

This week is mental health awareness week. It's an issue that I'm pleased to say has gained more attention in recent years. There used to be a lot of stigma attached to it, and whilst there's still a long way to go and barriers still to be overcome, it's definitely talked about more now than ever before.

The week of events is an opportunity to highlight the resources and support on offer, and to encourage people to talk about it and reach out for help, whether to family, friends, neighbours, or a charity or professional support.

Events this week, organised in partnership with the Council and others, have included a range of walks across the borough and sessions offering everything from cooking, tea and a chat, and much more.

There are many causes of mental health problems, including long-term stress, debt, and poverty. Sadly, these are issues which are affecting increasing numbers of people right now in St Helens and across the country. Week by week, more households are struggling financially.

The government could be imposing a windfall tax on energy companies making obscene profits. They could be raising pensions to support older people. They could be scrapping their national insurance hike to give a hand to working families. But what do we get instead? We get Tory MPs lining up in the media telling people to simply get a better paid job or work more hours, or even to "incentivise granny annexes" on our homes as one of them suggested this week. They really do live in a different world.

Thankfully, and in contrast to the current occupants of Downing Street, our St Helens community is home to good people and organisations who are determined to give a helping hand.

One example is the St Helens Shed project run by Jeff and Sharon Martindale at Cabbage Hall Community Allotments in Windle which gives men the chance to have a brew, a chat, and get together in a friendly environment. You can find out more about this group on Facebook, and I know it's just one of many such activities available for everyone across the borough.

To find out more about what's on offer all year round in St Helens visit [www.sthelenswellbeing.org.uk](http://www.sthelenswellbeing.org.uk), and if you're struggling financially visit [www.sthelens.gov.uk/sthelenstogether](http://www.sthelens.gov.uk/sthelenstogether) or call 01744 676789 for information.

Best wishes to all Star readers.