

January 2018

I wish everyone a peaceful and healthy 2018.

Over the recent festive holiday many may have over indulged in the consumption of alcohol for just a few days and then be back in control until their next celebration.

Others, either will find it more difficult to stop, or this festive period may be the start of a downward spiral leading to the start of alcoholism and all the alcohol related illnesses it will attract eventually over the next fifteen to twenty years, then there is the additional costs such as the grief alcoholism gives to families, marriages, relationships, employment not to mention the phenomenal costs to the NHS and the Local Authority.

To combat this problem Kent is rolling out a Dry January campaign.

As Dry January gets underway, special training is helping Kent's frontline staff to identify and support people who may have an alcohol dependency.

The sessions for professional workers, including probation officers, job centre staff, careers advisors and social workers, are just one of the many support services available from Kent County Council-commissioned drugs and alcohol charity 'change, grow, live' (CGL).

Felicity Rudman, West Kent Housing Association Tenancy Support Officer, explained why she took part in the training: "We go into all sorts of issues in our jobs, from rent arrears to property neglect, and some of the times alcohol does play a part. After doing the training, I can now look back and I know I've experienced this with a few cases. It helps to be able to relate to the things that people are dealing with as well as knowing there's somewhere we can refer them to for specialist help so it can be nipped in the bud before it gets to the point that we can't deal with it."

In Kent, it is believed that more than 327,000 people are drinking at dangerous levels. Kent hospitals treat approximately 20,000 cases* of alcohol related illness and injury a year while there is also a huge impact on emergency and health services due to accidents on the road, in the workplace and the home. Alcohol-related issues cost the NHS in Kent an estimated £108million a year.

Mike Trace, CEO of The Forward Trust, the charity which runs the East Kent Community Drug and Alcohol Service, said: "We know from experience that issues with alcohol can have a significant impact on people from all walks of life, as well as their families, particularly during and directly after the festive season. That's why our East Kent Drug and Alcohol Service hubs are running a series of informal coffee mornings throughout January for people who are worried about the amount of alcohol they drink. People can drop in without an appointment and talk in confidence to a member of our team about their concerns.

"Forward supports people throughout East Kent who have issues with drugs and alcohol, no matter what those issues are. If you need help, do get in touch or drop into any of our five Hubs." Location details can be found at www.eastkentdrugandalcohol.org.uk.

For more information on the treatment, support and recovery services available across Kent, go to www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/health/alcohol-and-drug

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