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Read about two of our staff members dry January stories.

See how they got on..

New Gateshead walking group every Friday

I.T Suite

We are delighted to announce the installation of our new I.T suite at our Sunderland Recovery Hub. The suite is for the use of any service users and their loved ones. The computers can be used for job search, benefit purposes, producing a CV and typing letters. We have staff and volunteers to help you use the computers and teach you the basic skills.

If you would like any more information about our I.T suite please contact Maria on 0191 5148520 or email maria.irving@neraf.org



Achieve with NERAF FLOAT Project

What is the FLOAT project?

The FLOAT Project (Families and Loved Ones Achieving Together) is an innovative way of supporting families and loved ones of those experiencing substance misuse. It has been developed through client and staff consultation to meet the distinct needs of our clients.

The FLOAT Project operates from Sunderland although Gateshead and South Tyneside areas are also covered.

One to One Support

We offer one to one and group support for those who are living through their loved one's substance misuse. We teach you coping techniques, helping you apply household boundaries, we will work with you on many areas of your life, physical health, mental health and wellbeing, keeping safe to name but a few. We work with you, not to you, we will set small achievable goals together. Our experienced workers will listen, understand and help you to achieve.

Sustained Recovery

Clients in the sustained recovery phase of support are those that have achieved all of their outcomes through one to one support but may still require support in the form of group attendance or sporadic telephone/text contact. A client can receive sustained recovery support for as long as they should require it.

Support may be in the form of;

- ☐ text message
- ☐ telephone contact
- ☐ group attendance
- or as an ad hoc one to one appointment



Our family workers - Lynn and Michelle

Groups

Coming into a group for the first time can be a very intimidating experience, most people know each other and there may be a 'vibe' that although the group is friendly, some could find off putting. The refore, the Family Workers will assist new members into the group and introduce them, and ensure that the client feels comfortable attending the group. Achieve with NERAF try to ensure that the groups sessions are continuously innovative and creative, and have previously taken part in a project working alongside 'Unfolding Theatre' who collaborated with Achieve with NERAF and Changing Lives to create a 'Let Me Tell You' project.

If you would like more information, or would like support please contact 0191 5656688.

Achieve with NERAF Recovery Hub timetable

MONDAY	9.30 – 11.00 DROP IN	10.00 – 12.00 FLOAT SUPPORT GROUP (Families and Loved Ones)	11.00 – 1.00 WOMEN'S ONLY GROUP	1.00 – 4.00 Peer Support Group 4.00 – 5.00 Healthy Mind, Healthy Body, Healthy YOU!	5.00 – 7.00 Peer Support Group
TUESDAY	9.30 – 11.00 DROP IN	11.00 – 12.00 Managing and Maintaining YOUR Own Recovery	12.15 – 1.00 LUNCH WITH ACHIEVE	1.00 – 4.00 Peer Support Group	
WEDNESDAY	9.30 – 11.30 FLOAT SUPPORT GROUP (Families and Loved Ones)	11.30 – 12.30 LUNCH WITH ACHIEVE (Families and Loved Ones)	12.00 – 1.30 DAGS	1.00 – 4.00 Peer Support Group	5.00 – 7.00 FLOAT SUPPORT GROUP SOUTH SHIELDS
THURSDAY	9.30 – 1.00 DROP IN			1.00-4.00 Peer Support Group	
FRIDAY	9.30 – 11.00 DROP IN	10.00 – 12.00 FREEDOM PROGRAMME	11.00-1.00 WOMEN'S ONLY GROUP	1.00-4.00 Peer Support Group	
SUNDAY		11.00 – 1.00 Peer Support Group			

Danny's story

I grew up in a neglected and violent home.

My parents were both alcoholics and this is all I knew as a child. I started to drink at the age of 15 and drank very heavily for the next 9 years.

At the age of 24, I joined a church to help me with my alcohol. I stopped drinking for the next 2 years. I moved to Sunderland to get away from my past as by now both parents died due to the alcohol.

I started to drink again 7 years ago due to my memories and instantly became an alcoholic. I knocked around with other drinkers so this did not help me.

Earlier last year, I joined NERAF as I was now in a bad place. NERAF gave me the support I needed and before I could get into a rehab, I collapsed and was rushed to hospital.

The hospital found I had two ulcers in my stomach which had burst. This nearly killed me and I had to have life-saving surgery. I was in hospital for 15 days. In this time, I did not have a drink of alcohol or a cigarette so when I got out of hospital I continued to not drink or smoke.

NERAF called me while I was in hospital to see where I was as they were concerned as I had not been going to the groups. When I left hospital, I returned to NERAF and I attend there 5 days a week and they give me all the help and support I need to stay off the drink.

My daughter cried with happiness that I am now off the drink.

I'm now a butterfly and not a caterpillar.

Works for me – works for you – works for everyone





Meet The Volunteer

Hello my Name is Sonia and I have been volunteering for Achieve with NERAF for 3 years and I love it. Volunteering is a break for me from my day to day life and also shows people that getting on the road to recovery can be done.

I was a binge drinker for 15 years but finally after I kept waking up covered in my own vomit I got my wakeup call and decided that I needed to change my life. I self-referred to NECA and received counselling and after a year I reluctantly started group therapy, however I am glad I did as my confidence started to grow. Unfortunately the NECA group was stopped due to funding and I felt like my friends that I had made in the group and I were just left and I felt we still needed the support. With my new found confidence I decided that I would set up my own group, I went to CVS in Sunderland and they helped me set up my own group called DAGS. I then completed a level 1,2 and 3 counselling course which I never thought I would be able to do as I previously hid myself away and wouldn't have dreamed about going out let alone doing a course.

My confidence continued to grow and my NECA worker then introduced me to the Achieve with NERAF groups. I started to volunteer with NERAF in 2012 and I have never looked back. I really enjoy volunteering and I am still running my DAGS group which is now based in the Achieve with NERAF building every Wednesday 12.00 -1.30. My confidence is better than it has ever been and I am looking forward to my journey ahead.



Meet the Volunteer

Hello, my name is Peter and I have just started volunteering for Gateshead and I am currently completing the peer mentor training. I am from County Durham originally, but live in South Shields with my wife and 7 month old little lad.



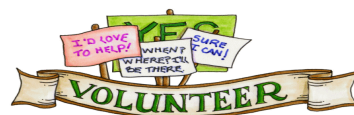
Keen Sunderland supporter, for my sins, and like to swim and cycle, but nappies and naps are more the norm these days. Done a variety of jobs including diving, TV remote control assembler, civil service, label sticker on-er, piano tuner and have a maths degree. Thankfully I'm not as daft as I look, and I play a mean game of pool.

Want to volunteer?

Want some more information?

Why not pop along to our volunteer Drop in on the First Thursday of every Month at the Sunderland office 10am-12pm and

Speak to our current volunteers.



Volunteer Opportunities

NERAF has always provided volunteering opportunities in the role of Group Facilitator but we have recently restructured our volunteering programme. We are now providing exciting opportunities in the following roles;

Advocacy , I.T Facilitators , Groups , Events ,Receptionist Duties

For more information about volunteering opportunities contact Shellie on 0191 5148520 (Sunderland) or 0191 4785422 (Gateshead) or email shellie.nichols-key@neraf.org. You can also come to our Volunteer Drop in on the First Thursday of Every Month and speak to Our current volunteers.

MY STORY OF DRY JANUARY

Hello, I'm Shellie, the Volunteer Co-ordinator for Achieve with NERAF and this month I decided to do dry January. I decided I can't really preach to other people about doing it without doing it myself.

If I am honest with you I told everyone it would be easy because I don't drink in the house very often and I don't drink during the week or on a school night as I call it. I was very complacent about the whole thing.

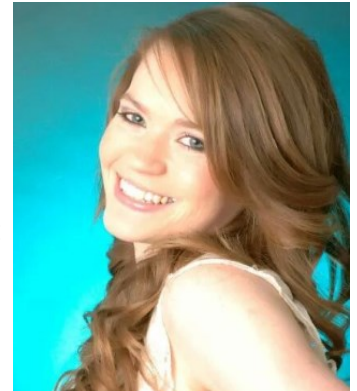
I started dry January at midnight on New Year's Day.....already the will power was tested as we were celebrating the new year but as I had challenged myself I was going to do it I stuck to my plan. A week went by and I was not bothered by it in the slightest.....until the weekend when I went out for tea and hit the town and all I could think of was do I look like these people in here after a few tipples. Needless to say it was an early night home for me, which now I think about it, had I just ignored what other people were doing and gone on as I always do, only alcohol free I would have enjoyed my night, hindsight is a wonderful thing.

Another week went by and again I was not phased by this and enjoyed a nice quite weekend in with the husband.

So now I was into the third week of being alcohol free and what can I say.....yes I said....I uttered the words I need a drink after a testing day. This was of course completely untrue as I didn't need it in the slightest and got home that night, went for a walk with my husband, ranted a little and an hour later that want had gone. I had found a different way to calm myself down.

That weekend I went to my cousins for a house party where we played a few games don't get me wrong I did think ooh wouldn't it be nice to have a drink but I only wanted it because I couldn't have it, I didn't need it and had an amazing time without it.

As the final week went on I learnt that I could relax without having to have a drink and that I can have a lovely weekend without that sore head on a Sunday morning. I am so pleased that I achieved this alcohol free month maybe next year I could challenge myself to two months.



Walking back to Happiness

Come and Join our walking Group

Every Friday 12.45pm - 2.00pm

All Welcome

Starting from Trinity Centre,
Gateshead High Street NE8 1EP





Dry January

Hi all, I thought it would only be right to practice what I preached! So I signed up for Dry January. As many of our clients already know I am not a big drinker having had a couple of months in my youth lost to excessive drinking, however I do on occasion enjoy the odd one or two. So my journey as a socially functioning non-alcohol induced individual began.

First day positive thoughts receiving texts from Dry January on how amazing I am, thinking a non-alcohol life style would benefit my weight loss, my skin complexion, energy levels and have some money left over at the end of the month, sounded great! Then reality hit hard ending week one feeling low moods, headaches, irritable at the sight of people having a drink. Why? Then it hit me it was the thought of not having the option to drink that had impacted on my mood, the detoxing of the chemicals in my body creating headaches and my irritability a product of my defiance to conform to this Dry January. I had to self-evaluate!

Positive	Negative
I have chosen to do Dry January	Impacted on social life.
I have maintained abstinence regardless of Dry January Campaign as I stopped drinking on the 27th December.	Headaches
Getting out of bed earlier in the morning.	Due to detox I have broken out in spots on my face.
I have more energy	
I have more money	
I have lost half a stone in weight	

Once I had completed this little exercise I had to laugh, no one forced me to complete Dry January, I had a choice and I chose to stop drinking, this did not impact on my social life I had allowed my focus on alcohol to stop me enjoying myself. In relation to conforming I had already chosen to stop drinking on 27th December, the sense achievement was worth the odd headache. Finally I had lost half a stone, surely that was worth three spots on my face!

“Well done think how well you may look and feel by the end of this booze-free month!”

Now at the end of Dry January I can honestly say I am glad I abstained from alcohol it has given me a sense of achievement, improved my weight loss and improved my confidence in my own convictions. I am happy I made the choice to abstain and will be mindful of my own experience when supporting others to make their own personal choices surrounding their alcohol/ substance use.

The continuing story.. A Tale of Recovery – The Hard Slog

Life now tends to consist of 14 hour days, teaching all day at the Prince's Trust, working with mainly young men aged 18 – 25 years old; many of them with substance misuse issues, criminal records, long-term unemployed, illiterate and angry at the whole world, then either studying or attending college in the evenings and weekends. I had recently passed the City & Guilds 7307 Adult and Further Education Teaching certificate and had moved up to the next step and started the Certificate in Education (Cert Ed). This had been a significant step up and in addition I was also studying Integrated Business Technologies Level 2 which was an ICT course.

In my spare time I was working in the Park Centre in the West End of Newcastle delivering IT training to people with severe disabilities and learning difficulties and developing a pilot project for a Computer Recycling programme, the plan being to sell internet ready computers at a low price to people in the community who would be unable to afford a brand new one (this was 2002 and the computers operating systems were usually windows 95!). I had also recently bought a Golden Labrador puppy (Oscar), who seemed to want to walk for ridiculous distances at ridiculous times of the day! The point at the time was that although I didn't realise it, it was to fill my time up, although looking back it now seems a bit over the top!

I felt as though I had lost ten years of my life and was desperate to fit in as much as I could, get back to the levels that I had reached in becoming an Engineer in the Royal Air Force and more than anything else to start respecting myself again.

Throughout the past couple of years I had continually pushed myself to achieve whatever I had set my mind to and each time that I had reached a level that seemed at the time to be unobtainable, I reached for the next level. People had laughed at me in the early stages and that had made me more determined to keep pushing and achieving; I had to prove that I wasn't worthless. The only way that I knew how to do this was to work harder than I had ever done before, so if that was what it was going to take, so be it!

What I had found was that addicts (people like me) tended to be very compulsive; life seems to be all or nothing. Looking back I can't remember any grey areas in my life, everything is quite black and white in that I like you or I don't, I am going to do it or not as the case may be, my life seemed to be about absolutes, no half measures, no uncertainties until now.

Now I was trying to rediscover who I am, what the meaning of my life was, why did I not die when the doctor quite adamantly insisted that I should have! What is the purpose of me being here? Because of the way that I had lived my life (everything in the extreme), I had never been married nor had children, I had moved around the country since leaving the RAF, not forming any attachments and with no real purpose other than surviving on a day to day basis and feeding my habit.

So, in retrospect, by throwing myself into work and study, was I also trying to bury the past and avoid the psychological turmoil or was it ambition kicking in again, only time would tell.

Support Groups

Day	Venue	Time	Location
Monday	Gateshead/Women's	10.30-12.00	Trinity Church, Gateshead High St, NE8 1EP
Monday	Gateshead/Mixed	1.00-3.00	Trinity Church, Gateshead High St, NE8 1EP
Monday	Sunderland/Women's	11.00-12.45	56, John Street, Sunderland SRI 1QH
Monday	Sunderland/Family and Carers	10.00-12.00	56, John Street, Sunderland SRI 1QH
Monday	Sunderland/Mixed	1.00-4.00	56, John Street, Sunderland SRI 1QH
Monday	Healthy Mind, Healthy Body, Healthy YOU!	4.00-5.00	56, John Street, Sunderland SRI 1QH
Monday	Sunderland/Abstinence	5.00-7.00	56, John Street, Sunderland SRI 1QH
Tuesday	Managing and Maintaining YOUR own Recovery! (structured)	11.00-12.00	56, John Street, Sunderland SRI 1QH
Tuesday	Sunderland/Community Lunch	12.15-1.00	56, John Street, Sunderland SRI 1QH
Tuesday	Sunderland/Mixed	1.00-4.00	56, John Street, Sunderland SRI 1QH
Wednesday	Sunderland/Family & Carers Group	9.30-11.30	56, John Street, Sunderland SRI 1QH
Wednesday	Sunderland/Family & Carers Group community lunch	11.30-12.30	56, John Street, Sunderland SRI 1QH
Wednesday	Sunderland/Mixed	1.00-4.00	56, John Street, Sunderland SRI 1QH
Wednesday	South Shields/Family & Carers Group	5.00-7.00	Horizons, 21 Beach Road, South Shields, NE33 2QA
Wednesday	Gateshead/Mixed	1.00-3.00	Trinity Church, Gateshead High St, NE8 1EP
Thursday	Sunderland/Mixed	1.00-4.00	56, John Street, Sunderland SRI 1QH
Friday	Freedom Programme	10.00-11.30	56, John Street, Sunderland SRI 1QH
Friday	Sunderland/Women's	11.00-12.45	56, John Street, Sunderland SRI 1QH
Friday	Sunderland/Mixed	1.00-4.00	56, John Street, Sunderland SRI 1QH
Friday	Gateshead/Family & Carers Group	10.00-12.00	Trinity Church, Gateshead High St, NE8 1EP
Friday	Gateshead/Mixed	2.00-4.00	Trinity Church, Gateshead High St, NE8 1EP
Sunday	Sunderland/ Mixed	11.00-13.00	56, John Street, Sunderland SRI 1QH

Achieve with NERAF

“Our mission is to deliver and enable real positive differences to the lives of people affected by substance misuse and their family networks”

If you need help finding the Route to Recovery whether it is from a substance addiction or if you are caring for someone with an addiction Achieve with NERAF can support you.

We offer;

Face-to-face mentoring

Motivational work

Managing and maintaining your own recovery

Volunteer opportunities

Peer Support

Group work

Partnership working

If you want more information about our service please contact

info@neraf.org

Or

Tel. 0191 5656688

Tel. 0191 5148520

Fax: 01915656715

Fax: 0191 5101827

Substance Misuse Peer Mentor Opportunities



Do you want to help people to get on their road to recovery and share your story?

Do you have life experience that you want to share and could benefit people who are where you were a few months/years ago?

Have you ever thought you wouldn't get where you are today?

Become a Peer Mentor

Today !!!

Contact Shellie on

**0191 5148520 or email
shellie.nichols@neraf.org**



Achieve with NERAF

56 John Street
Sunderland
SR1 1QH

Phone: 0191 5656688
Fax: 0191 5656715



FLOAT • Information & Advice • Face-to-face

ACHIEVE
with NERAF

www.neraf.org