



Maidstone & Malling Carers Project

Newsletter Mental Health December 2010



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Hello and welcome to my December newsletter

Hope you are all managing to keep warm and toasty. The weather this month has truly lived up to the Christmas carol 'In the Bleak Mid Winter'. If you are not as ancient as me and have forgotten the lyrics let me know and I will send you a reminder. It is freezing I feel for all the animals, birds and wee beasties having to live outside and, of course, the elderly, physically/mentally unwell and disabled people and realise that I have not a lot to moan about apart from the cost of heating my house of course! Please take extra care all of you on those untreated surfaces, as your input into the caring role is an important one – and above all else you need to look after yourself. Enough of my preaching, lets hope that by the time this newsletter drops through your letterbox the cold spell will have given way to much warmer and kinder weather but I am seriously doubting that as we are just at the beginning of the winter season – as they say it is the season to be jolly – I don't think so!

A request – can you please let me know, by email, your email address and if it is ok for me to send my newsletter by email rather than post. Those of you who have already given me an email address can you just refresh my memory as I have quite a few email addresses that I do not recognise. Many thanks. The details can be sent through to maureen.belcher@vam-online.org.uk. Each newsletter sent by email will save postage costs and in the current economic climate that seems like a sensible idea.

Terry Last, the Assistant Care Manager for Carers remains on long term sick leave. I am aware a few of you have now had a carer assessment completed by other team members of the Community Health Teams. If you would like to request a Carers Assessment the Pagoda can be contacted on 01622 724200 or Kingswood on 01622 766900.

Good news, following the cut to the Caring with Confidence Course, a new shorter programme called 'Caring confidently in Kent' has been set up and will be running in Maidstone in the New Year. (Please see P4 & 5 for full details).

I am sure you are all aware of the current cutbacks in various services. As the time of writing I cannot confirm whether funding will be available for the project or the Carers Break Fund in the next financial year, beginning 1st April 2011. There are funds available at the current time in the Carer Break Fund. If you would like to apply please telephone me (01622 685276) or send an email. As and when we have a decision from Kent County Council you will be informed as you are the people using our service and we hope we can continue to offer you a service in the future.

Have a wonderful Christmas and from all the Team please accept our good wishes for a happy and healthy New Year.



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SUPPORT GROUP NEWS

At the Meeting on the 26th October 2010, Steve Murphy the Benefits Officer attended. He gave an interesting presentation of the 'overhaul' of the Benefits System. Please see next page for a brief overview of the presentation.

The Department of Works & Pensions launched a public consultation for views on the proposed changes to Disability Living Allowance on the 6th December 2010. This consultation closes on the 14th February 2011. Please see below a press release from Community Care which highlights the proposed changes. Enclosed with the newsletter is a press release from Disability Alliance for your information.

DLA's replacement – personal independence payment – will be a non-means-tested and non-taxable benefit. Like its predecessor, it will be available to people in and out of work.

But the reforms will tighten eligibility in several ways:

- Claimants will have to have had an impairment or health condition for six months, not three, as at present.
- A wider range of aids and adaptations will be taken into account in the assessment process, meaning that people who can get about in wheelchairs may be ineligible.
- There will no longer be automatic entitlements for people with specific health conditions.
- All claimants will be assessed by a healthcare professional approved by the Department for Work and Pensions.

The changes are designed to implement proposals in the Budget to reform the assessment system for DLA, in order to reduce expenditure and the number of claimants by 20%.

The existing mobility and care components of the benefits will be replaced by similar measures looking at people's level of independence and ability to carry out the activities necessary to participate in everyday life.

The reforms will be introduced for new and existing claimants of working age from 2013 and could be extended to children or pensioners.

Minister for disabled people Maria Miller said: "Personal independence payment will maintain the key principles of DLA, providing cash support to help overcome the barriers which prevent disabled people from participating fully in everyday life, but it will be delivered in a fairer, more consistent and sustainable manner. It is only right that support should be targeted at those disabled people who face the greatest challenges to leading independent lives."

However, Neil Coyle, director of policy at Disability Alliance, said: "The combined effects of the government agenda for DLA risks meaning disabled people are unable to participate, less likely to work and more likely to live in poverty."

If you would like to be involved in the consultation please go to www.dwp.gov.uk for more details. If you require any assistance, or would prefer to give your views verbally to Maidstone & Malling Carer Project we will be more than happy to collate them and put them in a corporate response from the Project.

I was unable to attend the last meeting of the year on the 30th November as I was on annual leave. Well done to those 'hearty souls' who braved the elements that day, and thanks to Barbara for facilitating the meeting.

Also many thanks go to Marie Shandley for all her input into the group meetings this year. Many of you have enjoyed the head and shoulder massage provided by Marie.

Dates of 2011 meetings are on the back page

Notes on the visit from Steve Murphy (Benefits Advisor) at the support group on the 26th October 2010

ESA = Employment Support Allowance

DLA = Disability Living Allowance

DWP = Department of Works and Pensions

CPA = Care Programme Approach

In view of the wide changes planned to the benefits systems Steve kindly agreed to attend the above support group to give a brief overview of the changes planned, and to answer questions from the carers present at the group.

The first stage of the change is to reassess all of the claims for incapacity benefit (IB) together with income support (IS). These are due to be carried out in the next three years and all those on the above joint benefits must expect to be assessed.

When a review letter arrives from the DWP you will be asked to give as much information about your current health/mobility problems. Please make sure all the information you give in the medical questionnaire is supported by any other significant person involved in your care, e.g. Care Co-ordinator, GP, Support Worker. You could include a copy of your CPA documents, e.g. Care Plan and Risk assessment if they have been given to you. If you are receiving care from secondary services, i.e. a mental health team worker (normally Kingswood or The Pagoda or The Early Intervention Service) these documents should be on file if you are unable to locate this paperwork.

If, following your review by the DWP, it is felt that you are unable to cope with employment you may be referred to the Support Group or the WRAG – Work related activity group. It is difficult to say how these groups will work, as information is limited at the current time due to the 'newness' of the changes in the benefits system.

If you are currently receiving IB with IS and you are then awarded ESA the level of payment will remain the same until it comes into line with the increases awarded to ESA over the next few years.

If you are receiving ESA you can work up to 16 hours a week, earning no more than £93 per week before your benefits are affected.

Following the above review on all IB and IS applicants, a review of those claiming DLA will then be carried out.

Therefore the review for claimants on IB and IS are due to be completed by 2013, at which time DLA claimants will then be reassessed.

Please note you can have somebody with you when you attend the interviews. This could be a significant person in your life, e.g. partner, parent, brother or sister. If you have a named person in the Community Mental Health Centre who provides care for you in the community you may want to approach them to see if they are able to accompany you to the interview.

Carers allowance will not be affected, but please note if you earn over £100 per week you are unable to claim Carers Allowance. Any application can only be made for Carers Allowance if the person you care for is receiving DSL Care Component Middle Rate.

If you have any queries in relation to the above please do not hesitate to contact me.

Workshop – Carers Support – Tonbridge—21st September 2010

Thank you to the carers who attended the above meeting. One carer volunteered to give a presentation of her experiences of caring for her husband who has mental health problems. What a presentation! Thank you (and you know who you are) for sharing your thoughts and emotions with the audience at the Workshop, also for identifying how isolated you felt (and still do) throughout your journey as a carer. It was a moving presentation. Well done, and once again thanks to those carers for giving up their time to attend this workshop.

Caring Confidently in Kent – Support Workshops for Carers

There are two 3 weekly Workshops planned. These will be both held in the Salvation Army Hall in Union Street Maidstone. (Opposite the bottom of Wheeler Street).

The dates are:-

11th, 18th & 25th January 2011
24th February & 3rd & 10th March 2011

All sessions will start at 10am and finish at 1pm (3 hours)

Please see below for the content of the Workshops.

Following the withdrawal of funding for the Caring with Confidence programme, NHS West Kent PCT in partnership with Kent Adult Social Services have commissioned a shorter version of the seven week programme for all Carers living in the County of Kent.

Caring Confidently in Kent has taken the very best of the original, and produced a new three week programme aimed at helping Carers improve their lives and the person they care for.

Week One

The first session is all about getting to know you. We will explore the role of the Carer, and the issues that are causing the greatest concern. We will also be looking at how to cope with emergency situations, like medication. When to call the Professionals for help, and looking after our backs to prevent injury. We move onto the resources available for Carers and share experiences and knowledge.

Week Two

In week two, the focus is really on you the Carer and your wellbeing. We will be looking at stress, understanding why we become stressed and sharing techniques of how to manage this. Understanding the importance of taking care of you, from healthy eating to exercise, sharing top tips for coping and learning to breathe and relax effectively.

Week Three

Our final week concentrates on finding the balance in our lives, juggling all the balls that Carers have to manage and finding time for you. Sharing some techniques to help you structure appointments/meetings with Professionals so that you achieve your goals and communicate with them effectively. We will also take a closer look at your issues and help you take control and find possible solutions with your action plan.

Our main objective is to raise your confidence in your caring role, and take better care of yourself. We also aim to put you in contact with other Carers who like you would like to share their knowledge and experiences, and maybe build a new network of friends.

These **FREE** sessions are being held all over the County so there is an opportunity for you to join one near to where you live. To register your place:-

Contact : Helen Appleton Cert.Ed MifL – Lead Trainer/Facilitator

Tel: 01474 – 330350

e-mail: caringconfidently@btinternet.com

We look forward to welcoming you.

Dates and locations for the Caring Confidently in Kent Support Workshops

MAIDSTONE	11 th 18 th & 25 th January 2011
TONBRIDGE	12 th 19 th & 26 th January 2011
GRAVESEND	20 th 27 th Jan & 3 rd February 2011
MEDWAY	14 th 21 st & 28 th January 2011
SITTINGBOURNE	1 st 8 th & 15 th February 2011
DOVER	2 nd 9 th & 16 th February 2011
DARTFORD	10 th 17 th & 24 th February 2011
ASHFORD	4 th 11 th & 18 th February 2011
MAIDSTONE	24 th Feb 3 rd & 10 th March 2011
TONBRIDGE WELLS	1 st 8 th & 15 th March 2011
CANTERBURY	2 nd 9 th & 16 th March 2011
THANET	3 rd 10 th & 17 th March 2011
FOLKESTONE	4 th 11 th & 18 th March 2011
GRAVESEND	15 th 22 nd & 29 th March 2011
MEDWAY	16 th 23 rd & 30 th March 2011

All sessions will start at 10am and finish at 1pm (3hrs)

As mentioned above, you can contact Helen Appleton direct to express your interest, and it would be helpful if you could also let us know here at Maidstone & Malling Carers project that you are applying. Many thanks.

Carers – would you like your own bead making group?

A carer experienced in bead making has volunteered to run a class purely for carers if there is enough demand. Is this something you would like to attend in 2011? Please let me know—01622 685276 or maureen.belcher@vam-online.org.uk if this appeals to you.



Maidstone Community Support Centre is proud to announce The launch of 'THE FRIDAY LUNCH CLUB' *Especially for older people*

A warm welcome



Meet old friends
& make new ones



A healthy
tasty meal



- Enjoy a two course meal with entertainment
- Tea, coffee and biscuits
- Third Friday every month from 12–2 pm
- 17th December, 21st January, 18th February
- £7.50 per person
- Call 01622 690369 to book your place

We are delighted to offer a range of
entertainment:
Music * Dance * Sing-Along * Quizzes

Walking Group



Would you like a break from your caring role and wish you got out more? Would you like to take some exercise and meet friendly people? Would you like to see more the countryside around Maidstone? Have a picnic (although not in the current weather!), lunch in a pub or

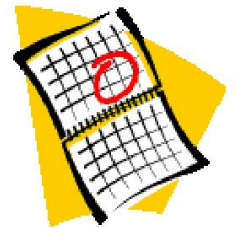


café and have a chat and some laughter – if so then why not join Maidstone and Malling Carers Project Walking Group. The group meets on the last Monday of the month from 11.30 to 1.30 p.m. Don't worry if you don't know anybody else you will be made very welcome. Please contact Jane Thomas on 01622 685276 or by email jane.thomas@vam-online.org.uk for further information.

I know Jane will be pleased to hear from you.

Christmas Calendar

We have produced a calendar for 2011, the 'stars' of the calendars are some of the 1,600 carers we support here at Maidstone & Malling Carers Project. The cost of the calendar is £3.00 plus 40pence postage & packing if you can't collect. Thank you for your support.



Thank you Marks and Spencers

The Maidstone Branch of Marks and Spencers have chosen us as their '**CHARITY OF THE YEAR**'! This means the staff will be raising funds for us throughout the year and if you shop in Maidstone you may have noticed **OUR COLLECTION TINS AT THE TILLS**. Thank you to the carer who suggested us for consideration and thank you to the staff for selecting us from the nominations put forward. A big thank you to all those who contributed we are now in the process of receiving our first cheque from this appeal to the value of £1147.00 - **WOW!**

MARKS &
SPENCER

MAIDSTONE & MALLING CARERS PROJECT (MENTAL HEALTH) SURVEY RESULTS ENCLOSED WITH NEWSLETTER

Please find enclosed collation of the results from the February 2010 Survey. I apologise for the delay in producing this document, and would like to take this opportunity to thank all those carers who responded.

INFORMATION AND ENROLMENT

Courses are designed for those who are disadvantaged by health or social issues including those who are learning disabled. Any student who would like a very gentle introduction to the subject is welcome to join. Max 10 students per course.

All courses will be held at Maidstone Community Support Centre unless otherwise stated.

P Available at the centre evenings and weekends.

 All courses please ask for details

£ Course fees. There is no charge for accompanying personal assistants.

Payment of fees:- cash, cheques or bankers transfer (sorry no cards at present)

Please speak to Joan if you would like to spread payment of fees.



CONTACT

Please contact us to enrol or for further information.

Contact Leisure Learning manager Joan



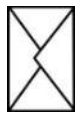
01622 230711



leisurelearning@mcsc.org.uk



In person Tue and Thu 09:30am-5:00pm Phone or e-mail to check availability.



Maidstone Community Support Centre
39-48 Marsham St, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1HH



In partnership with



LEISURE LEARNING COURSES
At
Maidstone Community Support Centre
www.mcsc.org.uk

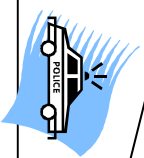
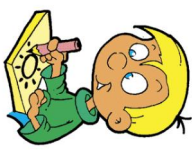
Join A Course Today

Have Fun

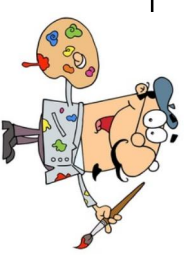
Meet new people

Gain confidence

Learn Something New



Introductory prices from £2 per hour



CARERS BREAK FUND

Don't forget about the Carers Break Fund. If you care for somebody with a mental health problem who is receiving their care from a Care Manager from the Pagoda or Kingswood Mental Health Team you can apply. Alternatively if the person you care for is receiving a service from the G.P. only you may still apply. Please contact me for further details.

This financial year closes on the 31st March, 2011. I have not received confirmation that we will be receiving Funds for the next financial year (April 2011 – March 2012). There are funds available, at the moment, so don't be shy come forward the monies are there for you – the carer.

If you are not to sure what you would like to apply for perhaps the Kiloran Trust Hotel in London might appeal. They offer carers a break from Monday - Saturday in their West London house, which is informal, friendly, warm and relaxed. All meals are provided. They know how difficult caring for someone can be, and how important it is for carers to spend time looking after themselves as well. When a carer has the chance for some respite, it is an ideal opportunity to go and spend some time at Kiloran.

Telephone: 0207 602 7404

Fax: 0207 602 3303

<http://www.kilorantrust.org.uk/>

info@kilorantrust.org.uk



a place of respite for carers

Other carers sourced the fund to:-

- help toward the cost of renting a cottage in Looe Cornwall for a break over the Christmas/New Year period (below)
- to have a Pamper Day at Bannatyn's Spas
- to have a two day stay at Champneys Tring Resort (bottom right)
- respite care for the cared for person
- to have a 4 night stay at the Burstin Hotel Folkestone
- to have a 5 day holiday in Loch Achray Hotel Scotland (see bottom of page)
- pay for a three night stay at a Premier Inn over the Christmas period



Don't forget you can apply to the Fund to help with Gym membership fees and further education costs if that appeals to you. The Fund is very flexible depending on your chosen 'break'.

Telephone 01622 685276 or email maureen.belcher@vam-online.org.uk.



Carer recommendation for a General Handyman/with emphasis on helping you with any garden work

Pete, a carer, has highly recommended a gentleman call Phil Shaw whom he says is 'great'. Phil normally charges £10 per hour but is willing to provide a service to carers for £8.50 per hour. Just let him know that you saw his service in this newsletter. Please note this recommendation does not come from Maidstone & Malling Carers Project, and we cannot accept any responsibility if you decide to contact Phil. Phil does cover a wide area and sends his assurance that he is willing to travel. Please contact Phil direct on **078288 22046**

Don't forget about the Drop In Service at Priority House – this service is for relatives and friends of people with a mental health problem

No appointment needed, just drop in!!

The service is available on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month at Priority House in Maidstone between 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

It is a place where you can drop in and speak to a Mental Health professional. You are normally seen straight away (circumstances permitting) so hopefully shouldn't have to wait too long.

Telephone 01622 725000 and ask for the Carer Drop-in Service for more details.

Local Planning & Monitoring Group

At the time of writing I have not had the minutes from the meeting on the 19th November 2010, and have not received any new dates for 2011. Kent Fire & Rescue Service gave a short presentation at this group meeting about free home safety advice and services see below for contact details.

At the meeting on the 19th November it was noted that a provisional date was given for the Aspergers Workshop - Thursday 20th January 2011 – it will be held in Maidstone between 10.00 and 3.00 p.m. There are 4 planned sessions, on a carousel basis, i.e. you go round from one group to another.

I do plan to attend please let me know if you are considering attending as lunch is provided. Please note as mentioned this is only a provisional date. To those carers who do respond I will let you know more details in the New Year.

A carer I support has been speaking on line to those caring for somebody with Aspergers (Jean does have experience of caring for a person with Aspergers). The following are Jean's comments about the sharing of experiences 'they are delighted that they are not alone, we share/we laugh/so times get sad, but we all respect each other, and amazed we all have so much in common'. Jean has kindly agreed for me to give you her email address which is jeanelow1946@hotmail.com – you can contact her for more details.



PERSONAL BUDGETS

With care services becoming more personalised many carers have asked me about personal budgets for the person they care for. The following fact sheet provided by Kent County Council may go some way to answering your questions. As always if you need more clarification please contact Maidstone & Malling Carers Project on 01622 685276

Kent Adult Social Services

Personal Budgets

Your money, your choice

September 2010

This factsheet is an introduction to personal budgets and is produced by Kent Adult Social Services. If it does not give you all the information you need, please contact us, our details are at the end of this factsheet.

What is a personal budget?

Everyone who is eligible for ongoing support from us, as well as a financial contribution towards the cost of this support, will be given a personal budget.

A personal budget is the amount of money we think is sufficient to meet the eligible needs and outcomes identified during your community care assessment.

What are the benefits of a personal budget?

Knowing how much money is available to you to spend on your care and support gives you choice and control, as you can decide how you would like to spend it.

How can I get a personal budget?

You get a personal budget after a community care assessment and a financial assessment show you are eligible for ongoing support from us.

What is a financial assessment?

Everyone who wants to have our involvement in their ongoing support must have a financial assessment. A financial assessment:

- is an assessment of your ability to pay for the cost of your support

- confirms what, if any, contribution we will make towards your personal budget
- is an opportunity to make sure you are receiving all the state benefits you are entitled to.

Before we can give you any money that we have agreed to contribute towards your personal budget, you will need to complete your support plan and decide how you want to manage your personal budget.

What is a support plan?

Your support plan sets out what you need to achieve to lead as independent and fulfilling a life as you can. It must outline the cost of any care and support that you need.

You can develop your support plan:

- yourself
- with the help of someone else, for example, family and friends
- with support from a suitable organisation, for example, a social care broker, community/voluntary organisation, user led organisation.

If none of these options are available to you, we can help you.

Your support plan shows how you intend to spend your personal budget to make sure you have the support you need. When the support plan is completed it must be agreed by us before we can give you any money we have agreed to contribute towards the cost of your support.

What is an estimated personal budget?

After you have had an assessment that shows you are eligible for support from us, we will estimate your personal budget. This estimate is the amount of money we think is sufficient to meet the care and support needs identified during your community care assessment and is based on what it would cost us to provide your support.

When you have completed your support plan, you will be told what your actual personal budget is. This figure is based on the cost of the support in your agreed support plan. It may be the same, more than or less than, your estimated personal budget.

For example: We estimate that Alice's support will cost £87 per week. Her estimated personal budget is £87 per week.

Alice completes her support plan which tells us how she wants to receive her support and how much it will cost.

Alice's actual support costs £85 per week and she is assessed as being able to pay £50 per week towards her support.

Kent Adult Social Services contributes the remaining £35 per week.

Alice's actual personal budget is £85 per week made up of £50 from Alice and £35 from Kent Adult Social Services.

What can I spend my personal budget on?

Your personal budget must be spent on achieving the things agreed in your support plan.

This may include:

- help with personal care, such as bathing and getting dressed
- help with day to day tasks
- help to get out and about and take part in activities
- paying for equipment to help you to be more independent
- other activities or items that help you achieve what is in your support plan.

Certain support that we provide, including residential care, is not included in your personal budget. We can discuss this with you.

Your personal budget cannot be spent on anything that is illegal or would endanger you or another person.

Is a personal budget taxable and will it affect any benefits that I might receive?

No. A personal budget does not count as income for tax or benefit purposes. A personal budget is specifically to pay for your care and support; it is not a loan.

What if I need help to manage my support or personal budget?

If you think you need help to manage your support or the money in your personal budget, a family member or friend might be able to help you or you may prefer to choose a suitable organisation to do this for you.

If none of the above options are available to you we could help you.

What are the options for managing my personal budget?

Options via a direct payment

If you are eligible for financial support from us you can have our contribution as a direct payment.

A direct payment is a legal arrangement between you and us. We pay our contribution directly to you and you use this money to arrange your care and support yourself.

Having a direct payment gives you choice and control over how you organise, buy and manage your care and support. There are three ways to receive your direct payment:

Kent Card

The Kent Card is a chip and PIN Visa card. The direct payment is loaded onto your Kent Card. You manage this money and use it to purchase your support. You can use the card on the internet, the telephone or face to face. It is not a credit card so you cannot run up a debt on it.

Bank account

You can have our financial contribution sent direct to a bank account set up by you. You manage this money yourself and have control to organise, buy and manage your care and support.

Client Money Service

This service is provided by us. You organise and manage your care and support but ask us to manage your personal budget money. We pay the providers of your support and if you are financially assessed as being able to pay for your support you pay us your contribution each month.

Options via a managed service

If you are eligible for financial support from us you can have an organisation manage your personal budget money for you.

Managed by a provider

You can ask an organisation (other than us) to help arrange and manage the care and support you need and manage the money needed to pay for this support.

These organisations are often referred to as a 'provider' which is why this service is called 'provider managed'.

Managed by Kent Adult Social Services

You can ask us to provide your care and support. We will manage your personal budget money for you.

If you are financially assessed as being able to pay for your support you will pay us your contribution each month.

You may choose to use a combination of these options for different elements of your care and support.

For example, you could have a Kent Card to pay for respite breaks and a bank account set up so you can pay the wages of someone you employ to provide support to you.

Personal Budgets

KASSPBPJ 26/10/10:1

Which option is best for you?

Deciding how much choice and control you would like over your support and money will help you decide which option is best for you.

OPTION		Choice over who provides your support and how and when it is delivered	Buy/ contract and monitor your care and support	Pay the costs of your care and support directly	Make changes to your care and support
Direct payment Kent Card	Direct payment bank account	✓	✓	✓	✓
Direct payment Client Money Service		✓	✓	✗	✓
Managed by a provider		✓	✗	✗	✓
Managed by us		Some choice	✗	✗	✓ With our involvement

If you want to discuss your options in more detail, please contact us or speak to your case manager.

This factsheet is available in alternative formats and can be explained in a range of languages. Please call 08458 247 100.

For leaflets, publications and other information:

☎ 08458 247 100
 ✉ social.services@kent.gov.uk
 ☎ 08458 247 905
 🌐 www.kent.gov.uk/socialcare

You may also find the following factsheets useful:

- Community Care Assessments
- Financial Assessment
- Social Care Brokerage
- Support Plans

Further information online:

Social care:
www.kent.gov.uk/adultsocialservices
 Self Directed Support:
www.kent.gov.uk/sds
 Kent Card:
www.kent.gov.uk/kentcard

We are always looking for ways to improve how we communicate.
 Please give us your views at: www.kent.gov.uk/kassinfoyourview

IMPORTANT NUMBERS TO HAVE TO HAND OVER THE CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR PERIOD

Pagoda Mental Health Team – 01622 724200
Kingswood Mental Health Team – 01622 766900

The above teams are available during office hours on a Monday to Friday basis.

In the case of an emergency contact

Priority House – 01622 725000
Or Kent & Medway Social Services Out of Hours Service – 0845 762 6777/08458 247247
Or Emergency Services – 999 – if the situation is threatening/or deteriorating rapidly.

NHS Direct – 0845 4647

Mental Health Matters Helpline – 0800 107 0160 – operates from 5 p.m. to 9.00 a.m. on weekdays and 24 hours at weekends and all bank holidays. This service is available to both carers and those who have a mental health problem. Referrals can be made to the Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment Teams.

If you find it difficult to talk over the phone there is an online chat service which you can access which is similar to MSN. Go to their web site to access this www.mentalhealthmatters.com then click on the live support icon.

Other useful numbers and websites

Samaritans – 08457 90 91 02 (24 hours a day 365 days a year)

Saneline – 0845 767 8000 – 6 p.m. to 11.00 p.m. every evening 365 days a year

Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS) – can advise, support and help you sort out any concerns or problems with health services. For services provided by West Kent NHS & Social Care Trust tel. 0800 587 6757

ICAS (Independent Complaints Advocacy Service- provides support to people if they have a complaint regarding their National Health Service Treatment – tel. 0845 600 8616 www.seap.org.uk/icas

Rethink Maidstone Advocacy Project – provides one-to-one advocacy partnership for people with a mental health problem – tel. 01622 678674 or visit www.rethink.org

Signpost Kent – Set within the context of personalisation and self determination, Signpost's person-centred approach helps people take control and supports them to navigate their way to a better mental health. Signpost enables individuals to work through the various stages of their mental health experience and find a pathway to recovery. www.signpostuk.org

Kent Health Watch – your experience counts – tel. 08458 247 103 www.kent.gov.uk/healthwatch

Carers Direct – Information, advice and support for carers. Carers Direct is NHS led service. It provides practical and comprehensive information, advice and support service for carers. Freephone 0808 802 02 02 (7 days a week) www.nhs.uk/carersdirect

NHS Stressline – 0300 123 2000. The service is open daily between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m.

Live it well – a Kent-based website that can also offer advice on ways to improve physical and mental well being, visit www.liveitwell.org.uk

Ask the experts (the pharmacist, psychiatrist or psychologist) this website contains information for family members and friends of people who have psychosis. The site has been developed by The Institute of Psychiatry, South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, Rethink & the Wellcome Trust – visit www.mentalhealthcare.org.uk

PLEASE NOTE THE MMCP OFFICE WILL CLOSE ON THE 24TH DECEMBER, 2010 , AND REOPEN ON TUESDAY 4TH JANUARY 2011

Look forward to seeing you at the next support group on Tuesday 25th January 2011.
(Weather permitting)!

Keep warm and have a wonderful Christmas.

SUPPORT GROUP DATES

Held at Kingswood Mental Health Centre, in the lounge
180 – 186 Union Street Maidstone Kent

Between 11.00am – 12.30pm

Tuesday 25th January 2011

Tuesday 22nd February 2011

Tuesday 29th March 2011

Tuesday 26th April 2011

Tuesday 31st May 2011

Tuesday 28th June 2011

Tuesday 26th July 2011

Tuesday 30th August 2011

Tuesday 27th September 2011

Tuesday 25th October 2011

Tuesday 29th November 2011

No Meeting in December 2011 due to Christmas break

If you would like to request a speaker at the Support Group please let me know your preference. Many thanks.



**Is someone else's drug or alcohol use damaging you or your families lives?
Do you know anybody else who is affected by these issues?**

Would you like some support?

If so come along to our Carers Drug & Alcohol Support Group
At Maidstone Community Support Centre, Marsham Street.

Monday	10th January 2011	10am to 12 noon
Monday	24th January 2011	6pm to 8pm
Monday	7th February 2011	10am to 12 noon
Monday	21st February 2011	6pm to 6pm
Monday	7th March 2011	10am to 12 noon
Monday	21st March 2011	6pm to 8pm

Contact Jane Thomas on 01622 685276
or email jane.thomas@vam-online.org.uk for more details