



Relaunch of the City Wellbeing Centre

City Wellbeing Centre

Wednesday 24th November 2021

The Rt Hon The Lord Mayor of London

Alderman Vincent Keaveny

Hello everyone, it's a pleasure to be able to speak to you all today.

For those who haven't met me yet, my name is Vincent Keaveny, and only last week I was made the 693rd Lord Mayor of the City of London.

Now, some of you may be thinking what does a Lord Mayor actually do? Well, to put it simply, I represent the City of London, both nationally and internationally.

Not just our financial institutions, not just our legal profession – of which I am a member, but all of the City of London: our charities, our cultural institutions and, most importantly, every single person who lives and works here.

That's why I am so delighted to be here today because City residents and workers have a great friend in the City Wellbeing Centre.

In fact, its founding and re-opening could not have been more auspiciously timed.

‘Emotional rollercoaster’ is a phrase which is often used to describe a turbulent period, but the problem with that analogy is that – to most people, anyway – a rollercoaster is something you enjoy.

There has been nothing thrilling, engaging or emotionally enjoyable about what many people have had to go through in the last two years.

Anxiety, depression, and isolation have all been steadily rising – the world, as we knew it, changed.

To stick with the fairground analogy, the pandemic has been more of an 'emotional hall of mirrors' – the familiar becoming distorted, warped beyond any recognition, a place where many people have become lost.

According to the Mental Health Foundation, within the first week of lockdown one in four adults felt lonely, one in five people started drinking more to cope with stress, and only one in four adults felt 'hopeful'.

Thankfully, these statistics improved as the lockdowns eased and the vaccine became more readily available: from this July, only one in three people feeling worried about being able to cope, compared to one in two in March 2020.

This is steady progress – and I want to take the time to thank all of the health workers and authorities watching this for your work during this time.

But we know what the pandemic and the necessary lockdowns have left people with many unresolved emotional issues, issues which need to be treated.

The mental health and wellbeing of all the City's workers and residents is crucial, never more so than now. As the City opens again, and welcomes in workers, the public and tourists, we all need to be as resilient as possible.

In the City of London Corporation, we have been working hard to support good mental health across the Square Mile like our This Is Me campaign, through the Lord Mayor's

Appeal, which aims to reduce the stigma around mental health in the workplace and to raise awareness of wellbeing.

Over the five years it has been running, we have seen fantastic collaboration and a growing community of business and organisations committing to end the stigma around mental health.

Over 1200 organisations have signed up to the campaign across the UK and globally, over 25,000 people have completed our Wellbeing in the Workplace training, and nearly 9 in every 10 organisations involved say people speak more openly about mental health in their workplace because of This is Me, with over three quarters of organisations saying stigma has been reduced.

This shows that we have achieved a lot together but there is still much more to do.

That is why our new City Wellbeing Centre is assisting everyone, whether its individuals, couples, families or businesses, it will provide a range of therapeutic mental health services designed to support all.

During this time, the Centre's services have all been online and I know they have brought much help to the people who have used them.

And as we are now out of the worst of the pandemic, I am so pleased to hear that the Centre will be offering more in-person support.

I am sure that this Centre will continue to cement its position in the City, a position of having a long-lasting and positive impact on mental health here in the square mile

I would like to thank everyone who has worked so hard in making this Centre a positive force in the City.

I look forward to hearing more about your future success and to see that reflected in those that use your service.

Yes, the past couple of years have been unrecognisable, but, with your help, things are becoming more familiar.

Thank you very much.