Havin' a Laugh

Who Decides Who Cares?
One Drink too Many
Festival Fever
Let's get Physical

Summer 2015
Summer’s here and the time is right...

The summer has arrived and this issue looks at the different ways people within our services are bringing sunshine into the lives of others and in the process fulfilling their own lives.

Recovery from a mental illness is much more than the right treatment and medication. It’s a journey, sometimes short, sometimes long, and always unique to the person. We feature service users whose recovery involves comedy, volunteering and becoming part of our workforce.

On page 10 a father and son have found a new beginning in volunteering after difficult times.

Comedy and mental health may not be obvious bedfellows – joking apart our feature on the latest course from our recovery college programme really is a laughing matter.

It’s summer and that means one thing – festivals! We are proud to support this year’s Liverpool Pride Festival. If you get a chance go to this year’s parade (page 25).

Enjoy your summer issue. If you would like to contact MC magazine with your views, contributions or suggestions call the Trust communications team on 0151 471 2336, or email communications@merseycare.nhs.uk.

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Contributers to this issue were: Graham Hignett, Myles Hodgson, Jackie Rankin (editorial), Joel Goodman (photographs), Jo Hadfield (design).
I'm still surprised - and delighted - when someone discovers I am associated with Mersey Care and shares something about their own, or a family member's mental health. It tells me how much we all need to talk.

Unless we feel able to share our feelings, mood or problems with others, how can we support one another? Unless we are willing to talk and to listen, how can we encourage people to seek help when they most need it?

We all feel low from time to time, but it's when these normal emotional experiences have unhelpful effects on day-to-day life that they can be termed a common mental health problem. When this happens I feel passionately about the importance of getting the right help early.

Mersey Care provides this sort of help through Talk Liverpool, the new Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service for Liverpool.

Here a range of psychological treatments – or talking therapies – are offered to people with common problems such as feeling stressed, low in mood or anxious. The service aims to see patients quickly and offer the kind of help they want in the way they want it - by telephone, face to face, on-line, or through courses and workshops and support at community based locations close to where they live.

If you are 16, registered with a Liverpool GP and keen to know more about the Talk Liverpool service, find out more on page 26.

You'll find lots more inside - a senior nurse tells why we're becoming a smoke free Trust; we talk to the service users who are now in a unique role supporting others, and we showcase the service users turned comedians for whom mental illness is a laughing matter.

Our work has been recognised nationally with our medical director, Dr David Fearnley named in the Health Service Journal’s 100 Clinical Leaders list, while Mersey Care was included among the best community trusts to work at in 2015. Iris Benson, our service user and carer representative, followed her MBE in the Queen’s Birthday Honours List by being named in the HSJ's inaugural list of Patient Leaders; and our No Force First initiative won the ‘changing culture’ category at the Patient Safety Awards. Well done to all!

Beatrice Fraenkel, Chairman,
Mersey Care NHS Trust

"Unless we are willing to talk and to listen, how can we encourage people to seek help when they most need it?"
“Being happy is the best cure of all diseases.”

Dr Patch Adams
Mersey Care’s Recovery College is pushing the boundaries of innovative courses that can help patients regain confidence and rebuild their lives – we take a not too serious look at how comedy and theatre is putting the spotlight on recovery.

Does someone with a mental health problem really want to hear a gag? You must be joking some would say. But at Mersey Care’s Recovery College the art of being funny is helping not only making audiences howl out loud it is transforming the lives of the perpetrators of these belly laughing routines.

Having a titter for the good of your health isn’t new. In the 1998 semi biographical film American physician Patch Adams, suicidal after the death of a friend, uses humour to help his fellow patients. Deciding to train as a doctor he develops a methodology that incorporates humour to help combat illness – a radical concept at the time of his graduation in 1971.

Humour for health goes back a long way. Look no further than the ancient proverb... “As soap is to the body, so laughter is to the soul.”

But a course in cracking jokes?

The idea that it could play a unique part in a new six week confidence-building course came to fruition just this year. But what kind of a college has a course in cracking jokes?

The Recovery College isn’t a school or a college in the traditional sense of the word. Its learning programmes are all aimed at supporting people along their road to recovery from a mental illness.

Stuart Robinson, Recovery College lead explains: “The wider aim was to help people develop personal skills and confidence in those social situations we all might find difficult.

“We chose comedy because there’s only so much you can teach about confidence in a classroom. Mental illness and comedy may sound poles apart but many comedians have acknowledged periods of mental health problems and their experience has influenced their work.

“People had some amazing ideas. One of our acts, Paula, did a send up of the pop tune ‘It’s All about the Bass’ called It’s All About the Meds…it went down very well!”

Comfort zones were left behind

People left their comfort zones, but what an achievement - if you can stand in front of 80 people and make them laugh you can do anything!”

Of course there’s no laughter without an audience and more than 80 people howled their way through a stand up show at Liverpool’s Pilgrim pub.

Course leader Kiefer Lewis is a professional workshop leader in drama and comedy.

“It wasn’t until the final show that I realised just how far the students had come. I’ve never had so much pride in a group as I did that night. The course was a huge journey for me too and to make it with those guys is something I will take with me for the rest of my life. They took the proverbial bar and raised it through the roof.”

Plans are under way to perform a fringe show to Liverpool Comedy Festival just prior to World Mental Health Day this autumn.

The Recovery College is open to anyone who uses services, including family and carers of service users and members of staff. A wide range of courses are running. For more information call: 0151 330 4140; email: Recovery.College@merseycare.nhs.uk or follow the College on Twitter: @RC_MerseyCare.
Nadine is 35, a law graduate, former Home Office worker, droll and naturally funny. Why did she get involved? “I have to keep busy otherwise I might start colouring in the cat...” she retorts.

“Comedy is something I have always admired but I never thought I would get involved myself. I’d done a confidence building course and some others about understanding mental illness last year, so when I heard about the comedy course I was sold on it.

“It helped to be with friends, like minded people with empathy for what you have been through.”

Nadine has had three psychotic episodes of delusional disorder, the latest just last year. “I had worked for the Home Office for nine years before deciding to travel the world. “When I came back Britain was a different place and although I’m well qualified I found it impossible to find a job. The stress of unemployment and being impoverished triggered my illness. I couldn’t hold my head up; I felt I had no self-worth.

“I had felt out of touch, I had no sense of purpose. Recovery is arduous, the journey requires input and dedication; I’m having to get to know myself again – but part of that is that I’ve discovered comedy!”

“I’m quite a studious person and found the whole process; learning how to write comedy, having to sit down and engage your ‘funny bone’ and then testing out your material on yourself, your peers and your family and friends, quite fascinating.

“The show was daunting; travelling the world was much easier than stepping out in front of an audience. I was trembling so badly I thought the microphone would fall out of my hand. But I’d been taught to use the excitement in a positive way.

“To say laughter is the best medicine is true. My confidence has grown; I’ve done a presentation to a mental health charity, been accepted as a volunteer and had a job interview. I’ve learnt more in the last year and that’s because of the Recovery College.

“The experience has recharged my sense of self worth and sense of identity and re-joined me with my community, friends and family. I’m more open with them and I’m finding people are genuinely interested and willing to share their own stories, which can only be good.”
The comedy course comes fast on the heels of a confidence through drama course, which linked with Liverpool’s Everyman and Playhouse Theatre. The week-long course, ‘Play a Part’, was delivered by professional drama facilitator Sarah Harper and lived experience facilitator Helen Jackson.

Sarah Harper said: “The confidence through drama course does exactly what it says on the tin. We worked together as a team exploring drama games and exercises, then began a series of improvisation exercises, as well as some vocal and movement work. Our aim was to create a performance for peers after 16 hours together.”

One of its participants said: “It made such a big difference to be here, in the Everyman, day in day out. We felt more confident, motivated, it had a real impact on people’s lives. We all felt a real sense of belonging.”

I say, I say, I say... Here’s a quick selection of some favourite jokes from recent Edinburgh Fringe Festivals.

Who are the most decent people in the hospital? The ultrasound people.

David O’Doherty

If you’re being chased by a police dog, try not to go through a tunnel, then on to a little seesaw, then jump through a hoop of fire. They’re trained for that.

Milton Jones

My hot water heater packed up so I had to fill the bath using a kettle and a load of saucepans... mind you it was dead uncomfortable when I got in.

Seymour Mace

Got a phone call today to do a gig at a fire station. Went along. Turned out it was a hoax.

Adrian Poynton

I was in town, I saw a big sign that said: ‘Bus tours, ten quid.’ So I thought I’d give it a try... What a rip off. Ten quid to have a look round a bus!

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Addy Van-Der-Borgh

You can’t lose a homing pigeon. If your homing pigeon doesn’t come back, then what you’ve lost is a pigeon.

Sara Pascoe

I’ve decided to sell my hoover... well, it was just collecting dust.

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‘I needed a password eight characters long so I picked Snow White and the Seven Dwarves.

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Focus on

Dementia

We ask a GP to share thoughts on their ‘hot topic’ - something they feel we should all know more about.

Traditionally recognised as a retirement town, Southport and Formby, in line with national trends is experiencing an ageing population which inevitably brings with it more patients who are being diagnosed with dementia.
It is estimated that one in six people over 80 years of age will develop dementia. As there is no known cure, the challenge for GPs is firstly prevention, by addressing risk factors early in life such as smoking, obesity, physical inactivity, high blood pressure and diabetes.

Diagnosing dementia can be complex and a time of anxiety and fear both for the patient and their family. It is important therefore to gain good access to timely diagnosis as this can then open the door to early treatments and interventions that can slow the progression of the illness and improve the quality of lives for sufferers and their families.

My experience of the memory services in Southport and indeed in Sefton has been very good, and having visited them, I’ve been impressed with the dedication, hard work and caring nature of the staff. It is not surprising then that the memory service in Sefton has recently been recognised nationally for its efforts.

The next stage is to build on this and pave the way for services that will improve the lives of our residents and their families. This needs to be addressed through destigmatisation of the illness, improving support for carers and patients that will allow them to live at home. This can only be done in partnership between GPs, secondary care providers, local authority and voluntary services such as Alzheimer’s Society.

The Sefton Clinical Commissioning Groups (the people who buy services) have made dementia care a priority, and work has started already through a transformation board that will bring together our partners in an effort to address the issues facing us all and to put forward real solutions to tackle the ‘dementia timebomb’. Hilal Mulla.
Martin, now 47, had volunteered for many years but in spite of attending a Queen’s garden party and meeting the Dalai Lama, he never felt fulfilled.

It was under sad circumstances he came into contact with Mersey Care. An operation to cure back pain didn’t go to plan and Martin was left with severe back pain and also lost the use of his right leg. He still needs a wheelchair to travel more than a few yards. His mum Maureen was his main carer and the two were inseparable. When Maureen suffered a debilitating stroke in 2010 the depression that followed prompted Martin to seek something to help him through the dark days.

They say a volunteer is worth ten pressed men. Father and son Brian and Martin Murphy are more than willing to give their time and their talents – and as members of Mersey Care’s army of volunteers each is invaluable in his own unique way.

“Being part of the team makes you feel that you are doing something worthwhile – I feel secure.”

Brian
“I feel myself coming alive when I walk through those doors”

Martin

“I was deeply depressed; I didn’t want to get out of bed. I had done some volunteering so I looked online and came across the Ashworth Hospital befriending scheme. Neil Tunstall who ran the scheme said ‘come here, we’ll look after you’ – and he has. I was buddied up with a patient who had no other visitors and I’m still visiting him today.”

When Maureen died in 2013 after suffering a second massive stroke, Martin and his dad Brian were devastated.

For Brian, a retired teacher, the future seemed unimaginable. “I had looked after my wife round the clock. Suddenly the house was so empty – I’d drop Martin off, come home and burst into tears. I didn’t know what to do with myself.

“Martin laid the groundwork for my volunteering; He said one day ‘why don’t you just give it a try?’ I knew I had to do something to keep my mind occupied so I applied to the People Participation team. What struck me was how cheerful and pleasant everyone was. They treat you as an equal. I recall one day I was at the same event as the Chief Executive Joe Rafferty and I mentioned I had family from the same part of the world as him – we chatted as if we’d known each other for years!”

Collette Irving, Service User and Carer Co-ordinator, knew the value of Brian’s knowledge, experience and skills and invited him to train so he could sit on job short listing and interview panels. “It was what I needed. I did the course and I’ve only recently interviewed people for the post of consultant psychiatrist.”

Even so, Brian was a little daunted when the invitation came to put his name forward for a position on the Trust’s Capital Investment Group.

“Martin was struggling with his depression so it was a difficult time, but I filled in the form, had an interview and now I’m about to become a lay advisor helping oversee a budget of £200 million! It’s a big responsibility, but being part of the team makes you feel that you are doing something worthwhile – I feel secure.”

For Martin, work now includes two days at Morris ward at Clock View Hospital, where he offers support and kindness to men recovering from an acute mental illness.

“I love it, Scott Parker and his team are brilliant – I feel myself coming alive when I walk through those doors.”

Become a volunteer

- Volunteering is the perfect way to discover something you are really good at and develop a new skill
- You’ll connect with your community and give a little back
- You feel motivated and a sense of achievement from choosing to make a little corner of the world a bit better
- Volunteering can boost your career options or help with a career change
- You’ll meet new people, find new interests and hobbies – and have fun
- Inspire friends and family to do the same

Our army of volunteers is ever growing – would you like to join us? Your knowledge and skills will make a huge difference and we will help you develop new skills and gain experience in an area of interest to you. We also offer a community volunteering qualification. If you would like to talk to someone about volunteering contact the People Participation team.

Tel: 0151 285 2250 or email: volunteering@merseycare.nhs.uk.

You can find out more about volunteering for Mersey Care from our website: merseycare.nhs.com/getting-involved/volunteer.
Mersey Care has embarked on an ambitious programme of improvements to its community services across Liverpool – here we take a look at what they are and why they are important.

We have been committed for many years to ensuring that people with mental health, learning disability or substance misuse problems are treated as close to home as possible.

Services are being transformed so that people spend less time in hospital; go less to traditional outpatient clinics and are instead supported in the community among their friends and family.

The Plan

We knew that new sites were needed for our community mental health teams to provide the type of care we want people to have. This was already happening for people being treated in our inpatient units. So we set out a five year plan to make sure it happens.

The framework was agreed last year - a massive step forward in providing the therapeutic environments our service users and staff deserve – light, airy modern buildings that will be fit for purpose for years to come.

Hubs and Spokes

One of the biggest changes has been the creation of ‘hubs’ and ‘spokes’. Imagine a bicycle wheel – it has a centre, or hub, and lots of spokes around it. In the same way we have created hubs, three so far - which house clinical, support and administration staff. All have office space, meeting rooms and clinical areas.

Our spokes are smaller sites - usually other venues in the community to be used as and when and where they are needed.

Donna Robinson, Deputy Chief Operating Officer for Liverpool Services and Hubs Project Executive is confident it will work.

“We know from the successful implementation of our hub at South Sefton a year ago that this model can provide huge benefits, both to patients and staff. We are investing substantially to give our staff the tools to work with service users in their own homes.

“Developing such an ambitious model is a big task, but we are well on our way to delivering improvements that will support the Trust’s aim to provide Perfect Care.”
Where are the Hubs?

Three Community Hubs are now open.

Mersey Care NHS Trust
Community Hub Baird House
Liverpool Innovation Park Edge Lane
Liverpool L7 9NJ

Mersey Care NHS Trust
Community Hub Norris Green
Falklands Approach Norris Green
Liverpool L11 5BS

Mersey Care NHS Trust
Community Hub Moss House
Moss Street Garston Liverpool L19 2NA

Spokes at outreach venues will utilise either suitable existing Mersey Care buildings or those of partner health organisations.

Movers and Shakers

These community services have already moved into the hubs and spokes:

Arundel House Community Mental Health Team (previously at Arundel Health Park off Smithdown Road, Wavertree) is now based at Baird House, Liverpool Innovation Park. Tel: 0151 330 8073

Drug and Alcohol Recovery Team, or DART (previously in Rodney Street, Liverpool) is now at a ‘spoke’ at Windsor House in Toxteth. Tel: 0151 234 5800

Drug and Alcohol Recovery Team, or DART, also operates five days a week out of a ‘spoke’ at Brook Place, Orphan Drive, Tuebrook. Tel: 0151 330 8260

Liverpool Asperger’s Team (previously at Olive Mount, Wavertree) is at the hub at Norris Green. Tel: 0151 737 4800

Liverpool Learning Disabilities Team (previously at Olive Mount, Wavertree) is at the hub at Norris Green. Tel: 0151 737 4800

Windsor House Community Mental Health Team (previously at Windsor House, Toxteth) is now based at Baird House, Liverpool Innovation Park, as well as operating three days a week from a ‘spoke’ at Kuumba Imani Millennium Centre, Toxteth. Tel: 0151 250 5352

North Liverpool Community Mental Health Team (previously at the Ferndale Unit, Aintree) is at the hub at Norris Green. Tel: 0151 479 3800

If you would like more information about any of Mersey Care’s services log onto our website and view our A to Z of services at merseycare.nhs.uk

Who else is on the Move?

Brain Injury Rehabilitation has moved from Mossley Hill Hospital to the new Sid Watkins Building, at The Walton Centre, Aintree:

Mersey Care NHS Trust
Brain Injury Rehabilitation Centre
Sid Watkins Building
Lower Lane
Fazakerley
L9 7LU
Tel: 0151 250 6062/0151 250 6247

Psychotherapy Services, including the community Personality Disorder Service, has moved from Mossley Hill Hospital to Waterloo:

Mersey Care NHS Trust
Psychotherapy Services
12 Haigh Road
Waterloo
Liverpool
L22 3XP
Tel: 0151 250 6128 / 0151 250 6130
“Doing a dance or exercise session changes people’s whole demeanour, you can actually see it happen.”

Let’s get Physical
Yoga at Garston Lifestyles Centre is part of the ‘Healthy Blues’ programme run by Everton in the Community and Mersey Care that supports physical, technical, social and emotional needs for mental health service users aged over 40.

They’re not the only ones to be energised by exercise. Research has shown that physical activity is good for your mind as much as for your body.

Even gentle exercise such as gardening or DIY releases chemicals in your brain that make you feel good, helping you concentrate as well as sleep, and give you a sense of achievement.

Tracey Thompson Community Learning Disabilities Focus Team Manager whose team runs a full on programme of activities in the Southport area, agrees.

“Doing a dance or exercise session changes people’s whole demeanour, you can actually see it happen.”

Focus Team Support Worker Maria Gilbert who leads the Southport sessions with colleague Amita Hampton says the benefits go further:

“It’s the same music and the same routines every week. People know what’s coming next so they don’t have to think about it, they can enjoy being with friends and motivating each other.

“Just being there makes you feel better. It’s not only the exercise, you see other people coming and going and that in itself makes you feel supported and part of a community.”

The focus team programme is open to anyone with a learning disability and needs no-one else can meet. Referral can come from the person or their carer, GPs and other health professionals. Contact the team on 01704 383 180.

“You can definitely blame it on the boogie for the feel good factor spreading through the learning disabilities dance aerobics group at Southport YMCA every Wednesday morning. A string of 80’s classics prompt a shimmy and smiles in anticipation of the good times ahead.
It’s a bit scary but...

Most people get anxious about trying something new. Take your time and do things at your own pace. Here are some tips:

**I’m afraid of failing**

Start with a beginners’ class then move on to the advanced group. Set realistic targets – start your new running schedule with a 1km walk or jog, then increase gradually.

**I don’t have the money**

Many councils offer discounted rates at gyms and leisure centres. Alternatively, choose an activity that is cheaper or free.

I suffer from social anxiety

Ask a friend to go along with you. If you are uncomfortable using communal changing rooms, or with the clothing you need to wear, leisure centre staff may have a solution. Otherwise try a single sex gym or exercise class.

How do I get to a class? I don’t have a car

People at your activity class may give you a lift, alternatively walk or cycle there. If you are eligible, use your local community transport service. However you travel, always think how you will stay safe.

Starting something new overwhelms me

If life is getting on top of you, talk with your GP about how you feel before you get active. GPs can prescribe an exercise scheme where you are given free or discounted access to a range of leisure facilities for a period of time.

What if I stray from my exercise goals?

Don’t worry, there’s always an opportunity to pick up where you left off. Starting and staying active can be challenging but once you get going, there are plenty of rewards.

What good does it do?

- less tension, stress and mental fatigue
- a natural energy boost
- improved sleep
- a sense of achievement
- focus in life and motivation
- less anger or frustration
- a healthy appetite
- better social life
- it’s fun!
It’s cold and dark outside
When the clocks change for winter that evening bike ride might not be so appealing – or safe. Try creating a winter exercise plan that involves an indoor activity.

I don’t have the energy right now
Not all of us leap out of bed full of beans and ready for exercise. Work with your energy highs and lows.

Accept that some days it’s best to take a break.

What if I get sick or become injured?
Always ease back into your exercise routine – take advice from your GP if you need to. If an injury is going to be an ongoing problem, switch to a more suitable activity.

“physical activity is good for your mind as much as for your body.”

Make the first move
- Search online for activities in your area
- Ask your GP about exercise on prescription
- Ask a friend to go for a walk with you
- Put on your radio and dance
- Check out these websites:
  - NHS Choices: [nhs.uk](http://nhs.uk)
  - Mental Health Foundation: [mentalhealth.org.uk](http://mentalhealth.org.uk)
  - Mind: [mind.org.uk](http://mind.org.uk)

Hints and tips courtesy of Mental Health Foundation: mentalhealth.org.uk
Let’s be Positive

Our Positive Achievement Awards shout from the rooftops about the incredible people who work for us and with us, whether as staff, students, volunteers, service users, carers or partners.

Here’s what people have said about past winners…

“He uses flexible working to ensure all staff members are able to have a good work life balance”

“They see the people behind the diagnosis…”

“It’s impossible to estimate just how many people’s lives have been positively impacted by the contribution he has made…”

What will you share with our judges?
Enter online, by email or by post. Get your nomination form now.
Contact: positive.achievements@merseycare.nhs.uk

It’s your turn to tell us…

Winners and entertainers from last year’s star studded event
Who do you know who regularly goes the extra mile?

Which individuals or teams do you feel are so dedicated to providing exceptional care that they deserve to be honoured with a Positive Achievement Award 2015?

The Positive Achievement Awards recognise the good work, commitment to caring and the personal and collective achievement of everyone connected to mental health, learning disability and addiction services the length and breadth of Merseyside.

**We can’t celebrate great care without you and your nominations.**
So please share your stories of great care by nominating your Mersey Care colleagues today.

For more information or for a nomination form please contact Positive.Achievements@merseycare.nhs.uk or call 0151 471 2336.

**Don’t miss out. Closing date is 14 August 2015.**
Mersey Care’s rehabilitation service is a national leader, accredited excellent by the brain injury charity Headway. Formerly housed at Mossley Hill Hospital the service has made the move to a home befitting of its status, within the Sid Watkins building at the Walton Centre for Neurology and neurosciences in Aintree.

It’s a move that means acute and rehabilitation services are all under one roof. So when people with acquired brain injuries make their own move, from the acute to the rehabilitation part of their care, it’s only to the next floor.

What does this move mean – and why was it a good one? Dave Evans, Unit Manager explains: “Being based at Mossley Hill meant we were a long way from the Walton Centre, where most of our patients came from. It made sense for us to be here to improve the experience for people in the transition period.”

“People would have to go to what seemed a far away place when they left the Walton Centre for the next part of their treatment – now we’re based at the Walton Centre patients and families who are ready for rehabilitation simply pop up the stairs to us.”

Dr Kevin Foy, Consultant Neuropsychiatrist.

“Better by design”

The design of the new unit was imperative. “When someone has a brain injury, they can be easily confused so environment and design are very important. Our staff were involved in the design right down to the décor and furniture. They decided what rooms went where and they told us how service users’ bedrooms should look.

“There’s a garden and an outdoor balcony so people who come to stay with us have plenty of outdoor space and fresh air, we have therapy rooms, a gymnasium, a large lounge with a separate female only lounge and a rehabilitation kitchen. We now have a purpose built facility that everyone can benefit from.”

A Good Move
**Being here makes people get better quicker**

Anna Money, (below) speech and language therapist says the unit mimics real life, helping people recover more quickly.

“It’s wonderful, the bedrooms are homely and private, but we have places where we can all meet. It’s like real life. Sometimes people just want to go home and have their rehabilitation therapy on a day to day basis, but having an appointment on a Monday morning isn’t like reality, whereas the rehabilitation they get here is like real life – it goes on seven days a week. It makes people get better quicker, it gets them as strong as they can be so they can get back home or to somewhere where they can be independent.

“When people come to us they have been through one of the most traumatic experiences anyone could have to deal with in life and we want them to leave in a better way. That’s what the Brain Injury Unit does.”

**Onwards and upwards**

For Dr Kevin Foy, Consultant Neuropsychiatrist (above) the move brings huge advantages. “Before people would have to go to what seemed a far away place when they left the Walton Centre for the next part of their treatment, now patients and families simply pop up the stairs to us.

“We have lots more medical back up, not just through scanning and x-ray facilities but also expert opinions; it also gives better integration between the Walton Centre teams and our therapists.”

**It’s like the Hilton**

When Irene (right) went to the unit six months ago she couldn’t speak.

“I have severe brain damage from falling down the stairs. I’m better, but I have brain damage. The staff are marvellous, even if you just want to chat about something. I say to my son in Canada it’s like the Hilton Hotel - it’s fabulous!

“After being here for six months I’ve started speaking again; I can make my own breakfast now, I couldn’t do that before. They help you to do it. They don’t throw you in at the deep end but they say ‘let’s just see if you can do that.’”
History tells us the implementation of smoking bans is notoriously difficult. It took the Government, after several years of trying, until 1 July 2007 to introduce a ban on smoking in all enclosed work places in England.
Even then, there was widespread criticism from both sides of the argument with MPs at the time threatening to overturn the bill.

It’s no surprise then, that Mersey Care’s commitment to go fully smoke free by next March is raising questions among staff, service users and visitors to the Trust’s sites.

The decision has been made following a review of the Trust corporate smoking cessation policy, to comply with the Health Act 2006 and NICE guidelines for smoking cessation in secondary care, acute maternity and mental health services. Our new nicotine management policy ensures that our service users are supported whilst in hospital.

But what will be the impact of this move on service users? What will it be like for staff caring for people who have become accustomed to smoke breaks?

We put the questions on everyone’s lips to senior nurse Jayne Bridge.

**What’s changing?**

The biggest change will be that service users will not be able to smoke anywhere on our sites. We’ve been a non smoking Trust since 2007, but service users could smoke in outside spaces. The new guidelines mean there can be no smoking anywhere in the Trust, inside or out for both service users and staff, and this includes e-cigarettes.

**Isn’t this unfair to those who need nicotine?**

Service users will receive the correct amount of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and support they need to prevent them from withdrawing within 30 minutes of arriving in our hospital and this will be included in their care planning and continue throughout their stay. People using our community services will be offered and supported to quit smoking as part of their care.

**But doesn’t it make people feel better?**

People often think they need to keep smoking to help manage stress levels, but addiction to nicotine can actually cause stress and worsen low mood.

**Isn’t it the act of smoking that people will miss?**

Many people smoke to fill in time, relieve boredom or as part of socialising. We will organise programmes of activities, education and support based on what service users say they like. We’ve seen in our high secure services, who have been smoke free for a while, and from other mental health trusts, that this works.

**Won’t it take up staff time when they should be caring for people?**

Staff already spend time taking patients outside on planned smoking breaks. In fact 26 hours of direct nursing care is spent every day supervising access to smoking areas. In future they’ll have this time to spend with patients doing activities chosen by the patient or giving them one to one support to reduce or stop smoking.

For help giving up smoking...

It’s easier to take control of your smoking if you have support.

- you can find further information on national stop smoking services at: nhs.uk/smokefree
- or call 0300 123 1044.

Continued page 24
Are you telling people they can’t smoke?
Surely that’s up to them?
People do have a choice, but when they are with us they can’t smoke. We will ensure that we always have the staff available to offer support and NRT.

But it’s a basic human right
Legally it isn’t. The Human Rights Act 1998 states that “everyone’s right to life shall be protected by law.” We also have a right to ensure people’s wellbeing. People with common mental health problems face a 70 per cent higher death rate than the general population. That’s 51,000 deaths - we can’t ignore that.

What about the staff? They might worry that people will become aggressive if they are told they can’t smoke.
Because we are replacing the nicotine constantly people don’t have withdrawal symptoms. Other trusts have told us there has been no difference in incidences of violence and aggression since they went smoke free.

Will staff be trained to support people and administer nicotine replacement products?
That’s crucial for this to be successful. All staff will be given smoking cessation training and will use their therapeutic skills to support and educate people and monitor any concerns. They will reassure patients that we will help them by providing adequate nicotine replacement in a form they choose and giving them one to one support. We will, in turn, support staff and each ward will have a smoking ‘champion’ who staff can call on for help.

What about e-cigarettes?
People won’t be able to use e-cigarettes while they are on our premises and we won’t provide them. They are not regulated or licenced as medicines, we don’t yet know what’s in them or how safe they are and we wouldn’t give a medicine to someone if it wasn’t approved.

If the service user is given NRT and they go on leave and smoke, could they overdose?
Nicotine overdose associated with NRT use in smokers is uncommon. Smokers are generally used to very large doses of nicotine. If someone is craving while wearing a patch, they may need more NRT to reduce the craving.

Why are you doing this?
We have a duty of care to protect the health of people who use or work in our services. Smoking is the largest single preventable cause of illness and death. People with a mental illness who smoke have a higher chance of becoming ill or dying earlier than the general population. By doing this we have an opportunity to help people become well and live longer.
One of the city’s most popular, visual and flamboyant events, Pride attracts thousands of colourful characters in creative costumes, as well as families, who take to the streets to support the Pride cause.

The festival was created in memory of murdered gay teenager Michael Causer as a way to celebrate his life and empower LGBT communities. This year’s theme is ‘Love is No Crime’ and highlights include the Pride march from St George’s Hall through the city centre, and the Michael Causer Vigil. Activities across the city include market, education and community zone, workshops, guest speakers, acoustic music, a mobile cinema, and a family zone, with locations including Stanley Street Quarter.

Mersey Care Equality and Human Rights Lead Meryl Cuzak said:

“The Trust is proud to demonstrate its commitment to the core value of respect. We recognise that people from LGBT communities may experience discrimination which in turn impacts upon their mental health. We are here to show a real and meaningful commitment to equality.”
We can all feel low or anxious or stressed at times, but sometimes these problems get worse and start to affect our day to day lives.

Talk Liverpool is a service for any person experiencing anxiety, depression or stress, aged 16 and over and registered with an NHS GP within the Liverpool City boundary.

We offer access to talking therapies, practical support and advice quickly and easily and we aim to offer you the help you need when you really need it. We can work with you on the telephone; see you at one of our three bases in North, South and Central Liverpool or at a venue in your community.

There are many different types of help. Our qualified specialists offer one to one help, courses and we have online computer programmes that you can do at home. Support is available some evenings as well as during the day.

We will book you an appointment and work with you on the steps you can take yourself to help tackle your difficulties.

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**Sunday 4 October 2015, Aintree Racecourse**

How far will you go to help stamp out stigma and get people talking? Let’s get moving and be active; let’s stop the stigma that stops people talking about mental health problems.

We need you to join in with us this year and take part in our 5k Talk Walk at Aintree Racecourse.

Anyone can experience mental health problems and being able to talk about them is a vital step towards recovery - towards wellbeing and away from harm.

Talking can be a real life saver, but the stigma that still surrounds mental health issues stops many from speaking out and asking for help.

So come on – let’s unite, let’s shatter the stigma and stop the harm. Let’s take the first steps together.

Join us at this free family event. Let’s talk the talk and walk the walk.

**Gates open 12 noon 5k Walk 1pm**

**Admission FREE**

Aintree Racecourse Ormskirk Road
Liverpool Merseyside L9 5AS
Unable to relax? Feeling stressed? Difficulty sleeping? Feeling low?

Talk to us

For more information call:
0151 228 2300
or go online at:
talkliverpool.nhs.uk

Stress control classes

If you want to learn better ways to handle common problems such as anxiety, depression, low self-confidence, poor sleep and panic attacks, enrol onto our six week Stress Control course. This is a class not a group therapy, so you don’t have to talk about your problems in front of others. You will be with a group of people and you are welcome to bring someone with you for support.

You can access Talk Liverpool through:

- Self referral - call 0151 228 2300 or complete the self referral form online on our website at talkliverpool.nhs.uk
- Speaking to your GP or any health or social care professional who can refer you if they think it appropriate
- Voluntary or third sector organisations
- Jobcentre Plus
- Any education or training organisation.

To book onto a Stress Control course – phone Talk Liverpool on 0151 228 2300 and look for dates and information on our website.
The NHS is ever changing – it’s no wonder we get confused. Who decides what we need, who buys it? How is the money shared out? Kirkby GP Chris Mimnagh gives the low down in simple terms.

The NHS costs money to run, it always has. In the past money was simply given out by the government directly to hospitals and health service authorities.

Now the purse strings are held by local Clinical Commissioning Groups, so called because they commission – or buy - services for you and me.

Organisations, like Mersey Care, where you go for your care, are called providers. This set up is good; it means control of the money is closer to you and me. Because they are local, the commissioning groups have a better idea of their population – whether there are more young people older people, those with specific needs – and they can buy the right services.

Not to confuse you further but there’s also something called social care. Sometimes the money for your social care is held by you personally – not in your purse or bank account, but put away for you should you need it. You’d need to be assessed to see what you are entitled to.

This sounds an ideal system to use in healthcare, but it can’t happen simply because unlike social care, health care is often complex and specialised. People may need so many different services, from mental health services to diabetes care and knee replacements.

In mental health services different people may be paying the bills for your care. Some people need the complex or specialist services such as those Mersey Care provides – eating disorders is a perfect example. These services will be bought by a commissioner who knows a lot about them.
How do the ‘buyers’ know what you need?
The commissioning process is highly regulated. Commissioners have to show they tried to get best value for money. They “go out to the market”, looking at lots of suppliers – this is known as tendering for procurement.

Isn’t this what people call ‘selling off’ the NHS?
There have been some headlines like that but in reality it’s buying the best possible service. If the current provider is the best they should win - if not then perhaps someone else should have the chance.

How does it all work?
Each bidder presents a bid to the commissioners; these are then assessed against the specification. Scores are added up and the bidder who provides the best service for the least cost is awarded the contract.

This way of doing things isn’t problem free - sometimes new suppliers promise what they can’t deliver; change can also be disruptive to patients. Sometimes there is more than one organisation providing the same mental health service and different commissioners buying that service – it’s like having half a dozen shops selling very similar goods. The people who buy your services for you have to decide which is the best one.

Shouldn’t I be more involved in buying my own healthcare?
It’s happening but it needs to happen more. Often it’s through a large scale event in which large numbers of people take part in defining what a new service should deliver.

The Healthy Liverpool programme recently involved hundreds of people across the city in order to be sure the programme would meet the population’s needs. If you get a chance to be part of a tendering process do it – the task sounds daunting, but service users I have met who have been involved in procurements have always told me how useful and interesting they have found the experience and you would actually help decide what services are bought.

“The NHS is ever changing – it’s no wonder we get confused. Who decides what we need, who buys it? How is the money shared out?”

“In mental health services different people may be paying the bills for your care.”
Friends can support when you have a problem, but sometimes you just need someone who has truly ‘been there.’

For as long as people have used mental health services they have provided each other with friendship, shared coping strategies and supported each other through dark times.

Traditional relationships between mental health professionals and the people they support are founded on the assumption of an ‘expert’ – the professional - and a non-expert – the patient.

But a very different type of support is now offered to people who come to Mersey Care for their care.

Sharing experiences
A team of people who have themselves been service users have been employed to use their personal experience to support others; they are now a fundamental part of the trust workforce, going onto wards, talking to people, sharing experiences and helping those in need find ways forward.

Allied health professions lead Lynn King: ‘Peer support workers don’t have specialist knowledge so they don’t offer that sort of advice; neither would a peer support worker say ‘you should try this because it worked for me’. Instead, their expertise is in real lived experience, so they help people to recognise their own resources and strengths and seek their own solutions, because they will have gone through a similar process in terms of their own recovery.’

What makes them so valuable?
“They understand the challenges, the impact of being defined as a mental health patient in our society and the confusion, loneliness, fear and hopelessness that can bring. “They aren’t afraid of being with someone in distress, but they also see the seeds of possibility, what a person has gained from their experience; they are in a position to say ‘I know you can do it’.”

*Davidson et al., 2012
Richard’s Story

Richard Cope spends most of his working life in Liverpool Crown Court. As a peer support worker for the criminal justice liaison team he regularly supports people having mental health assessments before they appear in court.

Latest figures show that nine out of ten prisoners have a mental health problem – Richard Cope sees the person behind the crime, often hearing stories that may be put forward during trial.

“I can see the person behind the crime. I’m not there to judge, I tell them they’re not alone in having a problem and I share the parts of my story I think might be helpful.”

Life was futile

Richard’s story began in 2008 when, as a door to door sales rep he felt life was futile and became unwell.

“I wasn’t a natural salesman and I felt I was letting my family down.”

He battled on until five years later, by then wrestling with what he describes as ‘a demon in my head’ he went to his GP. Unable to reveal the full extent of his thoughts he left with a prescription for a low dose of antidepressants. I couldn’t work out what was wrong and I wasn’t a great talker so I just kept taking the tablets.”

Crunch time came two years later when Richard confided in a colleague that he had self harmed as a youngster and had suicidal thoughts. Her cold reaction left him feeling shocked, vulnerable and eventually unable to work.

“I told the GP everything and was treated at the Broadoak Unit; my family learned for the first time how ill I was. My parents questioned themselves but it wasn’t their fault. Nothing could make me happy, not care, food, or love. My wife was wonderful but I needed to realise that I was creating the demon.”

Richard joined a peer support group at Broadoak Unit: “To be sat in a room and say ‘I’m Richard, I have these thoughts’ was amazing. They’re such a good bunch.”

No ordinary job

“The peer support worker job interview was a unique experience.”

It was strange to be telling people about such personal things in order to get a job, but then this isn’t an ordinary job.

“When I’m with people and I tell them I’m not medically qualified but I’ve been in the place they are now they open up, there’s a real connection - it’s a magic moment.”

Richard’s views are often put forward to the courts. “Through talking to people I can put forward information so the courts will see that the situation isn’t always as it seems.”

Team manager Sadie Canning-Dossor: “The peer support worker role is such a valuable addition to the team, and we have wanted someone like Richard in the team for a long time, so when the chance to develop the role within the team came, we took it. We work with people who experience not only the stigma of a mental health problem but also the stigma of being in the criminal justice system.

“As practitioners we try to empathise and we always saw ourselves as an effective team, but this role brings so much more to the service we deliver. Richard and our other peer support workers make the team feel whole.”

I may work in the courts but I don’t judge
You get home from work, crack open a beer or a bottle of wine and sit in the summer sun. You may have a few too many at the weekend, but overall you feel ok.

But if you consume the same or less alcohol and you don’t have a job, your health will be worse than your working neighbour.

New research from John Moores University, a national centre for public health research, shows that people from poorer backgrounds, where unemployment is high and job prospects are low, have much poorer health than those who drink but are in work even if they drink the same amount of alcohol or less than wealthier working people.

Katie Taylor manages Mersey Care’s Windsor Clinic where people with alcohol problems seek help either as an outpatient or on a ward.

“This is a massive study and I’m not surprised at the results - we see it on the ground. People who come too us may be in liver failure yet not even seen their GP.”

What are the reasons for this paradox?

“It’s sad to say but people who are educated and working tend to be confident and able to speak up for themselves – usually the people who have a job and know what’s what – will recognise they have a problem and go to their GP or another source of help. They understand what they are entitled to, they can articulate how they are feeling.

“Many of our service users are from poorer backgrounds and by the time they come to us they are very sick. Hospital admission rates for liver disease is very low compared to death rates – that tells us that people are just not getting help early enough with dire consequences for them and their families.

Katie is frustrated that educational messages are often contradictory.

“Take drinking during pregnancy. The Government has changed its advice saying one to two units a week is OK, the British Medical Association says that’s not acceptable, and as a service we would say don’t drink at all when you are pregnant – but the problem is that women don’t know what to believe.”

So what’s the answer? Katie is clear: “Unless we educate people in a much better way the problem will carry on for generations to come.”

But even educating people can’t be a ‘one size fits all’ approach. Families of people with addictions are far more likely to become substance abusers themselves.
“The emphasis needs to be on recovery; it’s at the heart of all our services, it’s about finding out what someone wants for themselves and their family long term, helping them set goals and supporting them to achieve those goals. They still have their detoxification treatment but it’s much more than that. They are supported by our service user volunteers who bring the lived experience that is invaluable.”

Katie believes the message to young people should be much more about preventing the problem happening. “It’s a huge problem amongst people under 25. At one time alcohol abuse was confined mainly to older people while drugs were more of a problem among young people. Now it’s the opposite. We have an ageing population of heroin users and the average age of people dying of alcohol related illnesses within our service user group is 40 – that’s shocking.

“We know that children and young people with substance abusers in their family are more likely to follow suit – they grow up thinking it’s the ‘norm’. So we link in with Barnardo’s and other children’s services to work with the whole family, mum, dad, grandparents and children together to break the cycle.”

This need to support people in a different way is transforming alcohol and drug services, with plans to bring them onto one site combining the skills of drug and alcohol nurses.

Katie: “By helping people become part of society, with hopes and aspirations, rather than part of an alcohol community, we can overturn the paradox and make the path to recovery and better health open to everyone.”
If you feel you or someone you know needs help for their drinking...

...go to your GP or contact one of our services

The Liverpool Community Alcohol Service (LCAS) works in local communities across Liverpool. Around 75 clinics are held each week at easily accessible sites such as GP surgeries. You can ask your GP or any other health or social care professional you are involved with to refer you into services or you can self refer.

LCAS brings together the skills and knowledge of specialist qualified alcohol nurses and alcohol health workers to deliver a recovery focused service to those struggling with their alcohol intake.

The service includes:

- Advice and guidance on your drinking and the help available to you
- Assessments and triage
- Community based alcohol detoxification programmes and referral for inpatient treatment
- Brief intervention sessions
- Onwards referral to specialist services.

Contact LCAS on:
Tel: 0151 529 4504
Fax: 0151 529 4506

Community alcohol services for people who live in Sefton are provided by Lifeline Sefton. Please ring 0151 944 5334 or visit lifeline.org.uk

Community alcohol services for people who live in Knowsley are provided by the social care and health charity Crime Reduction Initiative. Please visit: cri.org.uk or ring 0845 873 44.

Windsor Clinic inpatient unit offers medically assisted detoxification programmes for people who are unable to detoxify from alcohol within the community and need 24 hour care to enable them to do so. You cannot refer yourself; you will need to be referred by your GP or another health professional caring for you. Your local community alcohol service can make a referral.

Windsor Clinic, University Hospital Aintree, Lower Lane, Liverpool, L9 7AL
Tel: 0151 529 2450
Fax: 0151 529 2454

Useful websites:

NHS Choices: nhs.uk
Drinkaware: drinkaware.co.uk
Alcohol Concern: alcoholconcern.org.uk
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**WHAT'S ON**

Here's our handy events guide to what's happening in Mersey Care over the next couple of months. Hope to see you there!

### Wednesday 30 September

**Annual General Meeting and annual members event**

Join us for our Annual General Meeting and annual members event at Aintree Racecourse. Come along for refreshments from 10am. The event begins at 10.30am and lunch will be served at 12.30pm. You are welcome to stay for our public board meeting and a Big Brew afterwards. Contact Rebecca Kelly on 0151 471 2621.

### Saturday 10 October

**World Mental Health Day**

We'll be joining the activities at Williamson Square. Come to our Big Brew stall for a free cuppa, you can also find out more about the new talking therapies service, Talk Liverpool and get advice, support and information about our services, including our Recovery College programme. Contact Rebecca Kelly on 0151 471 2621.

### Sunday 4 October

**Talk the talk – Walk the walk**

Anyone can experience mental health problems and being able to talk about them is a vital step towards recovery - towards wellbeing and away from harm. Let's unite, let's shatter the stigma and stop the harm - join in with us this year and take part in our 5k Talk Walk. Gates open 12 noon and the Talk Walk starts at 1.00pm. Contact Rebecca Kelly on 0151 471 2621.

### Now until Friday 14 August

**Positive Achievement Awards**

Do you know someone – or a whole team – you think should be recognised for their good work, commitment to caring, personal and collective achievement in mental health, learning disability and addiction services. We cannot celebrate great care without your nominations and you and your nominee will be invited to the awards ceremony at the Titanic Hotel, Stanley Dock, Liverpool. You can nominate online from our website: merseycare.nhs.uk. If you prefer a form to be posted out please contact the communications team on 0151 471 2621. If you would like to sponsor an award contact Rebecca Kelly on 0151 471 2621.

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Self help guides
direct to your smartphone or tablet

New self help guides for a wide range of mental health issues now available to download for iphone, android and windows phones. Find out more at merseycare.nhs.uk