

LEEDS

2025 #6

# UNLOCKED

CHAMPIONING  
#LEEDSMEN

INSIDE...

PHOTOGRAPHY

STAYING ACTIVE IN  
RETIREMENT

MANTHOLOGY  
POETRY

FOOTBALL

OVERCOMING  
ADVERSITY

LOCAL GROUPS & ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING  
MEN & MEN'S HEALTH



## There's Always Light At The End Of The Tunnel by Gaz

Growing up wasn't easy, and I often had to depend on teachers, counsellors and friends for support. By 14, things had spiralled out of control. I was on anti-depressants, out of school and deeper into a dark place where drugs felt like the only escape.



By 16 I was homeless, staying in a hostel for young people. A housing support charity stepped in at a vital time, but my mental health had already hit a dangerous low. I struggled with severe anxiety, paranoia and constant panic attacks. I turned to

substances just to get through the day, becoming a shadow of myself. After months of sinking further, I hit breaking point and attempted to end my life. That moment changed everything, it was the turning point. Being stuck in hospital gave me space to confront what was happening, and with the encouragement of my housing support officer, I committed to an 18-week rehab programme. It gave me the vital tools I needed to start rebuilding my life.

So where am I now? Today, I have an undergraduate and a master's degree, a fulfilling career and a stable home. I still live with mental health challenges, but I manage them. Volunteering, talking to people and finding small things that help (like taking a hot shower) - they all make a difference.

Mental health is real and you're not alone in this.

*Speak out.*

## PEOPLE TO TALK TO...

### FINANCIAL ADVICE

**MONEY BUDDIES** - 0113 235 0276 - Help with money problems  
**GREEN DOCTOR** - 0113 238 0601 - Energy advice to help you save money

### MENTAL HEALTH ADVICE

**LIVE WELL LEEDS (LWL)** - 0113 219 2727 - [info@livewellleeds.org.uk](mailto:info@livewellleeds.org.uk)  
Citywide mental health support service for people to manage and recover from their mild to moderate needs. Can self-refer.

**MINDWELL** - [www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk](http://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk)

Online support for men's mental health

**LEEDS MENTAL WELLBEING SERVICE [LMWS]** - 0113 843 4388

Talking Therapies for common mental health problems. Can self-refer.

**SAMARITANS** - Free phone 116 123 - Need to talk? Confidential and emotional support 24 hours a day

### SPECIALIST ADVICE

**GAMCARE** - 0113 388 6466 - Help with gambling issues

**FORWARD LEEDS** - 0113 887 2477 - Advice, info and support if you are worried about alcohol or drug use

**LEEDS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICE** - 0113 246 0401

24hr helpline for men and women

**MEN'S ADVICE LINE** - 0808 801 0327

Help for male victims of domestic abuse

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE** - 0113 222 4401 - [leedsadults@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:leedsadults@leeds.gov.uk)

Supporting adults to live well and be independent, short or long term

**THE SILVER LINE** - 0800 470 8090 - A free confidential 24hr helpline for older people, offering information, friendship and advice

**CRUSE BEREAVEMENT CARE** - 0113 234 4150

(National Helpline - 0808 808 1677) Support for when someone dies

**CARERS LEEDS** - 0113 380 4300

If you are struggling to care for someone

**LEEDS REFUGEE FORUM** - 0113 244 9600 - Support for migrants

### GENERAL SUPPORT

**LINKING LEEDS** - 0113 336 7612 - Linking you to local services & activities

**CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU** - 0113 223 4400

Confidential and impartial advice

**NEW TO LEEDS** - [newtoleeds.org](http://newtoleeds.org) - A guide for migrants to the city.

Over 50 languages introducing all aspects of life in Leeds

**MEDICAL EMERGENCIES - CALL 999 / NON-EMERGENCIES - CALL 111**

## MEN'S GROUPS

Many local and community organisations run groups because they are incredible spaces to interact and have fun, to connect and celebrate.

Whether walking, cooking, gardening, fixing, playing music or sport, singing, or so much more, a group is a great way to meet people and find new hobbies - so get yourself out and busy.

Mindwell is a mental health website that offers so much for adults, our health and wellbeing, here in Leeds with lots of relevant information for advice and support. This QR code takes you straight to the men's groups listed on their website - scan and you might find the perfect group for you.



### ANDY'S MAN CLUB

Peer support group open to any man over the age of 18+. No referrals, just turn up on the night. A safe space for men to talk, there is also never any pressure to talk and men can just listen if they prefer. **9 groups in Leeds, nationwide and online - Find your nearest group via the website [andysmanclub.co.uk](http://andysmanclub.co.uk)**

### MEN'S PIE CLUB at New Wortley Community Centre

Weekly get together to make and eat pie! Thursdays 3pm - 5pm. Costs of £1.50.

Contact: [reception@newwortleycc.org](mailto:reception@newwortleycc.org) | 0113 279 3466

### MENZ OWN

Hobbies and interest group and try them with others. Last Monday of the month 6pm. Venue and cost varies depending on activities. LS25/LS26 area.

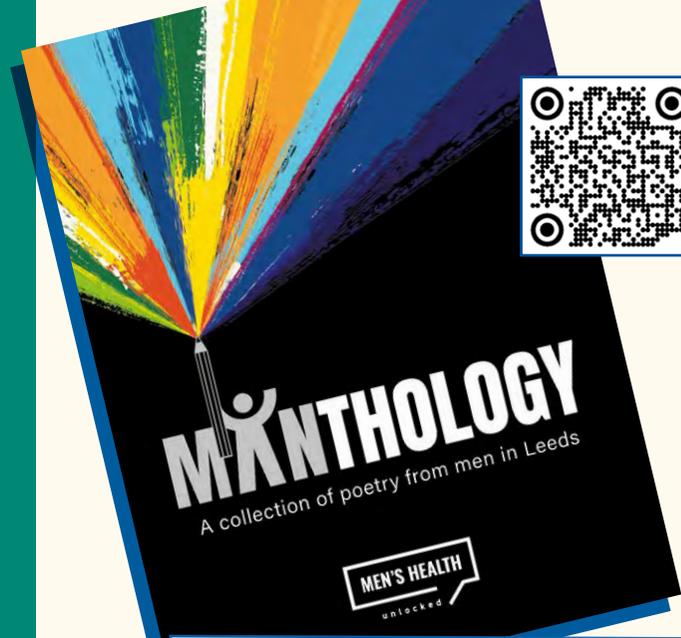
Contact: [info@thefairexchange.org.uk](mailto:info@thefairexchange.org.uk) | 07780 601 917

### BE YOURSELF MEN'S GROUP

All-ages gathering where men can connect, share experiences, play games, and take part in group-chosen activities or outings. Thursdays 1pm-2.30pm. Middleton Family Centre, 256-262 Sissons Road LS10 4JG. Contact Margaret: 07484 515 519

### THE MEANWOOD MEN SHED at Meanwood Valley Urban Farm, LS7

A space to meet others and take part in any level of woodworking. Wednesdays 11am - 1:30pm. Men must live in LS6, LS7 or LS17 areas. Contact Eamon: [eamon@interact.uk.net](mailto:eamon@interact.uk.net) | 07954 019 899



## POETRY IS FOR EVERYONE

**Men's Health Unlocked have been busy this year making a poetry anthology by men... A Manthology.**

62 poems from 57 men connected to Leeds. We chose to not set a theme, which meant men brought forward their work from different areas of life experience. We had established writers, regular guys who write in private but decided to share and men who had never written before.

This collection has poems that will make you laugh, cry, and feel seen. A Touchstone-led project for Men's Health Unlocked. Completely free and all available online - just scan the QR code.

### EVERY DAY IS A FRESH START by James Mahoney

Often, the hardest task is simply getting out of bed and remembering:

Every day is a fresh start.

Often, all you want is to curl up and hide from the world - but you repeat:

Every day is a fresh start.

You're dressed, ready to impress, but still you feel scared and lost, and you repeat:

Every day is a fresh start.

You greet your family with smiles and love, feeling like you're letting them down, but you say it again:

Every day is a fresh start.

You get in the car, ready to go, and you wonder, what if something happens to me - could I just go back and hide?

But you repeat:

Every day is a fresh start.

You get to work and greet your colleagues, clients, or customers with the positive mask you've prepared, while screaming inside - and you repeat:

Every day is a fresh start.

You get home to dinner, dishes, and diapers, fighting inside, wondering, Am I doing this family thing right? And you repeat: Every day is a fresh start.

You go to bed, lying down, reliving the day like a Greek tragedy, trying to find solace as your mind races with panic and dismay. And as you finally drift off, you repeat:

Every day is a fresh start.

But as you sleep in your bed, I want you to know—you did it. You got out of bed, you lived another day, you made it through with resilience and strength, and you made the world a better place.

Because today was a fresh start.

**GET INVOLVED WITH LEEDS UNLOCKED... Email: [lawrenceg@space2.org.uk](mailto:lawrenceg@space2.org.uk) Phone/WhatsApp: 07784 951 318**

Send in your writing, poems, photos of Leeds, new and old, and of your creations, doodles, drawings or word games; all things that either inspire you as a man, or are simply fun, interesting and lovely. And we will always credit you!

# NEW IDEAS.. FRESH STARTS..

Inspiration and motivation can come from many different places and at many different times. In this edition all of our contributors share different ways that men in Leeds keep well, stay active and overcome challenges at different points in their lives.



## MATE UNITED (MEN AND THEIR EMOTIONS)

by David Newsome

Mate United is a charity football side that was set up 3 years ago with the aim of raising awareness of mental health within men as well as breaking the stigma that can so often surround it.

Men And Their Emotions are not just a football team, it's a team of men who come together to play something they love while having a space away from some of the other things that may be going on in their lives, even if just for those 90 minutes.

Away from football, everyone has a laugh together and the topic of mental health is always open and welcomed if anyone needs a chat.

We go around the country playing other charity football teams, and whilst enjoying the occasion, we also raise money for various mental health charities along the way. We have already raised a few thousand pounds for different charities!!

We have had the pleasure of playing in a few stadiums too, Scunthorpe United, Macclesfield town and Ilkeston just to name a few.

We have also had a few star names playing for us too, from TV soap stars to pro boxers, singers and more, most of them are still involved with us today.



Playing for Mate United and what it stands for is a real joy. If I could give one piece of advice if you are reading this and struggling in any way, please know you are not alone, please do reach out if you need too.

Contact MATE UNITED FC at [mate.united.fc@gmail.com](mailto:mate.united.fc@gmail.com) to learn more!

## BATON OF HOPE

Back in September, Leeds hosted the Baton of Hope Tour, with many men's groups across the city getting involved.

The Baton of Hope is a powerful national campaign, symbolising awareness, remembrance, and hope around suicide prevention. The Baton travels from city to city celebrating mental health, community strength, and recovery.



[batonofhopeuk.org](http://batonofhopeuk.org)

## FLAMES OF FRIENDSHIP

Mick and Peter are old friends and colleagues. They share their story of being firefighters - and of staying social in retirement.

“ We're Mick and Peter, and we spent a big part of our lives at Gipton Fire Station, now The Old Fire Station. Back then it was the busiest station in the area, the place where every local firefighter came to train.

It's also where the two of us became friends, a friendship that's still going strong long after we hung up our helmets.

For us, the job was never just a job. There was a real brotherhood on the watch. We had to trust each other completely, physically and mentally, and our families became part of that wider circle. That sense of community didn't disappear when we retired. We're still involved at The Old Fire Station through the heritage group - a bunch of ex-firefighters who run pop-up events and, just as importantly, meet every week for a cuppa.

The day-to-day camaraderie isn't quite the same as when we were on shift, but it's still there in things like our upcoming trip to Dublin and the big breakfast on the first Tuesday of every month. Gipton, and especially Blue Watch, always had a bit of magic about it - we were colleagues, but more importantly, friends. That spirit is still alive today as new and old communities share the building. These days Mick follows the football and Peter is into old fire engines, but at heart we're still here to help and stay connected, just like we always did.



## REBUS PUZZLE PLAY FOR A PRIZE OR JUST FOR FUN!



1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....
6. ....

Say what you see to work out each rebus puzzle and send your answers to Lawrence  
Text or WhatsApp: 07784 951 318  
The first 2 entries with all 6 correct answers will win a £15 voucher



## LIFE THROUGH THE LENS by Derek

I've enjoyed taking photos for as long as I can remember - there's something about the way that it forces you to slow down and take more notice of your surroundings that I love.

I was in the military until 1985 which kept me very busy and focussed. When I left though, I felt like I wanted to learn some new skills and decided to do a photography course at Swarthmore Education Centre. It taught me lots of basic skills about how to compose a photo, think about lighting etc. But the main thing I enjoyed was experimenting with different styles and sharing my work.

I have ups and downs with my mental health, and photography is a great way of helping me 'get out of my head'. It's also great at getting me out of the house - I love nature photography and landscapes so I'll often go out for a walk on the hunt for a great photo. My granddaughter sometimes tells me off though, when I stop every two minutes to take a snap!

I've had some great cameras over the years, but some of the pictures I'm most proud of are ones I have taken using my phone, capturing unexpected moments or things that have caught my eye.

Swarthmore, amongst others, offers many adult learning opportunities in Leeds. Take a look, you might be inspired - [swarthmore.org.uk](http://swarthmore.org.uk)

“ MY ADVICE WOULD BE TO JUST START SNAPPING AND SEE WHERE IT TAKES YOU! ”

