

# Essex Respite & Care Association

## Christmas Newsletter

'Providers of Mental Health Support and Respite'

### Service News

As we are now in the winter months and Christmas will soon be upon us, we want to thank all our staff for their continued support and hard work. We would also like to say a special thank you to Crystal Pannell, our Client Liaison Officer. Crystal has worked for the charity for 25 years, showing true dedication and commitment.



This milestone occasion was marked at the staff training event on the 8th of December, where our Chairman, Karl Davies, presented Crystal with a £50 voucher, and Jemma Pollack Co-Manager presented flowers – Well done Crystal, keep up the good work.



We also hosted our staff annual Christmas meal at The Moulsham Inn in Chelmsford. Staff, Managers, and our Chairman, were in attendance. It was a lovely occasion and a wonderful opportunity for everyone to get together and talk about future plans for ERCA.

At ERCA, we truly enjoy the festive period and try to bring a little joy where we can. With this in mind, we held our clients' annual festive lunch on the 14th of December at The Copper Pot Café. It was lovely to bring some of our clients together for an afternoon to share the festive spirit.



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# Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

We understand for some this time of year can be difficult and Seasonal Affective Disorder can contribute towards this. We asked one of our trustees, Dr Sourangshu Acharyya, to write a piece for our newsletter on SAD.

Seasonal Affective Disorder also shortened to SAD is a type of depressive disorder that affects some people, not all, during the winter months. SAD can, though, for a fair few people, begin in Autumn. If autumn turns cold, remains cloudy while, the day-light hours are receding. A few might also develop the symptoms in summer but, paradoxically, feel better in winter!

As, SAD does not, usually, remain static, it is important not to ignore the symptoms or, think that some other “life-event” is the only reason for feeling this way. Of course, major life-events such the death of a near and dear one does bring about feeling upset, while grieving- this is a normal course of our lives. The loss of someone I love or, cherish, would inevitably, lead us into a period of grieving. But SAD is not this. No, not grief. It is a mental health disorder that does require further help, SAD will not just wither away!

*Symptoms of SAD:*

- Persistent Low Mood.
- A progressive loss of pleasure or interest in daily activities.
- Feeling of despair, hopelessness & worthlessness.
- Irritability or a feeling constantly disgruntled and irritated.
- Feeling sleepy during the day and sleeping for longer than normal, or despite feeling sleepy during the day at night- being wrought by anxiety and worry.
- Difficulty concentrating noticing that the attention span & concentrating is becoming progressively difficult.
- Loss of appetite or, conversely, craving carbohydrates & thus, either losing weight or putting on weight- although unwanted.



Given that, if left unattended, the severity of SAD can progress, if the above symptoms or some of the symptoms are continuing every day all the time, it is important to not to keep just” coping” or, “managing” but seek help. It is important to consider seeing your GP. Your GP will assess the condition & it’s severity & offer further help. It is also important to take measures that might alley the SAD and lessen the impact.

*Self-help measures may include:*

- Life-style measures: going out of doors to get as much sunlight as possible, given that in winter, in addition to the daylight hours are shorter, the sky may be clouded over. But, even through the clouds, some sunlight would filter through.
- Physical exercise daily will also help.
- Light Therapy- using the special lamp called the “lightbox” is extremely helpful.

***Please do not cope alone, reach out and ask for help.***





# COVID 19 Update

Whilst the threat of severe illness from COVID19 has reduced, we should all still be mindful that it is circulating in the community. Please find below the common symptoms to look out for.

*COVID-19 symptoms can include:*

- a high temperature or shivering (chills) – a high temperature means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
- shortness of breath
- feeling tired or exhausted
- an aching body
- a headache
- a sore throat
- a blocked or runny nose
- loss of appetite
- diarrhoea
- feeling sick or being sick

The symptoms are very similar to symptoms of other illnesses, such as colds and flu.

Did you know that you may be able to get a seasonal COVID-19 vaccine if you are at increased risk of getting seriously ill from COVID, this may be due to an underlying health condition or your age. You should be contacted by the NHS if you are eligible.

You or your child may be offered a seasonal COVID-19 vaccine if you are:

- aged 65 years old or over (you need to be 65 years old by 31 March 2024)
- aged 6 months to 64 years old and are at increased risk
- living in a care home for older adults
- a frontline health or social care worker
- aged 16 to 64 years old and are a carer
- aged 12 to 64 years old and live with someone with a weakened immune system

We follow the NHS and Government guidelines to deliver a safe service, if you have any questions or concerns, please speak with your support worker or contact the office 01245 353855.

# Fundraising

We tirelessly work to secure grants and donations to keep the charity afloat, and we are pleased to announce that we have recently secured the following funds:

The Inman Charity awarded us £5,000 towards our activities budget. This means so much to the clients that we support, these funds will allow us to continue to support our clients accessing the community to attend meaningful activities.

The Mrs. Smith & Mount Trust awarded us £3,000 towards support workers costs.

In the autumn ERCA completed a sponsored Fun Walk through Danbury Country Park raising £640, which was generously topped up by The Fun Walk Trust sponsors with a further £256, making a grand total of £896. The money raised will provide the activity budget for 90 client visits and we are looking to participate in the Fun Walk again during 2024.



ERCA has been approached by the Edward Gostling Foundation to become a Legacy partner. This is an exciting opportunity and hopefully may allow us to secure funds to develop the charity whilst being sustainable, for many years to come. Please follow us on social media for regular updates.

## Get Involved

We are always looking for volunteers to help in the office. If you know anyone who has some free time on their hands and could commit to 3 hours a week to provide administrative support, please urge them to contact our office.

At ERCA we like to encourage those who access our service to send in stories about their recent accomplishments, or their interests and hobbies.



One of our clients Rosemary, recently wrote a poem entitled Time and has kindly given us permission to share her lovely poem with you all.

Time to Listen  
Time to Care  
Time to Meditate  
Time to Be

Time for You  
Time for Me  
Time for Everyone  
Time is Precious

Time costs nowt  
That's what life's all about.....

Time, Time, Tick Tock Time.....

By Rosemary.



# Chairman's Message

We are coming to the end of yet another busy year for ERCA. 2023 has been a year of significant development on many fronts, as we improve further the solid foundations from which we can grow and develop the charity. We are starting to see some encouraging signs as a result of this effort, with more client referrals and increasing levels of positive feedback on our work from clients, referrers, and other partner organisations. This, together with the potential medium-term financial support from The Edward Gostling Foundation, will allow us to continue this work in the new year and hopefully build ERCA's organisational resilience to create a sustainable future for the charity.

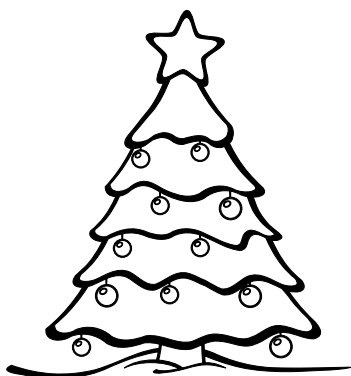
I would like to thank the support workers, managers, and other members of staff, as well as my fellow trustees and other volunteers that have helped out in the office, for their work and continued support of ERCA over the past year.

I wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year.



**Merry Christmas  
& A Happy New Year!**

**From All at ERCA**



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