



# Rethink Carer Support – Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

*Newsletter 325*

*Spring 2025*

*Phone Support Service: 07783 267013*

*E-mail Support Service: [cambridgecarersgroup@rethink.org](mailto:cambridgecarersgroup@rethink.org)*

*Co-ordinator: Jonathan Wells*

*Twitter account @CPrCarerSupport*

*Facebook*

*<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100095346875941>*

*Whats App group*

Welcome to the **Spring 2025** edition of our newsletter, where we give a flavour of what we have been doing to support the families and friends of people with mental ill health across this area.

Our aims remain to:

- Support and inform each other – through groups, one to one and other support
- Work alongside service users and their representatives as well as carers, (including SUN Network, Caring Together, and Making Space) to strengthen the voice of experts by experience so that the limited resources available to mental health and social care are put to the best possible use
- Engage constructively with NHS and local authority commissioners and the NHS Provider Trust Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT), to improve services as they are experienced – injecting where necessary a sense of urgency and an element of challenge

As usual, I welcome any feedback on the content of this newsletter, and any contributions.

With best wishes from Jonathan.



## **LOCAL NEWS - RETHINK**

- **Our monthly carer support meetings.**

**We have changed how these monthly groups will operate**, in response to feedback, aiming to make them as effective as possible for all. From now on (until we review things at the end of the year), meetings will be as follows:

7.30 to 10 26<sup>th</sup> March on zoom only  
7.30 to 10 30<sup>th</sup> April in person at St Lawrence's church 91 Milton Road Cambridge  
CB4 1XB only  
7.30 to 10 28<sup>th</sup> May on zoom only  
7.30 to 10 25<sup>th</sup> June on zoom only  
7.30 to 10 30<sup>th</sup> July in person at St Lawrence's only

It is a zzp/zzp/zzp pattern.

These confidential groups are especially valuable in helping carers see that they are not alone whatever is happening in their family. A lot of information is shared about what helps us manage to cope with the role and also about local mental health services, diagnoses and treatments.

- **Other Support.**

**We have disbanded our phone support team** as for a long time we have not received many new referrals via this route. Thanks very much to Jill, David, Salim and Heather for your contributions over the last 7 (?) years!

From 1<sup>st</sup> April onwards all new contacts should come to our official email address [cambridgecarersgroup@rethink.org](mailto:cambridgecarersgroup@rethink.org) or our official contact number 07783267013. I will check daily for any new messages.

People who know me are of course very welcome to contact me directly on 07342 691768 and [jfgwells57@gmail.com](mailto:jfgwells57@gmail.com).

- **Finances.**

We remain in a strong financial position and continue to make grants up to £400 to carers if they are in significant financial need. It is important that this includes those who need financial help to attend courses or maybe conferences to improve their skills and knowledge as a carer. Please contact me by email if you would like to know more.

We want to reach more carers generally and provide financial help where a family's money worries are contributing to the pressures they are facing as carers. We are having meetings with agencies including Citizens Advice and Homestart to explore ways of providing financial help through them.

- **Prize Winning.**

I'm delighted to announce that Joy – who many of you will know - is one of the 3 winners of the Ellie J. Shakerley poetry competition 2025 run by national Rethink Mental Illness. As you may know, we enter this each year and have a good track record of winning. As I've said before, I like the way the author receives £100 for themselves alongside £900 for their group.

Joy is a very talented author, illustrator, poet and performer. It's incredible that she fits all this in together with an extremely demanding carer role. Joy – you are an inspiration to us all!

The competition asked us to write a poem in response to a painting of a peacock. Here is Joy's:

### **Peacock**

**Peacock steps  
On elegant feet,  
Pecks at the lawn,  
Glow in the sun.  
Perches on statues,  
Flaunts among fountains.  
Ornamental,  
Cultivated.**

**Peacock, welcome.  
Walk into my house.  
Fan out the spokes  
Of your ferny tail.  
Guard my sleep  
With a hundred eyes.  
Watch the night  
With feathered candles.**

**Peacock, blow  
Your warning horn.  
Raindrops tap.  
Small birds hide.  
Lightning blades,  
Purple thunder.  
Blue and brave -  
Peacock is dancing.**

**Peacock, fly  
Through my fear.  
Scythe the wind  
With your broad wings.  
I will ride  
Bold on your back.  
Carry me far,  
Laughing and free.**

**Peacock, fly.**

- **Our Priorities for Change.**

I am repeating the list below as when we have the chance to influence the planning of better mental health services it helps if we are all aware of what we have found is most important to us.

**The Top Twelve (in no particular order):**

- Access to a full set of community mental health services via CPFT Locality Teams
- Continuity of care in community mental health services with everyone having a care co-ordinator or key worker
- Ensuring there are enough CPFT inpatient mental health beds so that no-one is sent out of area inappropriately
- Making crisis services simpler and safer
- CPFT staff to be more confident about when to breach patient confidentiality and involve families in high risk situations
- Engagement of carers in their loved one's care as routine in CPFT (Triangle of Care)
- Implementation of the Carers Strategy – carer identification, information and clarity about carer assessments
- Person centered needs based care from CPFT and others - especially for young people aged 16 to 25
- Re-development of a community mental health rehabilitation service (health and social care)
- Implementation of the All Age Autism Strategy – including Oliver Mc Gowan training for all mental health staff
- CPFT to be willing and able to learn from patients and carers and improve services wherever possible
- CPFT to show greater efficiency and urgency when addressing issues and making improvements to services

- **Other Rethink News.**

**Courses**

Jean and Sue from our committee have been looking into courses and on line resources that can help us in our carer roles. Jean writes:

“There are several UK-based courses and training programs designed to support carers looking after someone with a mental illness. These courses can help improve

your skills, provide practical knowledge, and help you develop a deeper understanding of mental health issues.

Many of these courses are free if you meet the eligibility criteria for the course, but if there is a course cost, please contact us and it is possible we may be able to support you.

Many of these online platforms require you to select filters right at the start of the search e.g. location, topic, free/cost associated with the course to ensure you get the right information.

Disclaimer -Whilst some of our members have taken courses through these links, we are not able to validate the worthiness of any particular course being suitable for your needs.

Your feedback is always welcome.

### **1. Futurelearn**

Futurelearn works in association with the Open University and provides hundreds of personalised recommendations based on your interests. The short courses are typically free although some longer courses attract a charge.

<https://www.futurelearn.com/?main-nav-submenu=main-nav-categories>

### **2.The Skills Network**

This platform offers a range of courses in health and social care. If you meet the eligibility, some courses costs are covered by the government.

Courses of interest include; Mental Capacity Act, Mental Health Awareness, MH First Aid and Advocacy in the workplace. Some courses take a few hours and others may take 3 months.

<https://theskillsnetwork.com/>

### **3. Eventbrite**

This platform advertises conferences and workshops that may be of interest. Some of these events are available online or possibly in your area.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/d/united-kingdom/mental-health/?page=1&lang=en>

### **4. Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England**



Mental Health First Aid provides courses specifically designed to train individuals to help others experiencing mental health issues. The course teaches you how to identify the signs and symptoms of mental health problems and provide initial support.

- Courses Available: 2-day Adult MHFA, 1-day Mental Health Awareness, Youth Mental Health First Aid, etc.

- Website: MHFA England

- e.g. Become Mental Health Aware £125/4 hrs

<https://education.clickdo.co.uk/top-elearning-platforms/>

## 5. Mind

Mind is one of the UK's leading mental health charities, offering a range of resources and training to help individuals understand mental health issues.

- Mental Health Awareness Training: Mind offers training for both businesses and individuals to increase awareness and reduce stigma around mental health.

- Mental Health First Aid (MHFA): Mind works alongside MHFA England to offer these courses to help people recognize the signs of mental health issues and provide initial support.

- Bespoke Training: Mind offers bespoke training tailored to specific groups, including carers and professionals, to improve understanding of mental health and provide effective support.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mind-training/in-house-training-from-mind/>

## 6. RCE Wellbeing Hub

CPFT's Recovery College East provides courses aimed at supporting mental health recovery. These courses are designed for service users, their families, and carers. Topics include understanding mental health conditions, coping strategies, and enrolments procedures.

<https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/rce-wellbeing-hub/>

## 7. Alison

Alison is a global online course provider with over 3,500 classes available. The

primary aim of Alison is to improve society with free online learning and widespread skills training. Alison courses are free and cover a wide range of topics.

<https://alison.com/tag/mental-health>

## **8. Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England**

Mental Health First Aid provides courses specifically designed to train individuals to help others experiencing mental health issues.

. The course teaches you how to

identify the signs and symptoms of mental health problems and provide initial support.

NB- Some of these courses are available through the Skills Network and the government covers the cost.

Courses Available: 2-day Adult MHFA, 1-day Mental Health Awareness, Youth Mental Health First Aid, etc.

Website: MHFA England

E.g. Become Mental Health Aware £125/4 hrs”

<https://education.clickdo.co.uk/top-elearning-platforms/>

## **Other Local Rethink News**

Generally, it has been a tough few months for many of the families we try to support. I think of the lived experience view and the professional view as two sides of the same coin. It helps if we can both “see ourselves as others see us.” A professional account of an intervention with a service user or their carer would often be rather different from the “lived experience” version of events, I think. But there is only one coin.

We have recently had several situations which to staff may be perceived as relatively normal but which have been hard to bear or even believe from the points of view of the families concerned. Some of these have been very high risk. In Rethink Carer Support we aim to be patient and determined in how we deal with our loved ones and how we deal with professionals. In this way we always hope to find common ground with planners and decision-makers so that between us we can make the improvements to mental health services that are so desperately needed.



## **LOCAL NEWS – OTHER**

It is great that co-production is now accepted as the best way of going about making much needed improvements to services. It's really important that we in Rethink make the best of these opportunities. Some examples of this sort of activity are outlined below.

- **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT).**

### **Development of a Community Mental Health Rehabilitation Service**

I understand that this important project is currently “on hold”. I imagine the delays may be to do with funding or uncertainties about whether the lead role is with CPFT or the Integrated Care Board (ICB). I will do my best to keep track of what is happening.

### **Development of an Assertive Outreach Service**

This is another very important area for us and I'm glad that we and Making Space have been closely involved. Assertive Outreach is about people with severe mental illness who need especially committed and flexible staff to work with them wherever they are, over time.

I gave a presentation at the workshop last month about why it is so important to carers – in the context of the other gaps in services which also need to be filled.

A Business Case will soon be going to the relevant Board in the ICB describing why this service needs to be reintroduced and making the case for funding.

### **Culture of Care**

This is a national project to improve the quality of inpatient care in a selection of wards around the country. 4 wards from CPFT are participating – one for older people (Maple), one for young people (Darwin), and 2 general mental health inpatient units, Mulberry 1 on the Fulbourn site and Oak 1 at The Cavell Centre, Peterborough.

This continues with several carers involved. I have found myself working with Oak 1 at the Cavell Centre, Peterborough which provides inpatient care for older people with mental health conditions. We have come up with small steps which will make the ward more truly therapeutic – such as staff routinely explaining why they are often on their phones, which is how they actually do their record-keeping.

The process is rather slow and I'm beginning to worry that the energy required for it to achieve its maximum impact may be fading.

### **Mental Health Crisis Care**

This is another big project where we as carers are closely involved. Emma Welsh from the ICB is leading a piece of work to make these vital services simpler and safer.

On behalf of carers I'm advocating for at least one walk-in mental health centre where people with acute mental health problems can be assessed face to face by a mental health professional. This has recently been launched in North London and elsewhere. I believe people with mental health conditions should only need to go to A and E if they need physical health care. I am told that walk in mental health centres are very expensive so we will see how we get on.

### **Cambridge University Hospitals (CUH) Urgent Care Review**

This overlaps with the item above. CUH are looking to make radical changes to their Emergency Departments and Urgent Care Centres as they simply cannot cope with current levels of demand. Whilst many of us have negative stories to tell about our experiences at Addenbrookes ED, I think it is also true to say that staff are doing an incredible job just keeping the show on the road.

A very good local consultancy called taproot are gathering the views of people who have used such services and we had a good session with them last month. This is being followed up with workshops – some in person – next week and I am going to one.

### **Suicide Prevention Group**

This also overlaps with mental health crisis care. There is a new Suicide Prevention Strategy being produced. In 2024 there were 95 apparent suicides in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This is roughly the same as in the past three years. Of these, 52% of the people who took their own lives had been known to NHS mental health services. And 24% were under the care of NHS mental health services at the time of their death. The highest rate of suicide by age is still among people (mostly men) aged 40 to 49.

I have repeatedly asked for more attention to be paid to preventing suicides among those known to CPFT. The National Confidential Enquiry into Suicide and Homicides has a very good chart showing what the evidence is about how to prevent more suicides in mental health services. The research shows family involvement is one of the ten key ways people under the care of Mental Health NHS Trusts can be kept from taking their own lives. See below.

<https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=37780>

### **Complaints**

A small group of carers recently met the CPFT complaints manager to discuss the difficult area of when a carer makes a complaint about their loved one's care but the patient does not agree to the complaints team looking into it. We also discussed what makes a good written response to a carer's complaint, including the importance of

showing that the complainant has genuinely been heard. We said letters sometimes come across as defensive and suggested this can be avoided if the language is straightforward, confident and clear.

There aren't many NHS Trusts who would take the trouble to consult in this way, and as usual I'm very grateful to Anna Tuke for arranging the meeting.

### **Inpatient Units**

Both Making Space and us used a recent Carers Programme Board at CPFT to repeat that we are not getting as many referrals from the Adult and Specialist Mental Health Directorate as we would like. We want to be treated as an asset or resource that can help professionals in their efforts to be as effective as possible in helping service users in their recovery journeys.

As a result Anna has set up two meetings – one with staff from the Mulberry wards at Fulbourn and one with staff from The Cavell Centre in Peterborough. I am keen to make the most of this opportunity and have written in advance a simple statement of our main expectations. It is good that a senior Consultant Psychiatrist Caroline Meiser-Stedman is also involved in this.

### **Talking Therapies**

Trust members recently heard a very good talk from a senior therapist in this service which is unique in CPFT in being able to measure what proportion of its patients actually benefit from the treatment provided. As a result, I am to meet her to promote what we do in Rethink.

I will add that as carers we are known to have high rates of depression and anxiety disorders and we are able to refer ourselves to this service via a link on the home page of the CPFT website.

<https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/talkingtherapies/>

- **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Board**

You may have noticed that I've been increasingly concerned in the past 6 months or so about a lack of effectiveness and clarity at the top of our local mental health system. It should be possible for relative outsiders like us to see where the funding sits, where the power sits and where decisions get made. It's a pity because there are many dedicated and skilful staff at the ICB doing their best, but it's often hard to see the results.

Despite a lengthy session in Peterborough last month, I still cannot see a work plan for this year or next year, with goals, leads and time lines clearly stated. I know the work is often incredibly complicated, but that makes it all the more important that we as a system know what precisely we are trying to do and how we will now when we've done it.

I suppose this is a sort of preamble to noting that in the last week, as well as announcing the end of NHS England (it will apparently take 2 years to die), Wes Streeting has also told us that at least 50% of the size and cost of each ICB must go too. I am not against this idea. All I can say is that in the meantime I will do all I can to get progress on the issues that are so well known to us as carers.

- **Local Authorities (Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council).**

In Rethink we have found that there is little point in having a carer's assessment as almost all the carer support we need is accessible directly from Caring Together, Making Space, Centre 33, Pinpoint, Family Voice and us. The last thing we want is another assessment that leads nowhere.

I have recently sought to escalate this issue with both local authorities after consulting with other carer support agencies and checking the Care Act wording. I am seeking for carer's assessments to cease to be promoted in our area.

I am aware I may be perceived as having a bee in my bonnet about this. If I am, please tell me!

- **Voluntary Sector.**

The Voluntary Charity and Social Enterprise Board of which I'm a member comes to an end soon. By being part of the group I have learnt a lot about individual projects and the value of the sector as a whole.

Given the relentless increases in demand for mental health care nationally and locally, I have come to the view that at the heart of good mental health care must be trusting optimistic and dedicated relationships between care givers and receivers.

Of course clinical expertise of many kinds and a range of resources such as inpatient care and crisis care will always be required, but I believe many mental health services in the NHS are fatally compromised by a lack of continuity of care. If they are not in a position to get to know each other well and develop some sort of therapeutic relationship, it is very hard for a mental health professional and a service user to work effectively together towards agreed goals. A psychiatrist or mental health nurse may have great clinical skills but if no significant relationship has been created between them and their patients, then lasting change becomes hard to achieve.

This is where I think the voluntary sector's strengths come in. The How Are You websites are a great step in the direction of a recalibration of the relationship between statutory and voluntary sectors so that they have equal value in one mental health system.

## **NATIONAL NEWS**

### **1. National Rethink.**

We are very sad to be saying goodbye this month to Julie Galliford who has been our link with the organization as a whole for 7 years or more. She has been unfailingly cheerful, helpful and kind and as a committee we will miss her a great deal.

Julie is so keen to hear how we get on that I've agreed today to keep her on my mailing list for newsletters!

She leaves at a time of great change in Rethink Mental Illness nationally. They have had some significant governance issues in local groups and so have begun to tighten up on how groups such as ours function. As requested, we have reviewed our internal procedures around finance, confidentiality, data protection, safeguarding and health and safety. We have made a couple of changes which were mentioned earlier but essentially we do not expect those we support to notice any significant differences. Our approach remains to behave towards each others as friends, whilst recognizing as a committee that we are volunteers within a national organization.

Rethink Mental Illness Advice and Information Service (RAIS): How to contact us:  
The Freephone line is 0808 801 0525 and available Mon to Fri 9:30am to 4pm, excluding bank holidays.

You can also email on [advice@rethink.org](mailto:advice@rethink.org) or post to Rethink, PO BOX 18252, Solihull, B91 9BA.

The RMI website has all you need to know about mental illness, diagnosis, treatment and your rights. With over 120 topics to choose from, our website is the best place to find the information you are looking for.

### **2. A New Mental Health Act.**

Don't hold your breath.

### **3. NHS Changes.**

The changes announced by the government last week, which I touched on earlier, may sound alarming, but I think they are not easy to interpret at this stage.

Structural changes around NHS England and ICBs are unlikely to show any immediate negative effects on patient care in my view.

The significant promised changes to the welfare benefits system are more worrying, although not surprising given the size of governmental debt. I imagine these are subjects that we will discuss passionately, whilst needing to hold on to our rule that we need to respect a variety of political opinions.

Many will know that for the past few months there has already been a massive consultation exercise where everyone has the chance to say to the Ministry of Health how services can be improved over the next ten years. It will keep quite a lot of civil servants employed for a long time whilst they read all the responses they have had (over 100,000). The closing date for this consultation is 14<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

Here is a message from Amanda Pritchard about it. She has since been persuaded to resign.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-term-plan/>

Below is a link to the King's Fund which I find a very reliable and unbiased source of enlightenment about everything going on in health and social care.

[https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/press-releases/response-government-plans-abolish-nhs-england?utm\\_source=The%20King%27s%20Fund%20newsletters%20%28main%20account%29&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_c](https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/press-releases/response-government-plans-abolish-nhs-england?utm_source=The%20King%27s%20Fund%20newsletters%20%28main%20account%29&utm_medium=email&utm_c)

Nick Timmins is my favourite historian of the NHS and he is still going strong.

## ***AND FINALLY....***

We welcome new people contacting us by phone or email.

We welcome donations from families who may at any time want to show their appreciation of the support we have provided by making a grant, so that we can maintain what we do.

We aim to keep down costs and make sure we that we do not keep sending this newsletter to people who no longer want it. It is emailed to most people and sent in the post to some.

As you know, Rethink Carer Support – Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is part of the Rethink Mental illness national groups network. Changes to the law mean changes to the way the charity communicates with its supporters. We have adopted an “opt in” policy which means that most kinds of contact now need your permission.

It is easier and less costly to send newsletters by email but we are happy to continue to send by post if that is your preference. We will check with you from time to time (at least every two years) to ensure you still wish to receive the newsletter.



We save your preferences and your contact details securely, and would never sell these details to a third party.

Please email [groups@rethink.org](mailto:groups@rethink.org) for our full privacy policy. National Rethink can send you a postal copy if you prefer – please ring 01823 365315