

"Caring About Addiction"

The newsletter for carers affected by the drinking or drug use of a family member or friend.



Summer 2020

For more information about anything in this newsletter or to find out more about our support for carers of someone who misuses substances, please contact a member of the Involvement Team listed below:

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Or for the office:

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Making Carers Count

Welcome

Hello and welcome to our Summer newsletter. It's been a time of change and challenges due to COVID-19 and some people are still facing difficulties. We wanted to remind you that Carers in Hertfordshire is still here to support you in your caring role. You can learn more about our services on page 2.

The Involvement Team has had some changes too as Nicola Beedell has left her role as a Carers Involvement and Development Worker and is now a GP Link Worker. So the team currently supporting carers of someone who misuses drugs or alcohol, has a mental health condition, or both, consists of Will Davis and Carers Involvement and Development Workers Sarah Williams and Karen Malone. Karen is helping out whilst recruitment takes place.

We've been hosting online forums using Zoom with a small group of carers and look forward to more carers joining in. The meetings provide a chance to share coping strategies and to support one another and you can learn more on page 3. If you want to join a meeting, please contact us (details to the left).

Also in this newsletter is information about online learning opportunities and updates about Turning Point's Complex Needs Service and Resolve.



Pictured on Zoom are Karen Malone and Will Davis (top row) and Sarah Williams.

Our Carers' Involvement Network explained

We often refer to our "Drug and Alcohol Network" or "Carers' Involvement Network", but you might be wondering what we mean by this so here is an explanation.

All unpaid carers known to Carers in Hertfordshire are invited to take part in the activities or events that we are involved with. To make sure that we reach as many people as we can, we have set up involvement networks that carers are welcome to join. Those who have joined our networks are kept informed about any relevant consultations or discussions which are taking place. They may also have the chance to respond to online surveys or be invited to join one-off workshops or events. People who join the network also receive notes and minutes from our forums.

If you would like to check whether you are a member of our Drug and Alcohol Network, or if you have any questions, please email one of our Carers Involvement Team - details above left - or call 01992 58 69 69.

How Carers in Hertfordshire can support you at this time of coronavirus

Our offices remain open Monday to Friday, 9am - 5.30pm (4.30pm on a Friday) with Carer Support Advisors available to talk to you about your caring role by phone or online from 9.30am - 5pm Monday to Thursday and 9am - 4pm on Fridays. Other services currently available include:

Carers' Passport Discount Card - this gives you access to discounts or offers from participating businesses and also helps to identify you as a carer for some supermarkets' priority shopping hours.

Keep in Touch calls - we offer calls to any carers who would like regular support and a chat.

Bereavement Support - Trained volunteers support you in finding a way forward after your loss. Currently, via phone.

Make a Difference - this scheme provides a small one-off payment to help you access something away from caring that will improve your health and wellbeing. For example, it could be used for equipment for a hobby or technology to keep in touch with family and friends.

Our website - www.carersinherts.org.uk is regularly updated with information to support you in your caring role. You will also find some activities to do whilst staying at home and online learning opportunities.

We also provide **mentoring**, a **Young Carers Service**, and dementia specialist **Admiral Nurses**, with support mainly over the phone at present.

If you would like more information, please call 01992 58 69 69.



Picture from a young carer we support.

Turning Point update about its Complex Needs Service and referrals pathway

Turning Point has completed a review of its Complex Needs Service that is delivered to individuals, carers, and professionals across Hertfordshire and has made some changes to its referral pathway to improve service delivery.

Turning Point re-opened its referral pathway at the start of June 2020 and offers a wide and supportive triage system where individuals will be supported in a more effective and dynamic manner.

People referred to the service or self-referring will have initial contact from a dedicated member of the team within five working days. Then a triage system has been designed to provide full and comprehensive needs and risk assessment within 10 working days, followed by person-centered advice, information and signposting to support. Where a worker is required, one will be allocated.

A spokesperson for Turning Point said: "Please be assured we are continuing to deliver support at this challenging time and where individuals require further practical support, this is being provided."

If you would like to make a referral to the service or have any queries, please call 01707 891120 or email cns@turning-point.co.uk. You can also visit www.turning-point.co.uk for help or more information.

Changes to Resolve services

The coronavirus pandemic and restrictions to help control the spread of the virus, have meant charities have had to adapt their services. For many this has meant providing support over the phone instead of face to face and pausing groups or activities or moving them online.

Here Patricia Elliott, from Resolve, talks about how Resolve responded to the coronavirus. Resolve provides treatment services to adults in Hertfordshire wishing to be abstinent from drugs or alcohol. It has centres in Hatfield, Letchworth, and Welwyn Garden City. It also supports relatives and carers.

Patricia said: "We have been supporting our existing service users and welcoming new clients throughout the coronavirus pandemic. Although we have not been able to offer our psychosocial group sessions and other holistic therapies, we have been running some group sessions on Zoom to support our service users."

She continued: "Not everyone feels comfortable in a group Zoom environment, or has the technology, so we have been running 1:1 Zoom sessions and telephone support during our normal working hours, 9am-5pm. These unprecedented times have been tough for us all and we are more than happy to welcome anyone to Resolve who believes they can benefit from our services."

For more information about Resolve, please visit www.resolve-online.org or you can email info@resolve-online.org or call 01707 690739.

Spotlight on our online Drug and Alcohol Carers' Forum

At Carers in Hertfordshire we have groups to bring together people in a similar caring situation, including a forum for people providing unpaid care to someone who misuses drugs, alcohol, or both.

The forum supports family and friend carers in having a voice in the development and delivery of health and social care services, mainly those in Hertfordshire, that they and the people they support access. At the meetings carers can find out about the support and services available in Hertfordshire and give their feedback about how services are working as well as ideas for improvements.

The coronavirus pandemic meant our face to face work such as meetings paused due to restrictions around social gatherings and social distancing. However, we know the importance of keeping carers informed and connected to each other and to services, so we have been holding meetings for carers affected by someone's drug or alcohol use online via Zoom.

Whilst we plan how and when we can safely restart our face to face activities we will continue with the online forum. The meetings usually take place on alternate Thursdays, from 11am. We aim to provide a supportive and friendly atmosphere, where we value each individual's contribution and respect confidentiality. We would welcome your ideas about speakers to invite and topics to cover.

A carer who has joined in some of the online meetings said: "The online forum meetings have been useful in hearing about how other carer's deal with problems in the current circumstances."

If you would like to join an online meeting, please contact the office or one of the Involvement Team (details on page one). We can support you in getting the technology set up or you can join by phone if you are unable to get online.



Carers review support for those with mental health and substance misuse issues

Accessing joined up services for those with co-occurring mental health and substance misuse conditions (dual diagnosis) has been problematic for many carers and the people they support. Recently, a small group of carers that have joined in our online Drug and Alcohol Carers' Forum meetings have produced a paper on the subject. It has been well received by Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (HPFT) and other service providers.

In Hertfordshire, mental health services are provided by HPFT, whilst Change, Grow, Live (CGL) Spectrum, alongside The Living Room and Emerging Futures, are contracted to provide drug and alcohol treatment and related services.

Several organisations are part of an Integrated Mental Health and Substance Misuse Governance Group that is currently reviewing the HPFT Dual Diagnosis Protocol. The Protocol outlines how CGL and HPFT will meet the needs of those with a dual diagnosis and their family carers.

The Group agreed to take the issues identified forward. The intention is that this paper will feed into the wider project of integrating care pathways countywide.

One contributing carer commented: "As a carer of someone with complex comorbidities of physical, mental health and substance abuse, I find the continual cycle of falling between the cracks of all services demoralising for the client and soul destroying for the carer. Like groundhog day. Same issues/different day/month/year."

Another carer stated: "As a carer of someone who is in the catch 22 situation of not being eligible to access mental health services, but is self-medicating to cope with underlying issues, I am worried sick that they will deliberately or accidentally be lost, along with others who fall down the gaps between services. I feel exhausted trying to ensure they are safe. I think it is vital that support for people with co-occurring conditions (and their carers) is reviewed urgently for the sake of individuals, their families and society as a whole."

Other issues raised were the long waiting times between a mental health assessment and treatment and a need to involve housing and other providers.

The carers' report is at www.carersinherts.org.uk/have-your-say/drug-and-alcohol or you can call us to request it.

Learning skills during lockdown and beyond

Online courses and workshops have helped people keep occupied during the COVID-19 situation or whilst self-isolating at home. As we move out of lockdown, there should still be opportunities for online learning. Below are details of organisations that may have sessions of interest to you.

Hertfordshire's New Leaf Recovery and Wellbeing College - The college offers a range of free educational short courses to give adults in Hertfordshire the practical skills and knowledge to better manage their emotional and physical wellbeing.

Previous students have reported that they benefitted by:

- ◇ Feeling more in control of their situation or empowered to change it.
- ◇ Overcoming fears and anxieties.
- ◇ Feeling less isolated and gaining new friends.
- ◇ Achieving improved self-awareness and mindfulness.
- ◇ Starting new or rediscovering favourite hobbies.



Due to the coronavirus, the college converted their courses into online versions, delivering them via Zoom. This has enabled them to reach more adults in Hertfordshire. It also produced online resources, such as breathing exercises and tips for keeping well at home.

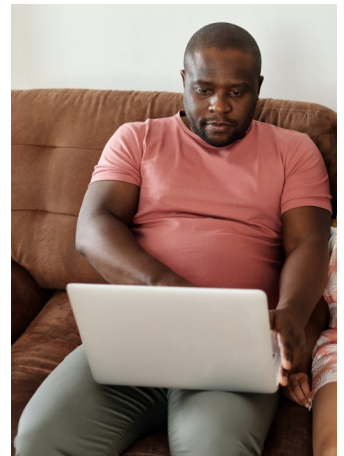
The New Leaf College is run by Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust and funded by Hertfordshire County Council and the NHS. The next courses are due to start in September 2020. You will be able to find out more and book a place online at www.newleafcollege.co.uk or call 01442 864966.

Other free learning opportunities

We, Carers in Hertfordshire, have produced some workshops you can do online at your leisure, including one with tips for getting better sleep and another about managing stress. In addition, we have created some resources with suggestions to keep well or occupied at home. They are available on our website at www.carersinherts.org.uk

We have also developed some online courses for carers, delivered via Zoom. We regularly update our website with details of our free learning opportunities at www.carersinherts.org.uk/events or you can call us on 01992 58 69 69.

Open University has a range of free online courses via OpenLearn. Find out more at www.open.edu/openlearn/education/free-courses Although, the organisation is unable to take calls about courses it does offer a web chat function and you can email openlearn@open.ac.uk



Free access to online drug and alcohol treatment and recovery programme

Change, Grow, Live (CGL) Spectrum provides the people it supports with free access to Breaking Free, a treatment and recovery programme for anyone addicted to alcohol or drugs.

The programme supports people to recognise and address the psychological and lifestyle issues that drive their use of alcohol and/or drugs, to help conquer their dependence.

It can be accessed 24/7 from any internet enabled device such as a PC, tablet or smartphone, and there is a Breaking Free Companion App that can be used alongside the programme.

People using the app can set alerts that will prompt them to:

- Use the positive coping methods they've selected if they approach any places they've identified as risky (via location alerts).
- Carry out the activities they've chosen in the planning your time positively strategy (via calendar alerts).

The app also gives instant access to strategies, such as mindfulness techniques, to stay calm or manage cravings and urges at any time. This is available without the need for an internet connection.

For more information go www.breakingfreeonline.com or speak to any member of staff or volunteer at your local CGL service. To learn more about CGL visit www.changegrowlive.org or call 0800 652 3169.