



**The Stein Centre
St Catherine's Hospital
Birkenhead CH42 0LQ
Tel 0151 488 7708
E-mail family.tree@cwpa.nhs.uk**

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Newsletter

This issue is earlier than usual because

We wanted to tell you about the **Christmas Meal** at the **Devon Doorway** on Wednesday Dec 8th at 7 pm



We wanted to remind you about the meeting with the **Chief Executive of Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Trust (CWP) Sheena Cumisky** on Friday October 22nd and about the other training we have on offer including the last two sessions of **“Not only but also”** on Oct 20th and Nov 3rd and **“Treading on Eggshells—Supportive Communication Strategies for Family Mental Health”** with Mick McKeown on Nov 12th.

We wanted to encourage you to come along to the social group for carers - there are two more meetings before Christmas, at the **Potting Shed** on Nov 18th, where you can choose a piece of pottery to decorate and the **Christmas Craft** event on Dec 6th.

and because the editor, Sue, is on holiday at the end of October!

More information and booking forms attached.

Changes to the web-site

Our web-site has always been provided by BT using software from a company called Recipero. Earlier on this year we were contacted by BT and informed that they had ended their contract with Recipero but were continuing to offer a free web-site to charities through another provider. This involved building a new site from scratch, which did not prove to be easy.

Following discussion in the management committee and having had a look at what the new site offered (which was not as much as the current web-site) we have now decided to look for another web-site provider which will hopefully give us a more up-to-date site. The current web-site will be available until Oct 31st. After that, if you log on to the existing web address, you will be directed to the new BT site which is only partly completed.

Once we are able to develop a new web-site we will let you know the new address.

www.familytreewirral.btik.com

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Wishing
you all a
very early
Happy
Christmas

Up-date on Benefits Fri Sept 24th

Steve Harnden—Advocacy in Wirral

Despite the fact that some people had said to us that they were too scared to come to this session because of what they might find out about future benefits the room was full for Steve's presentation.

He first of all gave an overview of the changes that have already come into place with regard to the move from Incapacity Benefit to Employment Support Allowance. ESA stands for Employment and Support Allowance. It was introduced in October 2008 to replace Incapacity Benefit (IB) for new customers. The overarching principle of ESA is that everyone should have the opportunity to work. It therefore aims to ensure that people with an illness or disability get the help and support they need to move towards employment, if they are able. The Work Capability Assessment for ESA looks at a customer's functional ability and how it affects their ability to work. Of particular concern was the system for assessing people to see if they were able to work as this is contracted out to a private company ATOS. Questions were raised about the level of training that the assessors had and how much they understood the impact of mental ill health on a person's ability to work.

The main message from this part of the session was never to attempt to fill in an application form for a benefit or challenge a decision without getting advice.

A separate concern that Steve raised was the fact that he, like many benefits advice workers, was funded through Legal Aid and this funding may not be available in the future.

After the break Steve spoke about particular changes that are imminent or have already been put in place. These concern limits to housing benefit and a cut in the rate that will be paid to cover interest on mortgages.

Obviously it is clear from reports in the newspapers and on TV and radio that there are going to be many more changes to benefits throughout this parliament and beyond so we will ask Steve to come back again once these changes become clearer—provided he still has a job.

CWP Carers Survey

CWP are carrying out their annual carers survey. If you haven't received a form (and your views are important) please contact Robert Davies on 01244 397389).

Forms have to be back by Nov 1st.

A final word about The Patient's Progress

Earlier this year we ran a series entitled "The Patient's Progress" which took carers on a journey that the person they cared for was likely to take and introduced them to the professionals and services they might meet along the way.

Reports on these sessions were printed in the last two editions of the newsletter.

What we have done since is to look at the feedback and where possible act on suggestions that were made.

The overall feedback was very positive, comments included

"Informative and valuable information"

"Very helpful"

"Very good to hear what the "gold standard" of practice in assessment is".

There was a special mention for our secretary Libby who was complimented for the very good job she does in reminding people about events.

The only slight criticism concerned the balance between the psychiatrist and the psychologist in one of their sessions and too much information about Early Intervention which was not a service that most of the audience had benefitted from.

Suggestions included (with our response in brackets)

- Trying evenings for meetings (we have had evening and Saturday session in the past but we tend to get a better response to day time events)
- The need for feedback from the CWP about how it is listening and taking on board the comments and experience of service recipients (we have arranged for the Chief Executive to come to meet you in October and we have also given you feedback from the consultation carried out by CWP earlier this year).
- The opportunity to look at blank documentation forms such as carers assessments, advance statements, care plans etc
- Another session on WRAP

(Both these last two we will look at for the New Year)

And last but not least we will make sure there are fans in place in the downstairs meeting room if it is likely to be hot.

Mature Broadcasting Association

If you are over 50 and are interested in making radio programmes John Cotcher of Age UK would like to hear from you. Contact him on 0151 647 4720

(John used to be the Carers Development Worker at WIRED)

The Big Society Event



We have all heard David Cameron talk about his vision for “The Big Society” but are we sure what it really means?

In September there was an opportunity for organisations in Wirral to begin to find out what it will mean for this area. Organised by Wirral CVS with the support of the council we were given an introduction to the idea.

The Big Society agenda is the central plank of the Coalition Government’s vision of a transformed relationship between citizens, communities and the state at local and national levels.

Council Leader Jeff Green delivered a key note address about building the Big Society on Wirral.

He spoke about Wirral Council’s commitment to making the Big Society a reality here on Wirral and about the importance of encouraging and enabling local groups and organisations to play their full part in making Wirral a better place to live, work and invest in.

He talked about the Big Society on Wirral being about local people coming together to solve problems and improve life for themselves and their communities; a society where the leading force for progress is social responsibility, not government control.

Workshops on some of the aspects of the Big Society then followed.

Some things are already government policy such as plans to train 5,000 Community Organisers and the setting up of the Big Society Bank (using money sitting in dormant bank accounts) to provide finance for charities and social enterprises.

Other ideas include making it easier for smaller organisations to bid for council contracts and an increase in volunteering.

Comment

There was a lot of emphasis on local community groups but not much about interest groups (in our case carers and service users) so we need more clarification about how these will be affected and involved in planning and delivering services.

There is also some concern about some vulnerable groups missing out on services if they are no longer going to be provided by the council .

New Horizons Event

Several of you attended the New Horizons event in July at the Lauries Centre and we have now received a summary of the consultation

New Horizons: A Shared Vision for Mental Health was a cross government strategy intended to replace the 10 year National Service Framework for Mental Health that finished in 2009.

Due to the change in government it’s implementation is in some doubt. A White Paper due to be published this autumn will clarify the future direction for mental health services but until then we have to continue to use New Horizons as the framework for mental health development.

On the day delegates were asked to discuss five key areas.

These were (with some of the relevant comments)

1. Service User/Carer engagement and involvement

There was a clear message from service users and carers that involvement should be embedded within commissioning, service redesign and evaluation. *In other words it is no good just asking for views about existing services, we need to be involved right from the beginning in designing the services in the first place.*

Support for carers needs to be improved as carers are often under huge stress but can seem invisible to service provider.

Access to services is often difficult and in times of crisis it is imperative that service users and carers can contact the appropriate service. A single telephone number would alleviate some of the stress (*now where have we heard that before!*)

2. Early Intervention

The remit of the Early Intervention Team should be widened, in particular becoming involved in education services at an early age.

3. Social Housing

People need more help to obtain and maintain their tenancies.

Needs assessments don’t take enough account of housing need and the effect this has on health and well-being.

Need to develop a wider range of housing options including in “nice” areas.

4. Employment

More awareness amongst staff about employment support.

Mental health awareness training for and by employers. More social enterprises (*could be part of the Big Society*).

5. Recovery

The medical model needs to be replaced with a holistic model.

Personalisation and personal budgets could be very useful in Recovery.

Up-date on other Family Tree Activity

Family Intervention Project

The project is now working with seven families and there are other referrals waiting to be assessed.

As well as providing individual families with support the project has also delivered training in Family Intervention to professionals who already had some skills.

It is hoped to be able to continue the project beyond the finish date of the end of January but this will depend on funding. The FI project is currently funded by NHS Wirral

Imago Project

The Imago project is now working with their first carer.

Once this image has been completed it is intended to have an open meeting where the person concerned will share what the experience has meant to her and give other carers the opportunity to get involved.

The Image project is funded by Awards for All - part of the National Lottery

Not only but also...

We have now had the first three sessions in this series discussing with carers who care for people who have other problems what extra issues they face.

Subjects covered so far include depression and anxiety, phobias, self harm, drug and alcohol abuse, learning disabilities, autistic spectrum disorders, physical disabilities and medical conditions.

Several themes are emerging the strongest of which are

- the lack of communication between the various services involved in someone's care
- the need for staff to be able to "walk in your shoes" and really understand the carer's perspective
- the importance of the attitude of staff towards services users and carers
- getting the right balance of medication when other medical or substance abuse problems are present.

Part of each session includes discussion about where these concerns should be taken. Obviously most need to go to the CWP and we will be presenting them to Sheena Cumisky before she comes on the 22nd October (there is still one session due to take place before then and another one after) but the participants have identified other agencies that they want these concerns to be taken up with for each of the sessions so far.

Once the report is done we will look at getting together a panel of people to respond to the concerns raised. This will be in the New Year.

Funding

Quite a lot of time is spent in the organisation putting in bids for funding to enable Family Tree to continue to offer the service to you.

This year we have been able to secure funds for

- the part-time worker for three years (from Lloyds TSB)
- our running costs (from the Yapp Charitable Trust—second part of two year funding)
- activities (from the Souter Charitable Trust - first part of three year funding), from the Marsh Christian Trust and from the Steel Charitable Trust.

In addition we are due to receive money from the Wirral Scout Post (we never know how much until the presentation night) - next year this will go towards the production of the newsletter and other publicity material.

We are also hopeful that we will get money from the Wirral Carers Fund (this is money that was left over when Help for Carers and Wirral Carers Centre closed down) which will go towards leaflets, social events and training.

We have got through the first round of a bid to Reaching Communities (part of the National Lottery) for a Mental Health Carers Advocate and to increase the managers role to full-time. The second round has to be in by Christmas so keep your fingers crossed.

Last but not least you, the carers, have contributed £500 this year for which we are very grateful.

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