



Rethink Carers Lancashire

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December 2021

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Best wishes to everyone

and hopes for a stress-free and peaceful time. We'll pick up phone/email messages intermittently over the holidays, leave a message if you need support or to talk



Let's hope the prospects for Christmas 2021 will be a bit better than they were last year despite all the Omicron uncertainty!

In the new year we still hope to have some group events coming up, with the monthly small group meetings on the second Tuesday of every month 10.30 a.m. in Accrington (next one January 11th.) **MAKE SURE YOU PHONE OR EMAIL TO LET US KNOW YOU'LL BE COMING.** If you need a lift, phone the number above, or if you live in Blackburn /Darwen contact the BwD Carers Service on 01254 688440 And we're still paying careful attention to Covid rules as outlined in our last newsletter.

Unfortunately, the planned meetings at Brindle for those living in the Central Lancs area are for the moment on hold. We need to look again at our offer and find ways of reaching out to more carers, possibly with a more accessible venue.

HOWEVER see next page for *one not to miss!* Covid rules permitting, our Brindle mini-conference meetings will be resuming with a **full day meeting at Brindle Community Centre on Friday February 11, 10.30 to 3.30.**

This meeting will be open to all carers (with lifts or travel expenses if needed) as well as any practitioners who wish to attend. Lunch details to follow, but – as above – you *must* make sure you let us know you'll be coming.

Full day meeting, Friday February 11th, 10.30-3.30

Brindle Community Hall PR6 8NH

Morning The most senior managers in Lancashire's mental health services will be there to provide crucial and the most up-to-date information about developments, and to listen to our experiences of how both Lancashire County Council and Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Trust provide for carers.



One old friend,
Mairead Gill Mullarkey,
Lancashire
County Council,

Senior Service Manager Mental Health. Mairead has been to our meetings several times, has always been very frank about the services, always taken on board what group members have said, and is always extremely responsive and helpful when matters are brought to her attention



And two new friends, **Steve Christian** (on the left above) and **Paul Jebb**, from Lancashire & Sth Cumbria NHS Trust. Steve is Chief Integration Officer and leads on delivering integrated care across Mental Health, Learning Disabilities and Autism. Paul is Associate Chief Nurse, Patient/Carer Experience and safeguarding. Both are committed to making sure professionals fully acknowledge the importance of carers and optimise our skills and input.

This is a fantastic opportunity to meet with managers who are keen to inform, to listen and to bring about change.

Afternoon No introductions needed for our afternoon speaker!



Doug Feery is a barrister well known for his work in Mental Health, Public and Human Rights Law. Doug has brought his expertise and speaking skills to our meetings on many occasions, and has very generously offered to do so again, this time to address the issue of what carers are entitled to expect from mental health services, to update us about changes in mental health law, and to draw our attention to the themes of today most relevant to carers (and of course to those we care for)

Any carer who would like to submit comments or questions for any of the speakers above should do so via the Group Coordinator beforehand. This will help to ensure a good spread of topics and that everyone has the chance to contribute.

We'd also like to hear from any group members who might be interested in participating in surveys or research about their carer experience. During the course of the pandemic, we've been contacted quite a few times by researchers. Conscious of the burden carers now have, we've hesitated to pass on such enquiries, but if you *are* willing to consider taking part, please let us know. Obviously, we'll ensure that any such studies are safe, ethically approved and properly supervised.

Carers' experience of hospital discharge: Carers UK had been concerned that government guidance about discharge from hospital did not refer to or include carers' rights under the Care Act 2014. It omitted any reference to carers rights and that carers should be asked whether they were willing and able to care. It should have referred to the fact that sufficient services are required to be in place to ensure that the patient is safe to be discharged. The Carers UK survey found that the law did not seem to be followed in a large number of cases. It revealed the devastating toll on carers where it is clear that they have been left with unacceptable levels of caring responsibilities which are unsafe in some situations. This has placed intolerable stress upon carers and has had negative outcomes for people needing care and support. A very clear thread from carers' experiences shows that carers have not been involved, consulted or given the right information in order to care safely and well. If carers are considered to be partners in care, then, like health and care professionals, they need access to relevant information to help them support a person needing care safely. You can find the full report at [Carers experiences of hospital discharge report 2021.pdf \(carersuk.org\)](#) This was a survey of carers of people with all conditions, but the findings are even more resonant when it comes to discharge of someone with a mental illness.



Rethink Mental Illness reaction to the new social care white paper

The government set out plans for social care in a new white paper, titled ['People at the heart of care'](#) unveiled 1 December 2021. Here's CEO Mark Winstanley giving our reaction to the white paper: "As a vision for the future of social care provision, there are certainly aspects of the white paper which are commendable. In a debate that is often exclusively framed around social care for older people, the needs of working age adults who rely on social care, including people severely affected by mental illness and their carers, are often forgotten. For people living with mental illness, access to good quality social care can mean the difference between a fulfilling, independent life in their community and a revolving door of acute and costly care via the NHS. So we are pleased that the white paper recognises the role mental health social care plays in improving the quality of people's lives. The white paper outlines the right aspirations for the future of the social care system over the next decade and much-needed action in key areas - new investment in supported housing is particularly welcome to aid recovery when people leave hospital.

"What the white paper is not, and what we need in addition to a ten-year plan, is an emergency road map to deliver us from the social care crisis, which has been fuelled by the pandemic. Many local authorities are struggling to make the numbers add up and simply do not have the resources to make ends meet. We must be honest that while there are leading lights and examples of positive practice across the country, the gap between where the system is now and the vision outlined in the paper is vast. Achieving this vision will be reliant on the funding, fine detail and action to turn these ambitions into reality for people living with severe mental illness."



The Lancashire AMHP Service is there to assess whether someone needs to be detained under the Mental Health Act (= sectioned). Both professionals and non-professionals (relatives/carers) can request a Mental Health Act assessment by calling the LCC Customer Access Centre on 0300 123 6721 and asking to speak to the AMHP Service. They have now launched an alternative way to do this - an online referral form which can be accessed directly via this link:

[https://lancashire-self.achieveservice.com/service/Mental Health Act Assessment Request](https://lancashire-self.achieveservice.com/service/Mental_Health_Act_Assessment_Request)

There is also a link to the online referral form on the AMHP Service webpage of the Lancashire County Council website:

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/adult-social-care/adult-mental-health-social-care-services/approved-mental-health-professional-amhp-service/?page=1>

If you'd like more information or support with this, contact our group



Leading UK Health charities join forces to boost vaccine uptake

Rethink Mental Illness has partnered with 15 leading health charities, the government and the NHS to boost vaccine uptake amongst the country's most vulnerable this winter. The coalition brings together 16 charities who will work to encourage their members to get their first, second and booster doses as soon as they can, as well as their third primary course dose if they're immunocompromised. The organisations will encourage people to get their flu vaccines, to keep them as safe as possible this winter. Terrence Higgins Trust, Carers UK and Epilepsy Action have also taken part in a short film that will be shared over social media. As the weather turns colder and people are spending more time indoors mixing with family and friends, it's crucial that those who are vulnerable to severe illness from COVID-19 and flu come forward for the jabs they need.

From the Lancashire Evening Post October 28th By Jack Marshall, Reporter

Caring for carers with Rethink Carers Lancashire: 'People have said they don't know where they'd be without Rethink' As the group coordinator for Rethink Carers Lancashire, Valerie Minns is under no illusions regarding the scale of the group's task at hand. "We work with around 100 people, but that's peanuts given there are about 1.5m carers in Lancashire," she says. "But that support is nevertheless crucial. Founded in 2009, this is an independent and self-funded peer support group run under the aegis of Rethink Mental Illness. Independent of social services and the NHS, it offers information and support both in person and online for the carers of those living with mental health illness. Run by and for carers - the best support is innately empathetic - the group works to ensure people can provide the best care possible for the estimated 37,000 people with a diagnosis of severe mental illness in Lancashire.



"Caring for people with mental illness can be difficult and, if they don't have insight into their own illness, it can cause issues," says Valerie, who's been involved since 2009. "Rethink offers everything from practical help - we've even helped people move house - to moral and emotional support, help with signposting to relevant services, and assistance with accessing benefits," she adds. "I've had quite a few people saying they don't know where they'd be without Rethink.

"There's a stigma around mental illness, but families live with it and need support," Valerie continues. "Often, as soon as people realise they're not alone, the floodgates open. And that chance to offload is crucial because I've often found that carers are disregarded by the statutory mental health services."

One of the group's volunteers, Trish, came across Rethink around eight years ago after a family member of hers was diagnosed with mental health problems and credits the group with making a big impact on her life. "You get such a lot of support from people and you get so much out of hearing about other people's experiences," Trish says. "It makes you realise that you're not the only one: in the group, we're all in the same boat. I get a lot of pride from being involved in Rethink, especially at a time like Covid, which has been tough for people. "But the pandemic has only reaffirmed the importance of the group, in my mind," she adds.

Having forged strong relationships with local service managers such as the NHS, local councils, and Lancashire County Council so as to resolve issues at as early a stage as possible, Rethink also offers support with financial issues and is involved with a couple of carers' services in Blackburn with Darwen and East Lancashire as their mental health arms. But, during the pandemic, their network of support was pushed to the limit. Forced to hold meetings online, Rethink found the format to be lacking given the age profile of their service-users but, thankfully, have recently been able to return to in-person meetings in Accrington and Chorley.

"The toll that caring for someone with mental illness takes can be huge and, of course, it's been exacerbated in lockdown," explains Valerie. "People didn't just stop getting ill and anxiety is a huge component of mental illness, which Covid has just added to. Services have done what they can, but they've been stretched and it's that face-to-face contact which helps people. You see a massive difference in people when they can actually come to meetings because they go from being completely lost to realising there are other people who understand," she adds. "Seeing that brings an awful lot of fulfilment."

