



Rethink Carers Lancashire

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New group meetings schedule from April 21st

Two regular monthly meetings (**Oswaldtwistle** for carers living in East Lancashire, **Brindle** for those living in the Central Lancs area)

It's always helpful if you can let us know that you plan to attend any meeting.

The **regular monthly meetings** will be held on the third Thursday of every month, starting on April 21st. Dates after that will be:

May 19 June 16 July 21 August 18 September 15

The **Oswaldtwistle** meetings will be from **10.15 to 12.30**, the **Brindle** meetings from **2 to 4 pm**.

We have a **new venue** in East Lancs. We'll be at **Brave Church**, Watson St, Oswaldtwistle, Lancashire, BB5 3HH. This is easy to find not far from Oswaldtwistle Mill, and has plenty of parking spaces. Turn off the main road at the war memorial into Rhyddings Street; Watson Street is the first street on the right. Brave Church has an excellent coffee shop so the plan is for members to meet in the coffee shop and buy a drink (very reasonable prices) before going to the meeting room.

Brindle meetings will be at the **Community Hall** (as before) Water Street, Brindle, Chorley PR6 8NH.

PLUS - one not to miss! our Brindle mini-conference meetings will be resuming with a **full day meeting at Brindle Community Centre on Friday May 27th, 10.30 to 3.30**. This meeting will be open to carers from across Lancashire (with lifts or travel expenses if needed) as well as any practitioners who wish to attend.

Morning: Doug Feery, Barrister, who is expert in mental health, public and human rights law. Doug will address the legal issues that most affect carers, and in particular look at mental capacity aspects.

Afternoon: Mairead Gill Mullarkey, Lancashire County Council's Senior Service Manager for mental health, who will pinpoint the processes for ensuring a good care package, with integration of health and social care, and an emphasis on building in provision for when the carer input is reduced.



Let us know if you'd like lunch on this day (menu to follow)

We need to talk about

After the last two years, and the sombre events in Ukraine, this seems to be a good time to talk about something on every carer's mind but rarely discussed at length, namely what will happen to those we care for when we're not here. Many of our group members are particularly conscious of this just at the moment, so it's probably useful to highlight the help and advice available from Rethink. It's never too soon to start taking gradual steps towards promoting independence – none of us can know what's around the corner.

There's an excellent section on the Rethink website ([Planning for the future - your relative's care and support \(rethink.org\)](https://rethink.org)) and a comprehensive factsheet to download / ask us for a copy. You'll find advice about how to talk to your relative on this sensitive subject, how to start getting things in place, how the mental health services should help, and what legal steps can be taken.

In theory, your carers assessment should include support with this problem.

Provision for when a carer becomes unable or unwilling to care should be written into the care plan following a Care Act assessment. Too many of our members tell us they have inadequate (or even non-existent) care plans, and when Mairead comes to our meeting on April 29 we're hoping for a good discussion about how things can be improved in this respect.

We're also arranging a meeting soon with Steve Howells of Arcadia Trust - another longstanding friend to our group. Steve works with Rethink to focus on vulnerable people and provide trust management services, wills, powers of attorney and tax advice, based on what is fair and what is the right thing to do. He's brilliant at explaining very complex legal issues and can discuss individual situations. Watch this space for the meeting date. If you want to prepare for this discussion, look at the Rethink factsheet, available for **trusts** at <https://www.mentalhealthandmoneyadvice.org/en/managing-money/how-do-i-make-a-will-or-trust-fund/what-are-discretionary-trusts/> and for **wills** at <https://www.mentalhealthandmoneyadvice.org/en/managing-money/how-do-i-make-a-will-or-trust-fund/how-do-i-make-a-will/>

If it's your job to eat a frog, it's best to do it first think in the morning. And if it's your job to eat two frogs, it's best to eat the biggest one first



So, if you've been putting off tackling this very upsetting subject, think of this quote from Mark Twain and just eat the frog!



Rethink's 50th birthday - 50 years of changing lives!

This year is incredibly special: throughout 2022 we will be marking our 50th anniversary. We will be reflecting on the changes in the mental health landscape over the last 50 years and celebrating our role in changing the lives of people severely affected by mental illness, and their carers. But our insatiable desire to fight for a better world for people living with mental illness has never left. And that's why we'll also be looking ahead to the next 50 years, as we continue to lead the way to a better quality of life for everyone severely affected by mental illness. Join us.

How it all started: In May 1970, a man named John Pringle wrote a letter to The Times about his son's experience of schizophrenia and highlighted the lack of care and support for people living with the condition. 400 people responded and the foundations of The National Schizophrenia Fellowship were born. From this, our charity was officially formed on 25 July 1972.

Over the last 50 years, we have been a beacon of hope for everyone affected by severe mental illness. From campaigning on [The Mental Health Act](#), to our award-winning advice and information service, to championing peer support, our message is clear. Everyone affected by mental illness deserves a good quality of life, no matter their circumstances.

Changing lives, every day: Today we run over [90 mental health services](#) across England that offer front line support for people in their own communities. With the help of volunteers, we also run a further 140 local [peer support groups](#) and an award-winning [advice and information line](#) which receives over 4000 requests for help every year. We're excited to look back over the last 50 years, but it's also vital that we look forward. The mental health conversation has made great strides, but people severely affected by mental illness still need to see meaningful change across all aspects of everyday life.

The road ahead: There's still so much work to do. Well-funded mental health support seems further away than ever in the economic uncertainty fuelled by Covid-19. And we see the impact of this in many different ways. People living with severe mental illness still have a shorter life expectancy than others, black people are still four times more likely than their white counterparts to be sectioned. And living with mental illness too often leads to isolation, financial problems and other difficulties. But there is hope. For half a century, our community of groups and services has been built to push the boundaries and improve mental health care. We have a bold vision for the future of mental health care, and we are working hard to make it a reality: our mission to build [Communities that Care](#) is just beginning.

Urgent campaign launches to increase awareness of psychosis, as research shows a quarter of young people at greatest risk have never heard of it.

A quarter of 18–34-year-olds (24%) say they have not heard of psychosis* One third (34%) of GB adults said they don't know how confident they would be that they could spot symptoms of psychosis, compared to mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety. Less than half of those polled (48%) say they believe psychosis is something you can recover from, even though accessing early treatment can be life changing. We have launched a new campaign to raise awareness of psychosis and encourage people to seek urgent support if they're concerned about themselves or a loved one. The campaign launch coincides with new research from YouGov, which suggests young people aged 18-34 have the lowest levels of awareness of psychosis (76% compared to 84% for those aged 35+), even though first episodes of psychosis occur most commonly in this age group. Awareness was also noticeably lower among full-time students, with one in three (31%) saying they hadn't heard of psychosis, compared to 18% for people of working status. The timing of the campaign is critical, with the pandemic proving hugely damaging to many young people's mental health. The drive to raise awareness also comes after services experienced an [increase in referrals](#) of suspected first episodes of psychosis during the pandemic.



War in Ukraine

We're all heartbroken at what we see on the news, and for us, especially, we're conscious of its implications for mental illness, not just for the people of Ukraine, but also on those watching from afar.

The war has contributed to the worldwide pandemic danger, causing panic in living rooms and workplaces, and jeopardising psychological safety and security. Watching the real-time slaughter of innocent Ukrainian residents and bombs of houses and buildings on televisions, laptops, or mobile phones for days on end has a catastrophic impact on worldwide mental health. The world has been stunned by Russia's unprovoked attack on Ukraine's sovereign nation. While it is distressing to witness the war's immediate impact on human lives and livelihood, the invasion will also inflict psychological damage that would last for generations. Civilians who have been impacted by war are at a higher risk of developing mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression, and the present circumstances may intensify or trigger pre-existing mental health issues. Ukrainian children will face a psychologically devastating situation. The psychological impact of the Ukraine-Russia war may be so profound that discussing it now, while the people of Ukraine are dealing with the trauma of war, is critical. Psychiatric and psychological research has shown that the war causes persistent episodes in practically everyone, regardless of age or gender. Anxiety disorders, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and Depression are some of the most prevalent side effects.

What we can do to help ourselves and those we care for:

After a two-year pandemic, it's a lot to absorb, and experts agree that feeling overwhelmed is normal. While it's right to think first and foremost about the impact on those caught up in the conflict, it's also completely normal to feel upset from afar by what we're seeing in Ukraine, says Alex Bushill, from the mental health charity Mind. "It's very natural to be distressed by what we're seeing, you wouldn't be human if you didn't," he says. This doesn't always lead to anxiety, but the NHS and Anxiety UK agree on some key ways to avoid it: eat well, get outside, put your phone down, connect with people, rest. These are all pretty basic pieces of advice, but when you're stressed, they can be difficult to do consistently. Alex says breaking it down into a two-step process can help. The first is to remove yourself from triggers so that you can practice mindfulness. "Get yourself into a place where you can be in the moment - whether that's sport or walking the dog," he says. The second step is to focus on self-discipline around specific techniques that work for you. "Create the space to take a lunch break or play squash on a Tuesday with your mate - and to make sure you do that." Experts agree that if you're feeling anxious, avoid doom scrolling - the act of spending an excessive amount of time consuming negative news. Mind advises only looking at news and social media at certain times of the day, for a limited duration, and then doing something relaxing afterwards. Stepping away from the constant news cycle can help manage anxiety; guidance from text support service Shout sounds simple - turn off your phone at night and don't feel like you have to keep looking at the news - but it can be hard to put into practice. "We always say, try to remember what we can control, and you can certainly control the amount of media you consume and how much sleep you have and how much you reach out for support." To help others who are anxious, the key thing is to reassure them. Keep it as matter-of-fact as you can: explain that there have been wars all over the world in the past few years and we've been lucky that most of them haven't had any impact in the UK. What people want reassurance about is that they're safe. Helping others is one of the **five steps recommended by the NHS** to improve mental wellbeing and there are countless ways to help with the Ukraine crisis. Watching war unfold can make you feel out of control, and focusing on ways to help can manage that. There's lots of evidence that doing something for other people has a really beneficial impact on your own mental health. If we perceive that we made someone else feel good, we feel good. Our brains are designed to be social and have connections and creating a connection with something bigger than you is really beneficial to your wellbeing."

(Taken from articles by the BBC and the Volunteer FDIP organization program.)



The sunflower is the symbol of Ukraine, and this is the most famous picture of sunflowers ever created. One explanation of why Vincent Van Gogh painted so many images of sunflowers is that they were meant to symbolise gratitude, in thanks for his **recovery** from a **mental** breakdown (a type of epilepsy that took the form of delusions and psychotic attacks). He was unable to work when suffering from bouts of this illness; but today he's considered the greatest Dutch painter after Rembrandt. In a spiritual meaning, these plants are seen as being genuine followers of the sun. This has a connection with Christians following God and other religions following their spiritual guide or divine being. No matter how small or how little light there is, sunflowers are believed to seek out the light and hold their heads high as if in worship and adoration of the sun. They are therefore a symbol of true and faithful loyalty to something that is much brighter and bigger than themselves. They're also seen as a symbol of optimism and happiness, and of good fortune, vitality, and a sign of love. Let's hope that these positive attributes will eventually prevail.