



# Rethink Carers Lancashire

07534 369889

[lancscarersgroup@rethink.org](mailto:lancscarersgroup@rethink.org)

c/o Rethink Mental Illness, Involvement Team, PO Box 201,  
TIVERTON EX16 0DY

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Group meetings are starting up again – *a first meeting* for carers from any area of Lancashire in Brindle on Monday October 18, then a re-start to our regular programme of *monthly local meetings* for East Lancs, and a new venture of *monthly local meetings* for the Central Lancashire area.

- **Monday October 18** Brindle Community Centre, 11 am to 1 pm. This will be a social meeting just for carers, to re-establish our connections and share our experiences over the past couple of years. We'll provide some refreshments.
- Second Tuesday of every month, starting **Tuesday November 9<sup>th</sup>** at Elmfield Hall Accrington, **10.30-12.30**. Drinks and biscuits, and the option to buy a lunch in the Elmfield café afterwards. *For this meeting we've arranged a visit from Scott Smith, who is the (new-ish) Associate Director of Operations for all community services in East Lancashire. Scott will explain the changes to the structure of community mental health services and answer our questions.*
- Second Tuesday of every month, starting **Tuesday November 9<sup>th</sup>** at Brindle Community Hall, **2-4 pm**. This is a pilot initiative, if there's enough support it will continue.

For all the above, to manage safe distancing, we'll need to know who will be attending. If you need a lift we'll do our best to help. **However, we will not feel comfortable asking group members to give lifts to anyone who is unvaccinated unless this carer has a negative result from a lateral flow test carried out on the day of the meeting.**

After the long disruption COVID has had to our regular meetings we are so pleased finally to be able to resume our face-to-face meetings once more. However, the decision to do so was not simple, we have had many considerations and concerns to explore. Rethink takes the safety and wellbeing of its volunteers and group members very seriously, and whilst we all recognise the need for people to engage in their regular peer support activities, it's important this is done in a safe way that mitigates the risk and transmission of COVID 19 wherever practically possible, and we all take on the responsibility to keep one another safe. So before attending the group meeting / activity please consider and follow the points on the next page.

**Staying safe  
in our  
meetings**

- Please do not attend during self- isolation periods or if you have symptoms of COVID 19.
- We encourage all members to make use of the free lateral flow tests available; if you can, please carry out a test prior to coming to the group.
- If you do test positive, then we would ask that you do not attend the group and follow the Government and NHS guidelines that follow a positive test.
- Please respect the restrictions upon us regards group size, do not invite others to attend without going through the group coordinator so group size can be managed and controlled.
- Please practice social distancing throughout the meeting.
- If you can wear a facial covering, please do so when walking around or in close areas with others.
- We ask that members do not share food, drinks, or equipment.
- Please follow the venue's instructions, routes, and processes in place to support the control of COVID 19 transmission.
- Please practice good hand hygiene and we would encourage members to bring their own hand sanitizer.
- Lastly If you are feeling under the weather, given we are entering cold and flu season, please, help protect your fellow members and stay home until you're feeling well again.

**Rethink's National Members' Day 2021** brings together all the charity's members and this year will take place on **Saturday 13 November** at The Studio in Birmingham, from 10am to 3.30pm. Members' Day is your chance to find out more about the work of Rethink Mental Illness, the mental health landscape, and to meet-up with other members. Join us and listen to our inspiring keynote speaker Dr Alison Brabban talk about psychological therapies for psychosis. Lunch and refreshments are provided, and we will also celebrate the dedication of our staff and members across the country in the Pringle and Janey Antoniou awards ceremony. - call The Members' Day Event Team on 020 7840 3132 or email [membersday@rethink.org](mailto:membersday@rethink.org) quoting your membership number.



### **Carers Rights Day 2021 will be held on 25 November**

Carers

need to know their rights wherever they are in their caring journey: whether they are in the workplace, in a healthcare setting, when interacting with professionals or at home. Carers need to be empowered with information and support, so they can feel confident asking for what they need. We also want carers to know how to challenge things when their needs (and those of the person they care for) are not being met. During the pandemic we've been contacted by many carers who just don't feel they have the right to ask or to challenge, and much of the work of this group is to provide exactly the information and support that will help with this.



## Flying the flag for carers

During the pandemic our activities of course have been curtailed, and we've not provided the same extent of emotional support. But we've continued to be a voice for carers, to send out information to those who've contacted us for it, and – when we've had permission from the carer – to contact managers within the services and pass on concerns about the care their loved-ones are receiving. We've continued our involvement with development of service provision, and established links with senior staff, many of whom have promised to attend our

meetings once they resume. We've been contacted by new carers who mostly found us from internet searches, and – without the benefit of face-to-face meetings – have in many cases just not known where to turn. The two big issues are (1) understanding how the various elements of care provision are delivered and (2) knowing what families are entitled to. Then it's a big step for an unsupported carer to be confident enough to ask the right questions, insist on answers, and challenge things that don't seem right.

### So what's our group's ongoing involvement for 2021?

- We've restarted training mental health practitioners around information-sharing with carers
- We have a group member representing us on the Trust's Service User and Carer Forum
- One of our carers has given a lot of her time and expertise to high level discussions about what person-centred care should be
- Another member is helping to improve how staff make assessments of someone's clinical needs
- We did a training session for Approved Mental Health Professionals on how it feels to have someone in your family sectioned. This resulted in some really positive improvements in the information given to families and a more empathetic approach by the professionals
- We're working with the Trust to develop a good hospital discharge pack for patients and their families. This has alerted us to the existence of the 'Integrated Discharge Team' and a detailed protocol (agreed by all local providers) for how hospital discharge is supposed to happen. More details below; it would be wonderful if this happened in every case !
- We are beginning training sessions for social workers, both within Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Trust, and on University of Bolton degree courses. The focus for these will be on what carers really need, and how communications between carers and practitioners can be improved

### Some key points from the Discharge Protocol

- Upon admission, every person should be offered a thorough, holistic and comprehensive assessment of their health and social care needs which is compliant with the Care Act (2014)
- The view of family members and carers should be sought and actively involved in the discharge planning
- In collaboration with the service user and carer, a care and support plan should be developed which sets out how these needs will be met and by whom. It should promote recovery, social inclusion and choice.

We've heard so many times about patients having been discharged before anyone has assessed their needs, with no care plan, no notification to their carer, and no follow up arrangements. This detailed protocol document will be useful ammunition to ensure a safe discharge. **ASK US FOR A COPY.**



## Rethink's response to Boris Johnson's Conservative Party Conference speech

From **Brian Dow**, Deputy CEO, 6 October 2021, after it emerged that there was no mention of mental health

*"Since investment in mental health was lagging so far behind physical health before the pandemic started, failure to put the issue at the core of the government's strategy going forward will have the opposite effect to levelling up for people living with mental illness. The absence of any mention of mental health in today's speech was a worrying surprise. It would have also been good to hear the Prime Minister describe how the social care system can support people experiencing mental health problems – not least those that will struggle further as a result of the £20 cut to Universal Credit. Let's trust these omissions are not reflections of broader government priorities."*



## Rethink's statement on High Court ruling in Jodey Whiting case

From **Alex Kennedy**, Head of Campaigns and Public Affairs

*On September 17 the family of Jodey Whiting lost an appeal for a new inquest to examine the role of the Department for Work and Pensions in her death. "This ruling is terrible news for Jodey's family, who have fought so hard to get justice on her behalf. Jodey, who lived with serious long-term physical and mental health issues, was desperately let down by the DWP but this heart-breaking case is far from unique. Recent figures revealed that in the past three years there have been 124 internal investigations by DWP into cases of death or serious harm. The lack of transparency and accountability is inexcusable. At a time when millions of people rely on support from benefits, this should be a national scandal. Our Stop Benefit Deaths campaign is calling for a public inquiry to give families the answers they deserve, and to prevent others from being failed by a system which is supposed to support them."*

## Rethink campaign "STOP BENEFITS DEATHS"

Research reveals that since 2012, the **DWP has set up more than 268 internal reviews into the death or serious harm of people supported by the benefits system**. We know that the DWP's internal processes are inconsistent and unclear, so we fear there may be many more cases that haven't been reported or investigated. In the **last two years alone, the rate of internal investigations by the DWP into deaths and serious harm almost tripled (a 176% rise) with 124 cases since summer 2019**. Without further information from the DWP, we do not know how far this shows that the number of deaths or serious harm has grown in the last two years, or that the DWP was not investigating cases in the past.

**Tip of the Iceberg? Deaths and Serious Harm in the Benefits System**: in our **NEW REPORT** we look at key areas of the benefits process that can cause severe distress for people – including applying for benefits, being assessed or reassessed, the threat of sanctions and the impact of administrative errors. The DWP has been found to negatively impact people's wellbeing, causing severe anxiety and distress, creating financial hardship, worsening existing mental health conditions and in very tragic cases led to death.

As part of our campaign **Stop Benefit Deaths** we are working with bereaved families and people seriously harmed by the benefits system to better understand the scale of the problem and to demand a full public inquiry and a new body to investigate future cases. **Their stories are heart-breaking, and they deserve answers.**

Let's be clear, the evidence **suggests that a government department has played a part in the deaths of over a hundred people. In any other public service, the tragic deaths of so many people would have triggered an urgent public investigation and outcry.** The current process is shrouded in secrecy, with little to no public accountability. For there to be confidence in the benefits system we need to see concrete evidence that the DWP is learning from these tragic cases and implementing change. You'll find this report at [tip-of-the-iceberg.pdf \(rethink.org\)](#) or ask us for a copy.