

## Community micro -services run for and by people with mental illness or affected by drugs and alcohol

### The Jam Club

Pete has a passion and skill for music and in particular playing the guitar. He set up the Jam Club in Oldham in 2009 for people with enduring mental health issues. He runs the sessions once a week on a voluntary basis and this has proved popular with people as an alternative therapy that aids recovery. Pete has mental health issues himself so fully understands the positive impact music can have.



The sessions are attended by approximately 7 people each week. Pete uses the strengths of each individual within the group setting including song writing, singing, and playing of instruments.

Since he started the Jam Club Pete has moved on to deliver guitar lessons at discounted rates and this earns him a small income. People pay for lessons from their own funds.

Reductions in funding restrictions have meant that Pete receives less support from the council than he did when he was setting up the Jam Club. Despite this the great feedback from people attending his sessions makes him determined to keep them up and running.

The experience of running his own community micro-enterprise and using his passion for music to enrich the lives of people with mental health issues has really increased Pete's own confidence. He has recently gained part-time employment working with people who live in supported accommodation. His employer has recognised Pete's skills and has asked him to set up another Jam Club for tenants.

### Your Choice Leigh

Your Choice was inspired by the experience of Colin Welsh. Colin's life changed when he was affected by mental health issues which resulted in him being hospitalised. His stay in hospital convinced Colin that he did not want to return and on discharge



he was referred to a community based support service. The service was invaluable in enabling Colin to stay out of hospital and for this reason he was very concerned when it announced that it was to close.

Colin recognised the importance of 'peer support' in enabling him to maintain positive mental health and in 2011 after the closure of the community service Colin set about starting his own group. He found a room to rent in a local venue in Leigh, Wigan and set about creating a homely friendly space for people to meet up.

The group became Your Choice, a community based service, open Monday-Friday from 10am-3.30pm that has gone from strength to strength. Your Choice supports up to 20 people every day and charges just £1 for unlimited brews. In addition to providing a safe friendly place, Your Choice also offers arts and craft sessions; access to a local allotment, a reading group in the local library and organises trips for all who attend. The group recently had a 3 day trip to a retreat in Conway.

After years of struggling with his mental health, isolation and loneliness one member of the group explained how the support he has received from Your Choice has enabled him to turn his life around. In the past he was regularly arrested due to alcohol related anti-social behaviour and he was admitted into hospital on numerous occasions due to suicide attempts. His family lived in constant fear for his wellbeing. Through the support of the group he is no longer using alcohol; he has formed meaningful friendships, loves arts and crafts and has been on several trips away.

Colin did not want to be reliant on funding so has created innovative ways of raising funds to keep running. In 2013 he launched the 'Friends of Your Choice' membership. Friends and families of those accessing Your Choice pay £10 a year which enables the group to pay the rent and offers 12 monthly draws for its members.

### **Telford After Care Team CIC (TACT)**

TACT was founded in 2012 by Robert Evers who himself endured 20 years of addiction. During his recovery Rob became aware of the lack of support available for people in Telford like himself.

Rob set up TACT initially on a voluntary basis with a small amount of funding to help set up a smart recovery group and a gardening group. This gave people in recovery an option to do something new and prevent them from returning to their old lives.

The main aim of TACT is to help people in recovery from using drugs or alcohol. This is achieved by improving the health and wellbeing of its customers; empowering people to lead productive and fulfilling lives so that they can once again be valued members of their community.

When TACT first got off the ground, Rob was offered office space by the local Treatment Service. In the last 2 years TACT has grown and grown and is about to move into its third new home.



Given his history Rob says it was 'hard work' engaging with professionals and statutory services. Overtime this hard work has paid off and he now has great relationships with key agencies all to the benefit of TACT.

TACT incorporated as a Community Interest Company in 2014 and is now a public health commissioned service for

people in recovery or people struggling to come to terms with their addiction. TACT has 2 paid staff and 13 trained volunteers all of whom have recovered from addiction. The service supports between 30-50 people every day with a rich variety of support groups, drop in sessions and activities. These opportunities include support with health issues, peer support, advice and guidance around benefits, housing and welfare, gardening, art, holistic therapies, training, employment and much more.

Rob has put his personal experience to fantastic use and TACT offers a much needed service to the people of Telford.

## Home Style Jenuin Health

Jennifer Williams spent several years trying to get to the bottom of her health condition. After being misdiagnosed, medically treated and hospitalised she was finally diagnosed with Fibromyalgia.

The impact of Fibromyalgia means that Jennifer lives with extreme fatigue and is in constant pain. Taking medicine which made her feel like a 'zombie', eating an



unappetising diet and spending time sleeping were not options that appealed to Jennifer. She knew that she had much to offer and that there must be other ways to manage her debilitating condition.

Food became the focus as Jennifer started to explore the medicinal benefits of cooking, eating and sharing healthy food. Researching nutritional supplements and testing out alternative cookware enabled Jennifer to create healthier cooking methods so she could continue to enjoy the food and lifestyle she loved. Alongside the medical benefits Jennifer recognised that preparing, serving and eating food brings people together and has a huge impact on health and wellbeing.

Jennifer set up Home Style Health in 2011 with some limited business support from a local organisation. Initially she was just running workshops on healthy eating but with the right help and advice she has developed Home Style Health much further.

Jennifer has secured a lease for some space in a local Methodist church to run a café open to the general public Monday-Friday offering subsidised healthy lunches. On Thursday mornings Jennifer hosts a Tea Group in another area bringing local people together to share healthy option cakes and sandwiches. From August 2014 Home Style Health will become the main drop off and pick up point for the FareShare initiative ensuring that surplus food is put to good use and reaches those most in need.

As with all community micro-enterprises sustainability for Home Style Health is a challenge. In addition to the Café, an income is generated from a 'pop-up' restaurant and by catering at corporate and private events. There has been great interest from people seeking healthy options to traditional event food.

With support Jennifer was successful in gaining funding to run a Recovery Café. The café is open every Thursday night 7pm-10pm and is aimed at people in recovery from drugs or alcohol misuse. The group cook and eat healthy meals together. When England played their world cup match Jennifer thought that no one would attend the café, which doesn't have a TV. She was surprised to find that people did turn up with one man commenting that it wasn't football that would keep him sober but food and sitting together would.

Home Style Health are aiming to expand the café by creating a training facility. Jennifer's vision is to recruit volunteers who will work towards accreditation enabling them to move towards paid work.

Despite the challenges, running her own community micro-enterprise allows Jennifer to be in control of her own time and health. Managing her own health enables her to contribute her skills and gifts to significantly improve the health and wellbeing of those in her community.

See this short video of community micro- enterprise Home Style Jenuin Health  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lh1GUn-Xzw>

## **The Birch Tree**

Julie was concerned about the closure of the Willows - a council service supporting women affected by drugs or alcohol which she depended on. At a meeting to discuss the implications of the closure Julie was inspired by the possibilities described by



Community Catalysts. She made contact to say that she and 2 other women had met, established an organisation, sourced some funding and a venue and intended to start their own peer support group. The Birch Tree Friday drop-in was established in April 2013 as a support group for women affected by drugs and alcohol.

Over the next 12 months the team developed the Birch Tree, partnered with the local college to provide free therapy and beauty treatment sessions, organised trips out and a holiday abroad.

The women who run the Birch Tree have all gained confidence and are all now in full time work (having not worked since 2002). This enterprise journey has helped the group to realise that they no longer need to access services as they are full and active members of their wider community. They continue to meet informally and offer their spare time to volunteer when needed.

## **Anxious About Anxiety**

See this short video of community micro- enterprise Anxious About Anxiety, supporting people with mental health issues in a number of ways

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yiqebEkZBNg>