



Rethink Carers Lancashire

lancscarersgroup@rethink.org

07534 369889

c/o Rethink Mental Illness, Paul's House, Tower Street, TA1 4BH

Newsletter

January 2019



Best wishes for 2019 Let's hope we can all find a reason to be cheerful in this New Year. Of course we all have many worries and stresses, but there are some positives outlined below, and we can all benefit from the fellowship our group offers. No carer should feel alone

Upcoming meetings:

1. Not to be missed – everything you need to know about PIP, ESA, & Universal Credit in relation to mental illness.

Laura Peters, Head of Rethink's Advice Service, will be coming up from Birmingham for an extended session to give us the benefit of all her team's expertise and experience in relation to claiming these benefits, as well as the appeals process and what changes are likely to happen in the coming year. This service is unique in the breadth of its knowledge of both the system and the particular problems of mental illness. An opportunity not usually available to carer groups, so do make the most of it. Questions beforehand if possible.

Friday March 8, 10.30 am to 3 pm @ Brindle Village Hall, PR6 8NH

Please make sure you book early for this meeting as it will be very popular and open to others beside our immediate group members. Lunch (from the Darwen caterers we were using some time ago) will be either hotpot or butter pie, £5 to include all refreshments during the day (£1 for teas/coffees if you don't have lunch). Make sure you order your lunch at the same time as booking, deadline for food orders **Friday March 1st**. Remember that we can contribute to travel expenses/lunch for anyone coming a distance or hard up just at the moment. (While we're waiting for Laura to arrive from Birmingham, we'll have a long overdue Annual General Meeting, **as brief as possible**. Let us know if you're interested in being on the committee.)

Benefits - what we're up against! (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jan/24/welfare-reform-mentally-ill-injustice>) This week it's been reported that people with mental health problems are at far greater risk of having their benefits stopped than those with physical disabilities. Researchers from York University analysed government data to find that benefits claimants who have a psychiatric condition are 2.4 times more likely than those with diabetes, back pain or epilepsy to lose their entitlement to disability living allowance. The York research shows a third of all people with anxiety have now had their claims disallowed – almost twice as many as those with neurological or musculoskeletal conditions.

Also this week - Ministers should consider abolishing the Department for Work and Pensions after its failure to help ill and disabled people out of poverty, a leading thinktank (Demos) has said. Tom Pollard, the report's author, spent 18 months at the DWP on secondment from mental health charity Mind. By the end of his time there he concluded that the "DWP is institutionally and culturally incapable of making the reforms needed to achieve such a shift in outcomes for ill and disabled people, or for 'harder-to-help' groups more widely".

Make sure you get to the meeting above, maximise your understanding of the system!

2. By popular request – what do you want to happen when you die? Apologies if this sounds brutal, but it's something we all need to think about. **Steve Howells** is a solicitor with special expertise in wills and trusts, and links into the Rethink Trust Corporation to give the best possible arrangements for someone whose inheritance might be a problem for them if it were not managed by trustees with an understanding of mental illness. Steve will also discuss ways to protect if possible the sum to be inherited. This is very complex, but we know from previous visits that Steve is highly skilled in explaining all the ins and outs. **Free lunch provided**, let us know when booking whether you have any dietary requirements.

Friday April 5, 10am to 3pm approx. (times to be confirmed later) **Blackburn Carers Centre BB2 1NH**

Rethink Carers East Lancs meets on the second Wednesday of each month at Elmfield Hall, Gatty Park, Accrington, 6 – 8 pm. **Fylde Family Support Group** meets on the second Tuesday of every month at Empowerment Advocacy Base, 333 Bispham Rd, Fy2 0HH. in Blackpool, 7 -9 pm. Phone 07999 332804. FyldeFamilySupportGroup@rethink.org
www.Facebook.com/groups/FyldeFamilySupport Every Wednesday Rethink Dog Walking Group. Find out information and get support in the fresh air, with or without a dog. 10am-noon Stanley Park Blackpool Fy3 9HU.

SOME THOUGHTS ON OUR FUND- RAISING

As you probably know, after the small initial set-up grant, Rethink groups are self-financing, and some of us remember the time when our funds were down to £35! Happily, things have improved since then, but we're constantly trying to keep the group secure by raising money in various ways. Over the last few months we've had a car boot sale and the Christmas raffle, both good learning experiences.

The **car boot sale**, starting at 5 am on a cold October morning, raised £100 after we'd paid for the pitch. It was really hard work but good fun. We were shocked by the traders who descended before we'd even got out of the car (any phones? jewellery?) and even more shocked by the people who bought items from for a reasonable amount then tripled the price when they re-sold them on their own stall!

The Rethink banner attracted a lot of attention, from people keen to share their own stories of mental illness, and towards the end of the sale we donated a lot of unsold clothing items to an amazing lady who single-handedly took parcels of useful items, including clothing, to the homeless people she met with on the streets of Manchester. The **Christmas raffle**, after the cost of ticket printing, raised £183 -not a lot in relation to the work involved. We felt that a group like this, spread over a wide area and not running big events, isn't ideally suited to this kind of initiative. But again it was good fun, and the star prize of the beautiful Nativity was won by someone who was thrilled to have it, but also happens to be a fund-raiser for Action for Children, and after enjoying it throughout Christmas 2018 is going to raise funds with it in 2019 for her own charity.

But we've had some significant donations, mostly anonymous, from group members grateful for the support the group provides, and we must emphasise that most of our members aren't in a position to do this, and we certainly don't expect it. But we must mention **David**, husband of a member from the north of the county. David took part in a 'Stepember' fundraiser at his place of work, Briggs Equipment UK, managed to complete the highest number of steps in one month of all the participants, and was given **£1000** to donate to a charity of his choice. A huge thank you to David, this was such a surprise and we're really appreciative.

So when Debbie our Treasurer gives us the financial report at the (**very brief**) AGM on March 8, you'll be able to see what a healthy state our funds are at the moment. Do think about joining our committee and being involved in decisions about how we raise funds and decide how to spend them.

Rethink's Group of The Year Award

Congratulations to Lancashire's **East Lancs Activities Group**, seen here with the trophy presented at National Members' Day in Sheffield. Look out for the article in the spring edition of 'Your Voice', the quarterly magazine for those who have joined the national organisation.

This magazine has a wealth of useful and interesting information on all aspects of mental illness, and is available to anyone who has paid either the £6 for online only membership or the £27 for classic membership. To join, phone 0121 522 7007 or go to https://wethink.rethink.org/WeThink/MemberJoin_new/join_us_today.aspx



The more members we have, the more influence we have!
Join now!

The NHS long-term plan

what does it mean for you?

You might have seen the coverage about £billions more for the NHS with a big focus on improving mental health services. But

with people who are most ill waiting the longest for mental health treatments, will this new money stretch far enough to help those most in need? Mental health services have been a binary picture – on the one hand we've seen huge improvements to support for people with mild and moderate mental health problems in need of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) through the rollout of Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT). There has also been much needed investment into early interventions for new mothers and people with their first experience of psychosis.

Yet a recent Rethink Mental Illness report, **Right Treatment, Right Time**, found that people severely affected by mental illness, for example with schizophrenia or personality disorder, have been facing a bleak picture. They have been unable to access the services they need in the time they need them with people on average waiting 14 weeks for an assessment and a further 19 weeks for treatment. We have therefore been on tenterhooks for months now waiting to hear about what the NHS decision makers were planning to do about this significant inequality.

In November 2018 we voiced our concerns through a piece published in **The Sunday Telegraph**. The piece outlined our call for there to be a focus on core community services for people severely affected by mental illness in the NHS Long-term plan, supported by increased funding, workforce and data. **We're delighted that we've been listened to and there's a lot to be pleased about:**

- Aims to give 370,000 people severely affected by mental illness more choice and control over their care by transforming community services and increase their access to mental health therapies and trauma-informed care, and physical health and practical support. Directly linked to Rethink Mental Illness' calls, we're pleased to see a commitment to trial a four-week waiting time standard to community mental health teams.

- 24-hour mental health crisis support in the community and improved access to 'safe havens' in the community, like the crisis houses and cafes **Rethink Mental Illness provide**. There will be specific waiting time targets introduced from 2020.

-Continued commitments to end out of area placements for people needing hospital care by 2021 as well as funding to upgrade hospitals themselves following calls in the recent **Independent Review of the Mental Health Act**.

-Increased overall funding for children's mental health to deliver expansions to CAMHS services from ages 0-25 and ensuring there's mental health support in every school.

-Improved specialist perinatal mental health care from preconception to 24 months after birth for mothers and fathers.

These ambitions are bold and promising, particularly within the constraints of how much extra funding NHS England were provided by the Government and considering **the acute workforce shortage**. Overall there will be proportionately more funding for mental health than other areas with £2.3bn a year more until 2023/24. However, **following research** we carried out with the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), we know this still won't be enough to achieve true parity of esteem. We also know the 5-10-year timeframe for most of the ambitions seems frustratingly long; a huge part of this is because there simply isn't enough NHS staff available. However, we are encouraged by the focus on improving supply and the skill mix of the mental health workforce. It is crucial this is made a priority, as only then will we see delivery on the other commitments within the timeframes set out in the NHS Long Term Plan. Overall, this plan goes a long way to address the needs of people with complex mental health problems like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. That's a first and something we have long campaigned for. Like all plans, it's about what action comes next that really matters. **Rethink Mental Illness will now be working closely with NHS England, the Government, and local commissioners, to ensure the new focus on community services is rooted in the needs of those severely affected by mental illness, and provides mental health care fit for the 21st Century. We'll keep you posted....**

Attention all those under state pension age but not working because of caring responsibilities! You could get **Carer's Credit** if you're caring for someone for at least 20 hours a week.

Carer's Credit is a National Insurance credit that helps with gaps in your National Insurance record. Your State Pension is based on your National Insurance record. If you're eligible for Carer's Credit, you can get credits to help fill gaps in your National Insurance record. This means you can take on caring responsibilities without affecting your ability to qualify for the State Pension. The person you're looking after must get one of the following: Disability Living Allowance care component at the middle or highest rate/Attendance Allowance/Constant Attendance Allowance/Personal Independence Payment - daily living component, at the standard or enhanced rate/Armed Forces Independence Payment. Carers who don't qualify for Carer's Allowance may qualify for Carer's Credit.

Go to <https://www.gov.uk/carers-credit> for more information

1524 extra MH nursing staff taken on in the last year
Target of **21000** by 2020 will be missed!

WORKING
TO
IMPROVE
THINGS

Some of the initiatives our group members are involved in

Let us know if you're interested in any of these

Working with senior managers from clinical and social care services to develop training that will help to overcome confidentiality issues

Producing a comprehensive patient/carer information pack for all East Lancs community teams (hoping this will eventually be rolled out across the county)

Being the pilot for a new course for carers from LCFT psychology staff. It will be trialled, evaluated and honed in East Lancs before being put in place in the other areas of Lancashire. This will go well beyond what we do already and aim to

- teach us to focus on ourselves
- help break down stress and identify early warning signs
- give us strategies to manage our situation
- develop communication and problem-solving skills
- learn how to help one another

Here's how Rethink's campaigning made a difference in 2018:

*The Independent Review of the Mental Health Act published its recommendations to improve the Act. There's still a long way to go before we get the law changed, so we're calling on the Government to accept the recommendations in full. Almost 2,000 people have signed our petition so far!

Help us to reach our target of 3,000 - **add your name today.**

***Seni's Law became law.** Getting this bill passed will reduce the use of force in mental health hospitals. A campaign win!

*The Government dropped its harmful plans for supported housing funding. This gives thousands of people with mental illness reassurance that their homes are safe and secure. A campaign win!

*The Government announced it would not challenge a court ruling on PIP. This was a huge victory as it meant that up to **220,000 people would receive a higher rate of PIP.** A campaign win!

*We highlighted the true cost of what it will take for mental health and physical health to be treated with equal importance by the NHS: double the £2bn announced by the Government!

*We put forward the voices of over 1,600 people who took part in our survey about NHS mental health services. Thank you to everyone that took part. **You can read the results in our report Right Treatment, Right Time.**



If you'd like hard copies of any of the information referred to in this newsletter, please let us know