Special EU Programmes Body
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Interreg
Northern Ireland – Ireland – Scotland
EUROPEAN UNION
European Regional Development Fund

SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES BODY

Project Case Study: Easing Anxiety During COVID-19 for Those Living with Sight Loss

THEME:

Health & Social Care

FUNDING:

€1,859,682.92

MATCH FUNDING:

Department of Health (Northern Ireland and Ireland)

LEAD PARTNER:

Royal National Institute of Blind People Northern Ireland (RNIB)

PROJECT PARTNERS

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) Scotland and Fighting Blindness Ireland

Start Date: 01/01/2017

End Date: 31/12/2022

https://www.rnib.org.uk/your-area-northern-ireland/services-rnib-northern-ireland/need-to-talk

Need to Talk is providing a cross-border counselling service and confidence building programme for people affected by sight loss throughout Northern Ireland, the border counties of Ireland and Western Scotland (Ayrshire & Arran and Highlands & Islands). Although it's working across the three regions, there is a specific focus on providing support to those living in more rural areas, where access to public transport and other support services can be limited.

Since March 2020, RNIB's Helpline has seen a significant rise in the number of calls regarding mental health.

<u>Emergency Mental Health Sessions</u>
Many blind and partially sighted people have faced anxiety, sadness and fear around the unique challenges experienced since the outbreak of COVID-19. Challenges have not been confined to lockdown as problems with social distancing and the difficulties of shopping without guidance remain and are set to continue for the foreseeable future. In light of this, in May 2020 the project introduced free emergency telephone mental health sessions, to give emotional support during these difficult times. These will remain on offer until June 2021.

In an hour-long session with a counsellor there is an opportunity to share feelings, explore coping strategies and any further support needs. The session addresses some of the feelings created by the current situation including anxiety and distress and helps build awareness that accepting these feelings is a positive step.