



# Rethink Carers Lancashire

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**The Covid situation from our group's perspective** – overwhelmingly one of **resilience** in spite of so many difficulties. Many of our members seem to have found ways to cope, from walking and gardening to volunteering and taking full advantage of what's offered for free, such as audio books and magazines, by Lancashire libraries (<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives/libraries/digital-library/?link=internal>)

**Our carers** are still caring, sometimes with great persistence when it's so difficult to get a quick response from mental health services – *"No one's come near us and they don't reply to messages"*. We know that staff have much increased caseloads, but

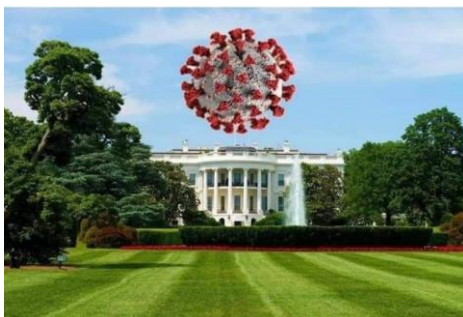
have found managers in both social care (Lancashire County Council) and clinical care (Lancashire & South Cumbria NHS Trust) have been really supportive as soon as we draw attention to individual issues, so don't hesitate to contact the group if you feel more needs to be done for the person you care for.

Rethink would be grateful to anyone who can complete a survey about how our groups can help you at this time. You'll find it at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/WTMSTDZ>, or if you receive this by post a copy and s.a.e. is enclosed.

**A New Rethink Group for North Lancashire** Rethink members Sue and Pete Flowers are channelling their energies in a really positive way by starting up a new Rethink Group in the Lancaster District. The **Phoenix Rethink Group** will start on Wednesday 18th November 2020. In the first instance meetings will be held remotely on Zoom, running from 11am-12pm. To find out more, to get involved or to request a Zoom link please contact [sue@greenclose.org](mailto:sue@greenclose.org)

**Lancashire is now in Tier 3**, as of course we know, but there's still some confusion amongst our members as to what this means. You'll find all the regulations at <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/coronavirus-updates/coronavirus-restrictions-in-lancashire/> (Copy enclosed with newsletter sent by post.) It's important to remember that individuals living alone can be part of a support bubble with one other household, and that, in any case, caring responsibilities *will* allow breach of the rule about mingling with another household.

On the next page you'll find some important information about how Covid is affecting the way social care is being provided by Lancashire County Council, and on Page 3 the Rethink information about living in the Covid crisis.



Talking of Covid.....a silly puzzle to lighten the mood; what's the name of this film?

(Clue – something to do with mental health care)

Answer on Page 4

## Updates from Lancashire County Council Social Care

We recently had a discussion with three senior social care managers from the Lancashire County Council mental health team; here are some of the key points:

- **Care planning for discharge from hospital:** it has been raised previously that although discharge planning should begin when someone is admitted to hospital, ward staff had been leaving referrals for Care Act assessments until it was too late, sometimes even *after* a patient had been discharged. No new social care package can be put together until a thorough Care Act assessment of needs has been agreed. Lancashire County Council now have 10 additional staff supporting the discharge referral system, so every referral from ward staff goes to this Integrated Discharge Team, which always has someone on duty. If health staff don't refer, no plans can be made, so it's well worth checking early on that this has been done.
- **Contacting your key worker:** we have had instances where carers have left messages for the practitioners involved in your relative's care but not had a response. For LCC staff, a duty worker is always available on the CMHT contact telephone number. For health staff, there is always a duty worker at the relevant resource centre. Although this problem seems to have increased during the lockdown, it was pointed out that in fact staff working from home and not making home visits actually have more time to respond appropriately. If you still encounter this problem, contact the Group Coordinator who will pass the message on to the appropriate manager.
- **Carer assessments:** the formal carer assessment is done by Ncompass or Carers Link, but doesn't cover much more than grants and basic information. If an assessor identifies that a carer has more complex needs, then they should make a further referral to the Social Care team. It seems that this is not happening, as very few such referrals have been made. Please contact the group if you feel your carer assessment needs wider actions.

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### And now for a REAL puzzle .....

Some people in Lancashire (those who are not on section 117 aftercare, for instance) have to **contribute towards their care package**, with the amount of this contribution determined by a financial assessment from the Finance Department at County Hall. Some of our families have been surprised to find that in the Covid crisis they haven't been asked to pay this contribution, and were worried that they might suddenly get a large backdated bill. And they have been even more worried by a letter sent out earlier this month from Finance to say they can expect to undergo another financial assessment soon!!!!

But **DO NOT WORRY!** In March the government allocated to councils a '**Covid Fund**', and in Lancashire some of this was used to support those receiving care packages by *temporarily* not charging for the care. (Unfortunately, we have as yet found it impossible to ascertain what the criteria were for the free care, although it seems to have something to do with how the social worker commissioned the package in the first place.) However, the scheme ended on August 31<sup>st</sup> 2020. So, to make sure people have good warning of this, Finance have sent out a complicated letter which has created something of a panic. "*When will I get this financial assessment?*" "*When will I have to start paying again?*" "*Will I have to pay more than before?*" "*Will they take my care away?*"

From a conversation this week with someone from the Care Finance Team (apparently as confused as we are!), it seems that this letter has been sent out automatically to those on some kind of list, and Finance don't necessarily know what the answers are for each individual. We were assured that no one would receive a backdated bill. If you're in this situation and want more clarity, you can first of all phone the Care Finance Team on **0300 126 6708**, giving them the reference number on your letter. If this doesn't help, you need to contact your social worker IF YOU HAVE ONE. If you no longer have a social worker, you should phone **0300 123 6720**, ask to speak to the Duty Social Worker, and say you wish to be allocated a social worker so that you can get advice on when and how your charges will re-start. This is not likely to happen quickly, Social Services being inundated with so many urgent problems at the moment.

Apologies if this is clear as



**Do get in touch if you'd like us to try to explain again!**

## From Rethink

You'll find a lot of *advice and information about Covid and mental illness* at

<https://www.rethink.org/advice-and-information/covid-19-support> but we've included

here some *specifics about Clozapine*:

**Will I continue to get blood tests during the coronavirus crisis?** You should continue to have your blood tests at your normal intervals during the coronavirus crisis. But healthcare professionals might decide that your blood test remains valid for a longer period during the coronavirus. If they do, you might have less frequent blood tests than normal. Professionals might give you less frequent blood tests as they might have less staff than normal, because of the coronavirus crisis. But professionals should only decide this if they think you can still take clozapine safely.

**Can I continue to be supplied with clozapine if my blood test is no longer valid?** If necessary, healthcare professionals might decide to continue to supply you with clozapine, even if your blood test is no longer valid. They should only do this if the decision meets your specific needs. They should explain to you why they have made the decision and record it in your patient notes.

**Can I still take clozapine if I have symptoms of coronavirus?** If you have symptoms of coronavirus you must self-isolate at home. Coronavirus is known to cause fever, sore throat and cold or flu like symptoms. But these could also be sign that your blood cell counts are low. The NHS say if you have symptoms, you should contact your mental health team before you take your next dose of clozapine. They will tell you what you should do. Your team might arrange a blood test for you. You might not be able to get hold of someone from your mental health team. The line might be busy, or it might be the weekend or out of hours. If this happens you can call your GP or NHS 111.

**What should I tell healthcare professionals about Clozapine?** You might come into contact with healthcare professionals who deal with physical illness if you have symptoms of coronavirus, or if you have another physical health problem. Be sure to tell these healthcare professionals that: • You take clozapine for your mental illness,

- Because you take clozapine you have to have regular blood tests,
- You need the blood tests because clozapine can cause your white blood cell numbers to drop, and
- They should contact your mental health team to discuss this. Give them the name and contact details of the person you normally deal with at your mental health team.

## Rethink's Advice Service

Don't forget that our **Advice Service** is still working really hard to provide up to date Advice and Information during the COVID-19 pandemic. They can give you advice on how to access support, medication, mental health diagnosis and many other practical issues surrounding mental health. You can contact them on **0300 5000 927** between 9.30am – 4.00pm, Monday – Friday or you can find information online too here: [www.rethink.org/aboutus/what-we-do/advice-and-information-service](http://www.rethink.org/aboutus/what-we-do/advice-and-information-service) You can speak to the service by web chat here too between 10am – 1pm Monday – Friday. There is also an online form so that you can leave a message for the Advice Service outside of their opening hours.

As mentioned in the last newsletter, if you need urgent *local* help with mental health distress, call Lancashire & South Cumbria's Mental Health Urgent Response Line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling **0800 953 0110**. It is staffed by trained mental health professionals who are able to provide assessment and referrals to appropriate services – ring it if you need to access services or for advice about someone who needs treatment/support. For those needing to contact the Trust services they already use, please use the numbers below.

Blackburn **01254 226430** **01254 226074**

Blackpool **01253 951225** **01253 956280**

Chorley & South Ribble **01772 676173** **01772 773525**

**9 am-5 pm**

Hyndburn, Rossendale & Ribble Valley **01254 226006** **01254 612640**

Lancaster & Morecambe **01524 550550** **01524 550198** **01524 550199**

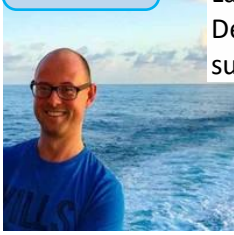
**5 pm-9 am**

Pendle & Burnley **01282 628455** **01282 657222**

Preston **01772 647024** **01772 773433**

South Cumbria **0300 024 7247** **0300 024 7247**

West Lancashire **01695 684161** **01695 684356**



**Chief Operating Officer, Chris Oliver**, is the latest appointment to the senior management team of Lancashire & Sth Cumbria NHS Trust. Chris joined the Trust in July 2020 as Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Chief Executive. Demonstrating partnership working is one of Chris's key drivers knowing the success that such partnership brings when delivering services across a whole health economy.

Chris has already taken time to contact our group, specifically with a view to partnership working; we'd raised the issue of long delays in getting an appointment with a Consultant Psychiatrist in the Chorley area, and received the answer quoted below. He's also agreed to come to a group meeting when we can re-start (ever the optimists!) and is keen on better integration of health and social care

***"I can confirm that the waiting times for a consultant appointment within Chorley South Ribble are currently between eight and nine months. While this is not as long as you had been informed, this is not acceptable and below are some of the mitigations and actions currently taking place:***

- ***All patients waiting for appointments have been consulted post lockdown and still require appointments***
- ***The waiting list is regularly scrutinised by the Team Leader and Clinical Lead***
- ***The Trust is obtaining additional Pharmacy support to support patients awaiting medical review***
- ***An advert is currently out for a 1.0 Specialty Doctor***
- ***Additional locum support is being sourced to help reduce the waiting time to an acceptable level at pace***

This year's **World Mental Health Day**, on 10 October, came at a time when our daily lives had changed considerably as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The past months have brought many challenges for everyone, perhaps particularly for people with mental health conditions, many experiencing even greater social isolation than before. Given past experience of emergencies, it is expected that the need for mental health and psychosocial support will substantially increase in the coming months and years. Investment in mental health programmes at the national and international levels, which have already suffered from years of chronic underfunding, is now more important than it has ever been. This is why the goal of this year's World Mental Health Day campaign is increased investment in mental health. And why Rethink Mental Illness has played a key role in bringing together over 50 voluntary and social sector organisations to call on the government for a new social contract for mental health, to address this crisis. You'll find a copy of the letter to the Prime Minister, with all the signatories, at <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/new-social-contract>

## AND WHAT ABOUT THE CARERS IN ALL THIS?

**The Coronavirus Act re-stated a hugely important element of the law vis-à-vis carers:** *"Under the Care Act 2014, unpaid carers have parity of esteem with the people they support and this is not changed by the Coronavirus Act. This means that local authorities should consult unpaid carers about the individuals in receipt of care and support and consider their capacity and wishes to provide support as part of the planning process. If the unpaid carer also has eligible needs, these should be considered and supported. They should also have had a carers assessment previously which may need to be reviewed. The Local Authority has a duty to meet the eligible care and support needs of both the individual and their carer."*

Carers UK is calling on the government to continue to introduce measures that support carers. They also want the government to implement a **New Deal for Carers**, with medium term tangible action to support carers and those they care for. Longer term, carers also need to be placed at the heart of a reformed and sustainable social care system that provides more support to both those giving and receiving care. You'll find all the data to support this, and the chance to join this campaign, at <https://www.carersuk.org/news-and-campaigns/campaigns/caring-behind-closed->

The film is "One Flu Over the Cuckoo's Nest"