

FREE
confidential support
in a safe
environment

Is your life affected by someone else's
alcohol or drug use?

Parent/Carer/Family
Support

Enabling families & friends of people with alcohol and/or drug related problems, by providing mutual support and offering a forum where experiences or anxieties can be shared.

We provide:
Information
Free, confidential, one to one support
Support groups
Black box therapy

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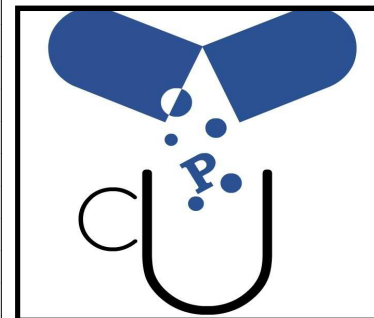
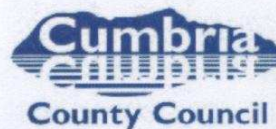
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Cumbria Users Project Newsletter

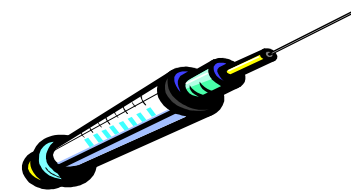
drug users have rights too...

Issue 22 March 2011

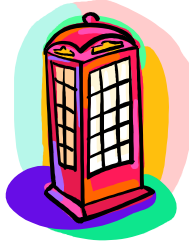
Welcome to issue 22 of our project newsletter. Apologies for the late arrival of this edition - we decided to delay it until after February's National Service User Conference in Birmingham. This gathering of service users and treatment service providers certainly lived up to the billing of "the must attend event of the year." The conference seemed to be of particular importance right now, in what is a crucial time for services, given that we now have a new government in place, a new drug strategy, the continued momentum of the Recovery agenda and what can only be described as monumentally difficult economic circumstances.

We have news inside on who attended, what was discussed, new contacts made and we will have more on the conference in our next issue, given that there's insufficient room in this one. There's plenty of local news and updates from Cumbria as well, so please take the time to have a good read through.

Thanks and very belated best wishes to everyone for 2011 from Cumbria Users Project



GETTING IN TOUCH



PENRITH

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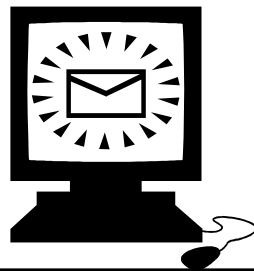
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BITS and BOBS

Release Under Threat

The UK's best known independent drug law advice service is on the brink of closure. The Release helpline has provided free legal expertise and expert drugs advice to the public and professionals for the last six years, but a lack of funding means the service is within weeks of being shut down.

To donate call 020 7324 2989

Change of Direction for Signpost

The 24 hour helpline Signpost (0800 0838449) is to switch to an 0845 number shortly, which of course means that it will no longer be free. Also, it will start offering advice to families and carers of service users. More details on these changes plus the new number when they become available.

I'm not what you think I yam

The UK border agency has revealed some of the more unusual drug smuggling attempts made over last year, including around 10 kilos of cocaine hidden in yams that had been cut open and then glued back together and more than a kilo concealed in packets of nuts. Brodie Clark, head of Border Force said "smugglers are coming up with ever more elaborate and expensive methods because they know the potential profits they can make". A kilo of cannabis was also discovered inside a wooden framed painting of ex-Manchester City player Emmanuel Adebayor. It's not yet known if Adebayor realises he's been framed for drug smuggling...

Drug bag drag...

GAINESVILLE, Fla. (AP) - Ditching the dope isn't such a great idea especially if your wallet is with the stash. Police in Gainesville, Florida, report that's what happened when Tarvares Lamar Dorwell tossed a duffel bag out of his car. Officers say they were trying to pull over Dorwell in a traffic stop. During a high speed chase, police say he threw the bag out the window. Inside, officers say they found Dorwell's wallet and ID, 40 grams of pot, ecstasy, a scale and cash. The Gainesville Sun reports he now faces several drug-related charges.

Black Poppy blooms again

The excellent Black Poppy magazine is back - for a free copy visit www.blackpoppy.org.uk

We have received the following statement from CRI:

Withdrawal of foil from the needle exchange:

“The provision of foil by drug services constitutes a technical breach of section 9a of the misuse of drugs act. The Harm Reduction Service has been able to distribute foil to clients under an agreement with the local authorities which states that the Police would not seek to prosecute the service for this breach.

The Police have recently been advised by their legal department that this agreement does not sufficiently protect the service from legal prosecution. Although we recognise that foil is a valuable harm reduction tool, it is has become necessary to protect the service from this risk of prosecution.”

We thank CRI for clarifying this situation.

WELFARE WARNINGS:

Niamh Eastwood, deputy director at RELEASE (as featured earlier from Birmingham User Conference) has the following to say on welfare reform and its impact on service users:

A new government is now in power and welfare reform is high up the agenda. The coalition’s drug strategy outlined their vision in respect of welfare provisions relating to people who use drugs problematically and who are in receipt of benefits. The strategy speaks of ensuring that “the benefit system supports engagement with recovery services “ and offers “claimants who are dependent on drugs or alcohol a choice between rigorous enforcement of the normal conditions and sanctions where they are not engaged in supported recovery, or appropriately tailored conditionality for those who are.”

Reading between the lines, this would appear to be proposing the introduction of a “treatment allowance”. Rather, engagement in treatment would meet the conditionality for employment support—this is a positive approach to supporting people in treatment and does not have the punitive impact of the previous legislation. However, some caution must be exercised when considering the use of language in the strategy. To propose “rigorous enforcement” suggests that there will be a greater level of compliance required by those who use drugs and are not in treatment than other claimants . Legally, this would not be possible.

The proposed introduction of “universal credits” will mean significant changes to the benefit system, and without full details of how this system will operate it’s difficult to assess what will be the impact of the clients we represent. What we do know is that reductions in welfare support for problematic drug users will inevitably lead to an increase in inequality. Recognition should be given to the importance social support plays in reducing harm related to drug use.

(with thanks to DDN magazine)



**Dry Blood Spot Testing for Hepatitis C now available:
Want to know if you have been exposed to the Hepatitis C or HIV virus?**

Until recently testing for blood borne viruses could only be carried out by medical staff, taking a full blood sample using a syringe - time consuming, inconvenient and for many people an unpleasant experience.

A simpler and less invasive test is now available from your local drug and alcohol service, and from participating pharmacists.

The new test involves a prick to the finger and the squeezing out of a few drops of blood onto a piece of blotting paper. Your test results are then made available to you within 5 to 10 days.

The person carrying out the test with you will explain the process in detail and discuss with you the benefits of knowing your blood borne virus status.

Usually it is the same person who will see you again to tell you your results and to talk through the next steps.

This is a free and confidential service.

Dry blood spot testing available from the following Drug & Alcohol Centres:

Duke Street, Barrow – ask at the needle exchange, or ask your key worker

Whitehorse Yard, Kendal – ask your key worker

Peter Street, Workington – ask at the needle exchange, or ask your key worker

Clint Mill, Penrith – ask your key worker

Botchergate, Carlisle - ask at the needle exchange, or ask your key worker

**If you attend your sessions in Shared Care, at a GP surgery, please speak to either your key worker or your GP about testing.
Dry blood spot testing available from the following pharmacists:-**

J N Murray – Ormsgill, Barrow

JN Murray – Ulverston

Mirehouse – Whitehaven

Boots - Workington

Joseph Cowper - Penrith

Boots – Carlisle

WARRINGTON - Opening the Gates to Recovery...

Allison Taylor development worker in the North, Kerrie Penrice and Adam Slade service users representing CUP made a visit to Warrington to have a look at services and user involvement.

We attended two meetings, firstly a service users forum held by CRI who provide a range of services on behalf of the local DAAT including prescribing. We were greeted by a member of staff who gave us a tour of the building. Services on offer include a drop-in open 5 days a week from 9.00am till 3.30pm, a service for pregnant women and one to one support through key working. The member of staff showing us around used to have a heroin addiction, he had only been off his prescription 6 months!! (what an inspiration) Staff were friendly and eager to talk about the services on offer. Not surprisingly the NTA rated them top out of 147 providers.

Prescriptions are sent directly to the pharmacy, this is good in two ways it stops prescribing being used negatively and also gives the key workers more time for one to one, their sessions can last up to an hour. We were most impressed to find that anyone requiring help will be seen the same day and will possibly start treatment immediately. There is no appointment system, people are seen on a just come in basis. Staff recognise the importance of helping people as quickly as possible. No letters are sent to clients as they also recognise that clients can be fearful especially of brown ones.

Once a quarter, service users volunteer their time to sit in the services waiting area collating information from service users about the service they receive. We were shown a survey that they had done recently Out of the 640 clients 10% were surveyed of which 95% were satisfied. Service users representatives also volunteer their time offering a meet & greet service to clients.

The second meeting concerned service users involvement that is independent from services. They feed in to CRI service users group and also provide training for service users. They commented that the most important part of their group was to have a say in how services are planned and delivered.

A member stated that it had taken a long time but services are listening to their views and involve them in all their consultations and team meetings, they feel that they have a good robust working relationship with all services.

GOOD NEWS FROM THE HEATHLANDS PROJECT

Hello,

My name is Michael, I'm 34. I have been drinking heavily for the last 3 years and I've been in and out of hospital because of it. Two months ago I decided to try and stop drinking so I started to go to the group sessions at DART and got involved in a voluntary work project with them. The project was at Heathlands Farm (a training centre for people with learning disabilities and acquired brain injuries). It involved helping them prepare to stage the performance of Shakespeare's A Mid Summer Night's Dream: creating the set, painting, making costumes, putting the music together etc.

It was an eye opener to see people with mental and physical problems do activities and this helped me see that my problems were small compared to theirs. I was a bit anxious about getting involved at first but seeing them getting stuck in to the project made me realise that I could too and gave me the determination to see it through. So far I have not had a drop of alcohol for 2 months and I feel 100% better in myself. I am sleeping and eating, I don't need drink to block things out anymore and I feel a lot more confident in myself. I can see things a lot more clearly... that there is more to life than drink.

Completing the project made me understand that I am not on my own and someday I could benefit and achieve things from it as the last 3 years all I have achieved is being a heavy drinker. I am now doing voluntary work for a previous employer and have been offered a full-time job once I feel more confident in my recovery. I'm hoping that in the long run this will also help me show that I am committed to being a good father figure for my children so that I can get to see them again. I am not the only one who benefited from this. It was useful to everyone that took part. Another DART client said, "I found it really satisfying and enjoyed meeting lots of new people, everyone was friendly and it was a very therapeutic experience". One also said "I couldn't make the first week as I was in Torbay, if I'd know how enjoyable The Heathlands Project was going to be I would have cancelled my break. Well done to everyone involved".

I would like to thank everyone that got involved at DART and the project for giving me a chance. The group sessions (especially D Club) have worked brilliantly and I still attend them as I get things off my chest and we are all in the same boat. I'd encourage anyone to give voluntary work or the groups a try - it does work, it's hard at first but does get easier. The help is there if you want it so my advice is take it, there is more to life than alcohol!

All the best,

Michael Baty, Carlisle Service User.

Many thanks to Michael for sharing this with us and our very best wishes for your continued recovery from all of us at Cumbria Users Project.

CRI's Peter Kay takes up London Marathon challenge for Furness Oncology Unit
Click to sponsor Peter at
www.justgiving.com/peter-kay0

Lean, keen running machine Peter Kay (picture right) is facing the challenge of a lifetime as he gears up to run the London Marathon on April 17th. He will be donning his shorts and running 26.2 miles to raise money for the Furness General Oncology Unit.

"I only discovered running a year ago," says Peter 34. "I was introduced to fell running by a friend, joined a local running club and I've not looked back"

Peter is a member of Black Combe Runners, the club are offering their support as well as training advice in preparation for the big day. "It all sounds like hard work but I'm really enjoying the challenge".

Completing the marathon will be a very worthwhile effort as Peter's sponsor money will be donated to the Oncology Unit at Furness General. A member of his family was diagnosed with cancer last year and the unit has since been a constant source of support.

"It's an emotional time when a family member is diagnosed with cancer. It can be very overwhelming and confusing when being faced with this illness" Peter explained. "We didn't know much about the condition and had no idea what sort of help or support was available, but we were referred for treatment with The Oncology Charity and they have been a great help. The staff are very supportive and always have time to listen and give advice to patients, it's a relaxed and friendly place.

The Oncology unit has done so much for us, now it's time I did something for them. Friends have been very generous and I hope to continue gaining more sponsors up until the marathon date," said Peter. "Even a few pounds can make a huge difference and help the Oncology unit to continue the invaluable work they do"

You can sponsor Peter by visiting his online fundraising page on

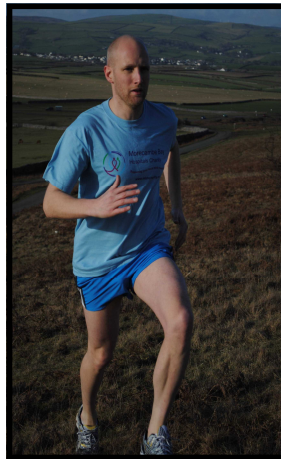
www.justgiving.com/peter-kay0

You can pay by credit or debit card, and the money will go directly to The Furness Oncology department. Where supporters are UK taxpayers, the charity will automatically receive 28% extra in Gift Aid, which makes Justgiving the most efficient way of sponsoring Peter.

For further information please contact Peter Kay on 07921 050405

For further information on Justgiving.com, please contact Mike Wells on 0845 021 2110.

Best of luck to Peter from all of us at Cumbria Users Project



Warrington has come a long way in three years and has a good recovery model.

We believe this is due to services listening to the views of service users and acting on them.

We would like to thank the staff and service users for making us feel welcome and giving us an insight into what services look like in Warrington.

Kindest Regards

Adam

Many thanks to Adam for this report - it seems that Warrington are very much ahead of the game in many areas. The two paragraphs on the opposite page in bold type clearly illustrate the quality of the service on offer, particularly the immediate access to treatment. It is also important to note the positive impact that service user input can make to a service - describing this as a "good, robust relationship" proves that service users and providers can work effectively, if both sides committed to doing so. The figures also speak for themselves - a 95% satisfaction rating from service users is outstanding, not to mention the NTA's ranking of 1st from no less than 146 other providers. It's obvious there is much to be learned from our colleagues over in Warrington.



SEIZE THE DAY National Service User Conference

Once again the Holiday Inn, Birmingham was the venue for the UK National Service User

Conference, now in its fourth year.

The main programme for the day included:

- **Survival of the fittest** - an invitation to get inspired by groups “achieving maximum impact with minimal funding.” Invited speakers from The Recovery Federation and London User Forum
- **Welfare Reform** - Niamh Eastwood from RELEASE and Andrew Selous MP
- **Question Time** - Subjects such as enforced reduction, payment by results and time-limited scripts.
- **DDN Film Awards**

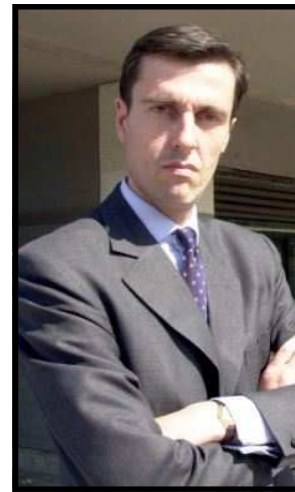
Anne Marie Ward and **Alistair Sinclair** spoke inspiringly about the rapid growth of the UK Recovery Movement from the perspective of their own personal recoveries and the success they’ve had in empowering individuals all across the country. The first Recovery walk held in Liverpool was followed by a larger event in Glasgow, there have been Recovery conferences held in Preston and there is little doubt that the movement now appears to have an unstoppable momentum. However, one main concern appears to be that the movement could in some way be hijacked by “Recovery Capitalists” aided by government bodies. It is difficult to see how this could be prevented either, given that surely the concept of Recovery cannot be owned outright by anyone or copyrighted in any way. Also, the actual definition of Recovery is a subject that’s still hotly debated - does it have to be complete and total abstinence, or does improved well being with the assistance of medication and therapies not also constitute some form of recovery?

Tim Sampney from The newly re-formed London User Forum was another source of inspiration, outlining how he went about “calling in favours” from different organisations and successfully gained access to various premises to hold meetings FREE OF CHARGE! Once one organisation had agreed to his (modest) demands others were more or less shamed into following suit. It was definitely a strategy that has paid off - Tim kept reminding the audience that things could be achieved without money in the initial stages, providing the commitment and determination to make things happen was there to begin with.

There should have been a presentation from Fabrice Olivet concerning an ongoing campaign for consumption rooms in Paris and how “direct action” had achieved results. Sadly, she was not available on the day.

Welfare Reform:

This was, understandably, a particularly thorny issue and must have been an extremely tough gig for one **Andrew Selous**, Conservative MP for South West Bedfordshire, a bit like Andy Gray turning up at a Women’s Institute meeting. To be fair to Mr Selous he did a good job of maintaining the government’s stance on the necessity for reform, despite plenty of heckling and intimidation. He insisted that the new “universal” benefit system would ensure that if someone works for a short period of time they will not have to go through the whole process of re-applying for benefits, as was the case previously. He also stated that assessments would be “personalised” but also added that failure to apply for a job or accept a “reasonable job offer” would be penalised. He also stated that “this government has higher ambitions for people than to leave them on benefits.”



Speaking with Andrew Selous and very much from a totally different and much more popular perspective was **Niamh Eastwood** from RELEASE. Niamh highlighted the concerns of so many service users—particularly the subject of trying to force the pace of an individual’s recovery, the sheer scale of the task in achieving stability after the throes of addiction, as well as the worries many people now have on subjects such as time-limited scripts (which was denied by Mr Selous “was never going to be included in the new drugs strategy”) payment by results potentially threatening fair treatment for all and even the possibility of enforced reduction..

There was much questioning—especially on the subject of housing (our own Allison raised the issue of hostels charging service users £200 a week rent) the response to this point was that “it was a matter for local authorities.” Niamh Eastwood felt that the new drug strategy is more a list of points at the moment and lacks any hard and fast detail of how services will be commissioned and delivered, especially given the formation of Public Health England which replaces the National Treatment Agency.

People also wanted answers on specific issues such as what would happen to those on long-term methadone prescriptions, people who had not really known any other kind of life for decades - one man in his sixties asked if he would have to be assessed for the new universal benefit scheme - which was met (from Selous) with a definite no - those coming up to retirement age would not be assessed, though no actual age cut-off point was indicated. Another question from the floor was: Can the government assist in ensuring that Service User Involvement is acknowledged as a legitimate form of voluntary work? Mr Selous informed us that he would take this issue back and discuss it with colleagues at Westminster.

We will check that he does and let you know his response next time.