



**PRESS RELEASE**

**16 May 2016**

## **BAG SOME HIGH END ADVICE ON MENTAL HEALTH AT RUNCORN SHOPPING CENTRE**

Halton is marking National Mental Health Awareness Week by staging a revolutionary invitation to go 'shopping' – in a new pop-up advice store at Runcorn Shopping Centre

Among the food and clothing units will be a month-long shop called 'Changing Minds'. Shoppers browsing through the latest fashions will find tags on the clothes – not with the price – but with thought-provoking messages from real Halton residents who suffer from mental health issues.



Support workers from organisations such as The Samaritans will be on hand if anyone wants to discuss their problems in confidence. There will be a seating area with free refreshments for people who simply want to drop in for a chat or to find out more. The shop will also be a drop off point for the Runcorn Foodbank.



The Changing Minds shop will run for four weeks, Monday 16 May – Saturday 11 June, and each week will have a different theme.

16–21 May	Mental Health Awareness Week
23-28 May	Dementia Awareness Week
31 May-4 June	Children and Young People’s Week
6-11 June	Carers’ Week

In this joint initiative with Halton Borough Council and Halton Clinical Commissioning Group, Runcorn Shopping Centre invited local residents with mental health issues to help break down the stigma by sending a message or telling their own real life story via social media. Dozens of people responded.

Messages included:

*“We live in a world where when you break your arm, everyone runs to sign your cast. But if you tell people you’re depressed, everyone runs the other way. That’s the stigma. We are so accepting of a broken body part but not if our brain breaks!”*

*“Help us, trust us, love us... don’t judge us”*

Karl Clawley, Runcorn Shopping Centre manager, said: “This is the first time a shopping centre in the UK has ever challenged this important subject. Most people will know someone with mental health issues or may even suffer themselves. It is incredibly common.

“Runcorn Shopping Centre is at the heart of our community. Where better to set up a drop-in centre than in this familiar, everyday setting. Over the next four weeks we hope to welcome hundreds of visitors and casual shoppers to the Changing Minds store to find out how they can improve their lives and hopefully help their friends and relatives too.”

The Changing Minds store is one of a range of activities being promoted by Halton Council’s health improvement team.

Bridgid Dineen, Halton Council’s mental health lead within the team, added: “Mental Health Awareness Week is a chance for all of us to take a step back and think about how we can improve our mental health and wellbeing. Modern life can be hectic and can often take a toll on your emotional and physical health.

“There are lots of things you can do though to help boost your mental wellbeing – taking a class, going for a walk with your dog, or just doing something nice for someone can have real positive effects on how you feel. During this week we’re giving local people a chance to sample some of the many activities, services and places to go around Halton.”

For further details of the Changing Minds shop, go to the Runcorn Shopping centre website [www.runcornshopping.co.uk](http://www.runcornshopping.co.uk).

Or for a full timetable of all events, go to the council website: <http://www.haltonhealthimprovement.co.uk/mhw2016/>

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