



Your Voice

Mental Health Act reform update
Advocacy – what it is and how it's used
Highlights from Members' Day

Rethink
Mental
Illness.



Respite offer for carers

We know that many of you are carers for loved ones, so we are delighted to have signed up as a referral partner with a charity called Carefree.

Carefree works with hotels across the country to give rooms that have not been reserved by paying customers to carers for free so they can take a respite break. Most hotels include breakfast, and breaks are usually offered over one or two nights.

Carers pay a £25 administration fee, and must be able to get themselves to whichever hotel they choose to stay at.

The carer can go on the respite break and take another family member, but this cannot be the person they care for. These respite breaks can be taken once a year, and only one carer per household can be registered with Carefree.

If you, or your loved one, uses one of our services then get in touch with the staff there and they can refer you to Carefree. You will be given access to the Carefree online booking portal to book your own break.

If you aren't linked to one of our services you can refer yourself directly to Carefree to book your own respite break, just visit their website: **carefreespace.org/take-a-break** which has all the details.

They ask that carers meet the following criteria:

- Aged 18 or over
- Full-time unpaid carer (30+ hours per week)
- Able to arrange interim care for the person they care for
- Able to pay for extras (£25 admin fee, transport, food, travel insurance if required etc.)



Richard Walsh, Associate Director of Advocacy Services, shares what advocacy is, when advocates are needed and how it has grown and developed in our organisation in recent years.

“ When I tell people what I do for a living, I’m often met with a slightly confused expression when I tell them I work in advocacy. To try and explain I will often tell people that advocacy is about addressing the power imbalance between people who need health and social care support, and the people who are making decisions about their support. While we know people who receive support can get left out of these highly personal decisions, advocacy is really about choice and control. It means that people who need health and social care interventions are given the same rights most of us take for granted – which are to be respected and be able to make a choice!

Advocacy can be done in one of two ways; instructed advocacy or non-instructed advocacy. For instructed advocacy, we support someone who has the capacity at that time to understand and be involved in the decision. The purpose of the advocate is to ensure that the person is involved in the decision that is being made about them. The ensure they are listened to, provided with choices wherever possible and respected. Advocacy is very much in the background, encouraging the person to have their say, helping them understand the options and ensuring people listen to them directly.

With non-instructed advocacy the role of the advocate is to find out as much information about that person as possible - including their likes, preferences, friendships and places that are important to them. They do this by finding a way to communicate with them directly, and gathering information from people and professionals who know them best. This is all presented to the professional making the decision, who has to take this information into account, and evidence how this has been considered.

It's important to remember that most advocacy provided is a statutory role, and a legal right for people under a number of legal processes and statute. This includes The Mental Capacity Act and The Mental Health Act, to name a few. In almost all of these situations, advocacy has to be offered to those who are lacking capacity to make and understand the specific decision, or if they have difficulty being involved in the decision. They also don't have

friends or family who are able to support them. Advocacy is aimed at those individuals (and carers when it relates to Care Act Advocacy) who are at most risk of being marginalised and left out of decisions being made about them, or their loved one.

We also offer statutory advocacy support services for adults with a range of support needs, not just mental illness, for example autism, learning difficulties, dementia, or people with vision or hearing impairments."



Richard Walsh,
Associate Director of
Advocacy

During Carers Week in June we will be offering an exclusive members only webinar on advocacy. Look out for your email invitation nearer the time.



Rise Sheffield:

Recognition, inspiration, and support for everyone.

One of our newest registered peer support groups, Rise Sheffield, is a voluntary led group supported by our Community and Group Development Team. We caught up with Group Coordinator Maddie to find out more.

Rise Sheffield meets weekly and began its journey in May 2022. It provides an opportunity for people who have had experience or thoughts of self-harm to come together in a safe, supportive, and non-judgmental place. Group members get the opportunity to share their stories with peers who understand, and gain tips from other people who have been in a similar situation.

Maddie, the coordinator, was inspired to set up Rise Sheffield after seeing a documentary by Gemma Collins (reality TV star and media personality) about her experience with self-harm, in which she visits a self-harm support group. Curious to see if there was one in her local area and on finding that

there wasn't, Maddie set herself the task of setting one up herself. As she says, she would have loved such a group when she was struggling with self-harm. She teamed up with Rethink Mental Illness, to create Rise Sheffield. She hopes that the group embodies the words it stands for: Recognition, inspiration, and support for everyone!

Since its launch, the group has gone from strength to strength. One member reflects the experience of many members and says "Rise has helped them make positive changes while meeting new people" and has also "helped with distraction."



Maddie, with over 10 years of firsthand experience with self-harm, is in recovery and leading this group as a way of supporting others. Also helping to lead the group are Elwyn, Alex and Lynsey. Elwyn is passionate about rights and acceptance for mentally ill people and has firsthand experience of being in the system and recovery. Alex wants to give back to a mental health charity as she has benefitted from them and has lived experience of self-harm, neurodiversity and disability; she is passionate about using her lived experience to support others. Lynsey has supported her daughter through mental illness and self-harm and can reach out to other parents and carers who are going

through the same thing. Lynsey is Maddie's mother, and the group also run a monthly peer session for parents, carers, partners and friends.

Future plans for the group include fundraising and also promoting harm reduction alongside engaging with safer coping mechanisms.

If you'd like to know more about the group, please contact **riseshffield@rethink.org**

Braintree art group



Michelle



Michala



Jenny

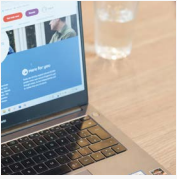
Creative Voice

This spring Creative Voice includes the art and poetry by our current winners of our Bill Pringle awards for art and poetry, as well as artwork from Braintree art group that remind us a new season is here.



Art winner – Nils Wilkinson,
Alone in the Loch.

The winner of our Bill Pringle award for art was Nils Wilkinson, with his painting Alone in the Loch. Nils said he was 'blown away' to win "It means the world to me that the art I do to help me through my mental illness has been recognised by this award."



Poetry winner -Leonne Harper, Beyond The Event Horizon

Leonne's poem is from the perspective of being mother and carer to her son who had a diagnosis of schizophrenia. She writes about his journey and her pride in him.

Beyond The Event Horizon

My son, he's a physicist
And here we are stood,
Today at his graduation.
We're up to the nines',
Shiny and Proud,
Although not my first celebration.

When the stranger he'd become,
Recognised and called me, 'Mum',
I celebrated.

When he went from hiding in the night,
To striding out, in daylight,
I celebrated.

When he once again said,
"I just have to tell you this!".
"Something, something, Dirac.

Something, something, dynamics".
I celebrated.

When he picked those 'pro markers' up.
Twist 13, Stars and Skull,
I celebrated.

When the beard was shaped and waxed,
And in the mirror, the bicep flexed.
I celebrated.

When I observed the current,
Of laughter and jests,
That he kickstarted,
In his circuit of friends.
I celebrated.

When I saw excitement
And bright joy,
In the crinkly, twinkly eyes,
Of my boy,
I celebrated.

It's been a road of many,
A quiet, private celebration,
And nearly as many setbacks,
That's led to this graduation.

I'm so emotionally overwhelmed,
That we're actually here.
Gulping down my fusion
Of champagne and tears.

So we'll raise our glasses,
But not for the Event Horizon,
We've learned from Prof. Hawkins
Of the 'Apparent Horizon'.

And my son, he's a physicist.
He's my baby, my soul.
And today we celebrate.
Motion and emergence,
From a Black Hole.