Press Release

17 May 2023

Avanti West Coast provides platform for mental health with walk-in service at station

- *Partnership with support group dedicates space to promote good mental health*
- *Facility provides platform for people to connect and improve wellbeing*
- *Support sessions champion benefits of music this Mental Health Awareness Week*

Avanti West Coast has teamed up with a mental health support group to offer a dedicated walk-in service at Runcorn station to help people with their wellbeing.

Two days a week the station's community room hosts sessions delivered by local peer support group, It's Good 2 Talk, to provide space, company, resources, and time to help those struggling with their mental health – in what is believed to be the first initiative of its kind on the West Coast.

The sessions are designed to encourage people to offload worries or stresses of the day, take time for themselves or get support and information in a safe, non-judgemental, and confidential environment.

The idea began with a chance meeting between Avanti West Coast's Community Champion, Laura Warwick, and Nathan James, founder of It's Good 2 Talk, at a local event.

Laura and Nathan, who have a shared passion to stop the stigma associated with mental health, wanted to bring people going through similar situations together, and encourage them to talk as well as share their feelings.

On Monday mornings, Nathan broadcasts a live talk show - Getting on Track Together – which sees guests chat about their personal experiences of mental health. Over 20 episodes have been streamed on social media – giving audiences an opportunity to get involved in the conversation.

Every Friday the room is open between 12pm and 6pm to anyone wanting to talk, enjoy a brew, find company, or relieve stress with colouring activities, sketch pads and fidget toys, as part of 'On the Right Track' drop-in sessions.

Since the dedicated space was made available in January, it has made a difference to people from all walks of life – from a lonely woman finding a place to go when at a loss for something to do, to a passenger needing to talk after returning by train from a friend's funeral, and a local man who found much-needed friendship.

The pop-up support at the station has also been backed by charities and organisations, including Weaver Arts community group, Animal Teach, Mind, Halton Carers Association, and Mind, in the region that link back to aiding positive mental health and wellbeing.

To mark Mental Health Awareness Week (15 to 21 May), Nathan will be promoting the benefits of music and speaking to the founder of Sound City music festival, Dave Pichilingi. On Friday 19 May, live acoustic performances will take place in the community room throughout the afternoon by various musicians, including Andy Salter.

Nathan said: "It's a sad truth that many people today don't have anyone to listen to them about their day, worries, feelings, life stories. Those things are integral to our humanity.

"I'm overwhelmingly grateful to Avanti West Coast, Laura, and the team at Runcorn for providing this space for people to take time to talk because it's changing lives. Everyone needs places like this – somewhere to sit and be free to chat, listen, learn, connect, read, and have a brew, find comfort or friendship. Communication through talking, laughing, or crying together brings connections and through connections comes growth, understanding and community. I have already met some great people at Runcorn and look forward to meeting loads more."

Laura Warwick, Avanti West Coast Team Leader at Runcorn, said: "We know it's the simple things that can make a huge difference to people's wellbeing, which is why we joined up with It's Good 2 Talk to create a space for anyone to drop in for a chat, make time for their mental health or connect with others.

"By bringing people together in a safe and welcoming environment we hope to support those who may be struggling to open up, while raising awareness and understanding of mental health. We've seen the incredible difference this space has made to many people, and we hope this will help many others, as well as encouraging everyone to take care of themselves."

It's Good 2 Talk always welcome volunteers and anyone who wishes to support their work can contact Nathan on: itsgd2tk@gmail.com

ENDS

Watch episodes of Getting on Track at https://www.facebook.com/itsgd2tk/

About It's Good 2 Talk

"For the times you struggle, and those you don't.

For the moments you can't do it, and those you just won't.

The power you get from sharing the load, really helps to get you on the road.

The road to better, to happier, places to be and things to do.

We are in this together, then, me and you.

itsgd2tk (It's Good 2 Talk) has three main purposes:

- To provide peer to peer mental health support in a safe, non-judgemental, forum for free.
- To challenge and stop the devastating stigma concerning mental health.
- To provide services offering support, development and direction.

https://www.facebook.com/itsgd2tk/

About Avanti West Coast

Avanti West Coast, operator of intercity rail services on the West Coast Main Line, is a joint venture between FirstGroup and Trenitalia, delivering a cleaner, greener railway that drives the West Coast forward.

We're on a mission to revolutionise train travel. Our refurbed Pendolinos are returning to the rails, with a £117m investment that's delivering best in class comfort. Rebuilt using sustainable materials wherever possible, including tables made from recycled plastic bottles, our upgraded fleet offers 25,000 brand new seats, free Wi-Fi, onboard recycling and much more.

New Hitachi trains are set to replace our Voyager trains from 2023, leading to a 61% cut in carbon emissions. Quieter and roomier, with more reliable Wi-Fi, wireless charging for electrical devices and a real-time customer information system, the new 23-strong fleet is the result of a £350m investment in sustainable travel.

We're tackling climate change wherever we can, from reducing energy and water use to training drivers in eco-driving techniques and sourcing food and drink from local suppliers. Our goal is to be net zero carbon by 2031. We're on track.

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https://newsdesk.avantiwestcoast.co.uk/

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