

## The Mental Health Access Pack: equipping churches

Dr Rob Waller



Katharine Welby-Roberts and Dr Rob Waller presented the Mental Health Access Pack, which can be viewed at [www.mentalhealthaccesspack.org](http://www.mentalhealthaccesspack.org)

This is a 'microsite' – a website of just 20 pages, giving succinct information on common mental health problems, treatments and theological conundrums aimed at carers and leaders in the average local church. It draws on information already held on other websites [Livability and Mind & Soul] but condenses it into specially rewritten articles that are suitable for the lay reader. The articles can also be printed off as nice-looking A4 handouts suitable for displaying at the back of a church. All the material is open-access copyright, enabling it to be reproduced in a church magazine or similar.

Katharine spoke of her own experiences of sharing her depression in church, at times being told to 'have more faith' or 'get over it'; but also of having found helpful communities where she could be herself, including holding positions of responsibility.

The idea behind this pack is to produce a bite-sized introduction to mental health that your average church leader is going to be able to access quickly, and also some more detail and links for those in the congregation who want to take this further, such as a pastoral worker or counsellor. Because the kind of difficulties Katharine experienced are by no means uncommon, we have included some articles on 'theological issues' such as getting the balance right between medicine and healing.

Rob shared how the pack was launched initially online, and then at a conference attended by over 600 people. Providing information in a 'Christianised' format was important for it to be trusted, and also for it to be endorsed by key church leaders; however the information the pack contains is mainstream, as might be found on other similar sites that do not share the Christian faith perspective. Initial data suggest that the pack has been well accessed by a wide range of denominations and there have been a number of subsequent social media campaigns. In the future, we plan to send a sample article by post to every church in the UK using established denominational mailings. Whilst an online resource is a scalable and environmentally friendly location, many churches are still quite paper-based. There is also wider work by Livability, Mind & Soul and other organizations in providing input to clergy CPD sessions and ministerial training programmes.