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Jo Brand supports Lepra's appeal to "Beat leprosy"

COLCHESTER, United Kingdom–

Leprosy is one of the most misunderstood diseases in the world, despite being completely curable.

Mental health in particular is a serious issue for those affected by leprosy.

50% of people diagnosed with leprosy are also affected by mental health disorders such as depression or anxiety.

People affected by leprosy experience discrimination and prejudice, often being forced from their families and communities, which leads to extreme emotional distress.

With Jo's previous experience working as a psychiatric nurse, she understands the serious impact poor access to services can have and she is calling for the public's support of Lepra.

Jo says: "It can be very difficult for people affected by leprosy to get help for their mental health issues, so the work Lepra is doing to help provide people with access to counselling and peer support is very important.

Leprosy is extremely misunderstood. A lot of people don't even realise the disease still exists, but it does and it has severe and lasting implications for people's mental health, as well as impacting their ability to work, socialise and live in their communities.

This World Leprosy Day, which coincides with Lepra's 97th birthday, Lepra is asking for the public's help to continue its vital work and reach those most in need."

In Bangladesh, Lepra launched its Mental Motivator project to help people affected by leprosy and improve knowledge of the disease within communities, to lessen discrimination and prejudice.

The Mental Motivator project is supported by Baillie Gifford, investment management firm.

Mental motivators are trained to improve mental health knowledge of the wider community, while also acting as counsellors for people affected by leprosy and directing those in need to further resources should they need them.

Lepra's holistic approach to the treatment of leprosy places an emphasis on mental health and ensures that people receive the care and treatment they need.

Geoff Prescott, CEO of Lepra, stresses the importance of Lepra's work and the way in which the public's support makes this possible.

He says: "Leprosy and mental health go hand in hand, and this is because of the prejudice people experience with both.

We work hard to dispel prejudice surrounding leprosy and ensure people affected live free and fair lives. The public's support allows Lepra to continue its mission to beat leprosy."

For more information about Lepra's work please visit their website www.lepra.org.uk or consider making a donation to Lepra by visiting their website at www.donate.lepra.org.uk/LepraDonate

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For more information, please contact Lepra:

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Notes for Editors

About Lepra and leprosy

Our Vision - A world free from prejudice and disability due to leprosy

We are secular, open to all religions, races, classes, gender. A positive decision to favour no one and everyone. We support those who are subject to the most neglect from existing services, as well as continuing to work with those who are not specifically marginalised or ignored.

Since 1924, we prioritised being evidence-led. Being evidence-led culminated in the adoption of Dapsone after it was observed being used by veterinarians. Thus Lepra working with the Indian Government, became the first to find and use a cure for leprosy. Being evidence-led in the contemporary context, means remaining committed to doing what is best for people affected by leprosy.

Lepra works internationally across the leprosy spectrum including transmission, disability prevention and medical rehabilitation (DPMR) and advocacy. Active case finding is critical, a fact which people now recognise as the COVID-19 pandemic rages.

Lepra works to beat leprosy in India, Bangladesh, Mozambique, Zimbabwe by finding, diagnosing and treating people affected by the disease. By raising awareness, pushing for early detection and supporting people living with disabilities caused by leprosy, Lepra works towards a day when this disease no longer destroys lives.

Last year, the charity reached 260,893 people through diagnosis, treatment and care. It reached a further 995,659 people through health education and events to raise awareness of leprosy and other neglected diseases.

Find out more about Lepra on its website and social media channels:

Website: www.lepra.org.uk

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/LepraUK>

Facebook: <https://https://www.facebook.com/LEPRAUK/>

You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/LEPRAHinA>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/LepraUK/>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/lepra/>