

News release

24 August 2009

Sick of feeling unwell? - become an Expert Patient at Dewsbury Sports Centre

NHS Kirklees and Kirklees Council have teamed up to invite people with long-term health conditions, and unpaid carers, to join the FREE 'Expert Patients Programme' at Dewsbury Sports Centre starting on Thursday 3 September at 10am and then every Thursday morning until 15 October 2009. Leaflets and booking forms are available at the Sports Centre.

The course provides a set of tried and tested skills which have been shown to lead to many benefits for people with long term health conditions – helping people feel better and more in control of their lives. Participants will learn ideas and techniques about relaxation, healthy eating, exercise, and dealing with anger, fear, frustration, isolation, fatigue, depression and coping skills. In addition, participants will:

- receive useful information and facts;
- be able to discuss issues with others in a relaxed and confidential setting;
- discuss common problems;
- learn how to think more positively;
- learn self-help management techniques; and
- develop communication skills and confidence.

People who have learned to live with and manage a chronic illness usually have a good understanding of what makes their condition better or worse. Taking part in an Expert Patients Programme means they can share those experiences with others who have a similar illness as well as picking up ideas for improving their wellbeing. The Expert Patients Programme has been a life-changing experience for some participants.

www.kirklees.nhs.uk

Marilyn Horton, User Involvement Manager at NHS Kirklees, said: “The Expert Patients Programme, which has been running since October 2003, has helped many people to cope with stress levels induced by their illnesses and given them a lot more confidence. Some participants have even managed to go back into full time employment.

Courses are running throughout the year across Kirklees and we are always looking for people with long term health conditions, or those people looking after someone with a long term health condition, to take part in the programme.”

Hundreds of people from all over Kirklees have completed the programme and become ‘Expert Patients’. The programme also offers volunteering and further training opportunities as well as access to other free activities including the Get Food Wise and Exercise programme and support groups.

The Expert Patients Programme is supported by local healthcare professionals who recognise the benefits of the course and refer patients on to it. However, anyone with a long term health condition can refer themselves on to one of the programmes.

Other courses that are offered include:

Looking After Me course for unpaid Carers

New Beginnings for people living with, or recovering from a mental health condition

Specialist courses can also be organised by arrangement, such as:

- Diabetes
- Asthma
- COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease)

Some of the volunteer tutors, who have all received training to deliver the programme, have community language skills which enables courses to be provided in Urdu, Punjabi and Gujarat. Training for volunteer tutors is held locally and is led by the Expert Patients Programme Trainer, Rehana Hussain.

Courses that are currently being developed include:

Supporting Parents Programme for parents of children with long term health conditions

Persistent Pain Programme for people who live with day to day persistent pain.

Substance and Alcohol Misuse (SAM) – a self management course for people in recovery from substance and alcohol misuse.

For dates and further information or to book a place contact:

Julie Lawes, Expert Patients Programme Administrator: Tel: 01924 351448

or e-mail at: julie.lawes@kirklees.nhs.uk

Information can also be found on the NHS Kirklees website at <http://www.kirklees.nhs.uk/get-involved/expert-patients-programme/> .

For the **Looking after Me** Course information contact:

Farah Haq, Carers' Support Officer, Gateway to Care on Tel: 01484 226050 or e- mail at

farah.haq@kirklees.gov.uk

Ends.

Notes to News Desk

1. NHS Kirklees is the main NHS body responsible for healthcare and health improvement for people living in the district. NHS Kirklees commissions - that is plans and pays for - any health services you might need. This includes hospitals, ambulances, mental health and other specialist services. NHS Kirklees also agree contracts with local GPs, dentists, pharmacists and optometrists to deliver high-quality services for local people.
2. Information about the courses above can be found on the NHS Kirklees website at <http://www.kirklees.nhs.uk/get-involved/expert-patients-programme/>

**For further information please contact the Communications Team, NHS Kirklees on 01484
466004/466223**