working round the clock to help desperately ill patients and tackle a virus they knew little about, the chance to take some respite – a couple of moments' peace or snatch a chat with a colleague over a cuppa – was massively important.

Challenges

It is why a lot of the initial funds so generously donated by the public were used by NHS charities to provide short-term practical and emotional support, just to help get them through each shift and be ready for the next one. Thankfully that urgent requirement has passed, but the need to support staff, volunteers and patients continues as the challenges they face change.

They need ongoing support to make sure their mental health isn't another casualty – and there are many thousands of people who need help to deal with the impact of long Covid.

Getting together over a cuppa is part of our DNA. After so many months of isolation the

NHS Big Tea is a chance for everyone to join up – friends, family, neighbours, communities – to thank staff, carers, other key workers and each other for everything they have done over the past year.

All while having a great time and raising vital funds to support staff, volunteers and patients in extra ways that can make such a difference for them.

during the dark times. I sometimes think the NHS runs on tea and coffee."

Evidence shows projects are making a huge difference to frontline staff with three in 10 saying they most value the support and help with practical needs, like food and drink.

● To sign up for NHS Big Tea event and receive a support pack visit nhscharitiestogether.co.uk

COVID MENTAL HEALTH WARNING

PANDEMIC damage to mental health could overwhelm the NHS, a report warns.

The Centre for Mental Health says 10 million in England may need help, including the bereaved and intensive care workers.

The demand for support could be three times higher than services available.

Modelling is based on more than 200 pandemic studies from around the world.

Report author Nick O'Shea said: "Meeting the mental health needs that arise from Covid-19 is not optional."

port available to NHS staff, patients and volunteers as they battle the Covid crisis and start the long road to recovery.

The federation raised more than £150million through its Covid-19 Urgent Appeal. Grants issued to every one of its 240 member charities have provided help to patients, staff and volunteers. This year another £78million is being distributed to communities.

Future funds will be used to help the NHS recover from the long-term impact of Covid.

One example is at Moorfields Eye Hospital in north London, where a well-being space has given shattered staff a place to take a break.

Robert Dufton, chief executive of the Moorfields Eye Charity, said: "Thanks to generous donors, we've been able to create a space to benefit staff – where they can recharge their batteries." Meanwhile, tea trucks travel to hospitals

and control rooms across the capital each day serving hot drinks and food to ambulance staff and volunteers.

And at Airedale NHS Foundation Trust, which covers West and North Yorkshire, a well-being garden has been created.

Matron Angela McGarry said: "I was on shift and told my dad, who was on a ventilator in intensive

care, would not recover from Covid.

"In the next half an hour I had to prepare myself for the ventilator to be turned off. At this point I would have loved nothing more than to have sat in our beautiful well-being garden to reflect and gather my thoughts and feelings."

Darren Barthorpe, a physiother-

apist and occupational therapist technician at Chesterfield Royal Hospital, was redeployed to its Covid ward.

He said: "The chance to take a break, enjoy a cuppa and chat nonsense with a colleague for a few minutes was a real life-saver

