

# Thurrock Recovery College STUDENT NEWSLETTER



By Louise, a student at Inclusion Thurrock Recovery College

## In this issue...

- Unity & Reflection
- Articles from the Peer Support Team
- Staff spotlight
- Yoga Pose of the month
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- Community Updates

# UNITY & REFLECTION



Welcome to this edition of the Recovery College Student Newsletter where we explore the theme of 'Unity and Reflections'.

As we navigate the complexities of life, unity remind us of the strength we find in togetherness, while reflection offers a path to understanding ourselves and others more deeply.

As we approach the end of the year, it's a perfect time to pause, reflect and celebrate the unity within our community.

Unity isn't just about standing together, it's about building connections, finding common ground and fostering a sense of belonging that fuels growth and resilience.

Reflection is just as important. By looking back at our past experiences, we gain clarity and recognise the lessons that have shaped us.

Reflections help us honour our progress while it gives us a clear view of what lies ahead.

Let this edition remind us that recovery is not about perfection, but about persistence, growth and connection.

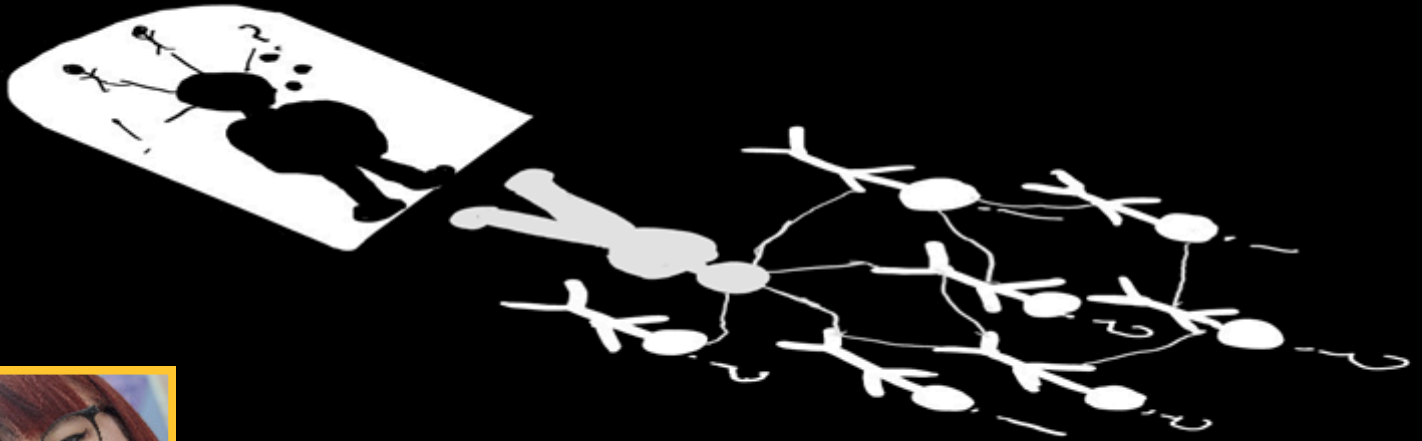
Whether we are just beginning your recovery journey, or have travelled far along the path, know that this community is here to walk alongside you.

**Thank you for being an essential part of the Recovery College.**

**Together we are stronger.  
With gratitude and encouragement.  
Wishing you all a nice Festive Season,**

**The Recovery College Newsletter Team.**

# What's SEEN in the LIGHT, is hidden in the DARK!



**Katie Ireland**  
Peer Learning  
Support Worker

*Artwork by  
Katie Ireland*

## Does anyone ever feel like their shadow is lingering?

I do, I see from the outside looking in, people only see a person but never really take into consideration what struggles that person might have to deal with on a daily basis.

I have experienced a lot of negativity in my life and other people not understanding me. I have often been told to just 'calm down', 'chill out' or 'relax' and I find it infuriating. I didn't choose to be this way and I'm trying my hardest to be better, If I could just 'calm down' 'chill out' or 'relax' then I would, in fact I'd love to!

So when you see other people, please try and remember how many obstacles that person has had to overcome to get where they are at that moment. Don't make people feel bad for something that, to a certain degree, cannot be fully controlled.

If you suffer with anxiety you will understand this photo quite well, or at least have your own interpretation of its meaning. For me, I do a lot of navigating in my head. I may be doing the task at hand but, in my head, I'm already thinking of the next task I need to do, maybe even what I need to do tomorrow or the next day, or even next week, month, or year.

I feel like I am always carrying a darkness around me. All of these thoughts and questions have become a part of me.

**Anxiety is not what defines me,  
but it has come to live with me**

**RENT FREE.**

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It's like being trapped in a dark room and searching for the switch to turn the light on, yet the light never comes despite knowing that light switch is somewhere. I feel like a prisoner in my own body and wherever I go, my shadow will follow me.

Through my recovery I have learnt that acceptance is key to getting better. I accept that my brain works differently. I accept that the thoughts and questions I have are here to stay, but I'm not running away from them; I am just accepting them for what they are: thoughts!

It is quite easy to get trapped in these thoughts and dissociate, but the world keeps going regardless.

**We need to keep moving forward, even if that means 5 steps forward and 3 steps back, keep persevering!**

I am not one for exercise, however I imagine myself with each obstacle that gets in my way, as if I am climbing Mount Everest. And even though I may fall down,

I get back up, time and time again until I have made it to the top. I may fall down but hey, I made it once so I can do it again. That's how I see my mental health, there are good days, there are bad days, but I get myself up again, dust myself off and try again.

When you are in this dark place and feel like there is no light, just remember the darkness can't last forever! You will eventually find that light switch or reach the top of the mountain and let me tell you, it will feel like you are breathing for the first time, a sense of relief that you finally 'made it'.



# Pose of the month

## Puppy Dog Pose (Uttana Shishosana)

### Embrace the Winter with Heart Opening Stillness

By Diana - Yoga Tutor



As the winter season invites us to slow down, reflect, and restore, Puppy Dog Pose (Uttana Shishosana) offers the perfect opportunity to embrace this natural rhythm.

A beautiful pose from Yin yoga, it mimics the deep stretch of a puppy extending its entire body, combining both intensity and relaxation.

## Why we need yin yoga

In today's world, where we're constantly on the go, Yin Yoga offers a much-needed opportunity to slow down and tune inwards.

It allows us to cultivate stillness, patience, and mindfulness, helping to balance the high-energy demands of modern life.

By nurturing our parasympathetic nervous system, Yin Yoga not only improves physical flexibility but also supports mental and emotional well-being.

This makes it essential for maintaining overall harmony in body and mind.

It provides an intense stretch, Puppy Dog Pose is often practiced after a sequence of yoga poses targeting the spine, shoulders, and back.

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This pose deeply stretches the arms, shoulders, and chest while simultaneously lengthening the spine, creating space and flexibility.

As an inversion, it also expands the chest and opens the Heart Chakra (Anahata), allowing emotional release and balance.

Regular practice of Puppy Dog can help correct posture, particularly rounding of the back, while enhancing the flow of prana, or life energy, throughout the body.

This invigorates the practitioner, calms the mind, and promotes a sense of deep relaxation.

In the stillness of Puppy Dog Pose, let your heart open and your spine lengthen, embracing the warmth within as the world outside cools.

## How to Practice Puppy Dog Pose

- 1 Begin on your knees, keeping them directly under your hips.
- 2 Slowly lower your chest toward the floor, bringing your chin down as well, while extending your arms out in front of you. This deepens the stretch through your spine and opens your heart.
- 3 Lift your lower back slightly upwards, while lengthening your spine forward from the upper end, creating a profound awareness of your body and breath.
- 4 For a deeper heart-opening experience, you may place a bolster under your chest or your hands.
- 5 Stay in the pose for about 6 breaths or longer, allowing yourself to fully relax into the stretch.

# ADHD

## in the WORK place

By Imwechete

NHS

US

- Recovery College -

My path recently crossed with somebody who also has ADHD, and we had a brief conversation which led to her asking me if I liked routine in my life.

“Yes,” I said, “I like routine,” and she expressed surprise, which did not surprise me because ‘routine’ and ‘ADHD’ do not make good bedfellows.

“I don’t,” she said dismissively before shifting her attention to somebody else, no longer interested in anything I might have to say.

What she could not have known was that I had been asking myself that question for some time and had come to the realisation that, to bring about order to my chaotic thoughts, I needed to embrace routine.

I had in fact proved that ‘routine’ was my friend. It is typical of people who have ADHD to hyper-focus on their tasks.

If I am hyper focusing my mind will be abuzz with a multitude of complex thoughts and I will be ‘zoned out’ from everything around me.

An intrusive sound, such as a pinging or ringing phone, a doorbell or an alarm, shatters my thought processes so thoroughly that I will completely forget what I was doing and tragically, if I am being creative at the time, I will also lose my train of thought and my enthusiasm for the task along with it.

If I had been conscious/mindful of these things back in the day, I dare say I could have made things a little easier for myself in the workplace.

I would have forced myself to work to a routine (as I do now) so whenever I was distracted from my intended course by a phone or a colleague, the routine would pull me back on track.

The interesting thing about knowledge is it is liberating. Knowledge elevates us from ignorance and allows us to stand very much in our own truth.





**One** of the key themes for this month's newsletter is reflection – upon learning this, I couldn't help but twitch a, and I found it little. It's a brilliant topic and a tremendous skill to learn, but having recently qualified in a healthcare profession, my course mates and I found ourselves frequently compelled to sit down in front of our online portfolio, forcing ourselves to put into words what exactly we had learned from our experiences. Frankly, the whole process was a chore to begin with, and as I am someone who can be averse to doing extra paperwork, it was a task that often found itself working its way down to the bottom of the to-do list. With a lot of prodding from my personal supervisor, I persisted.

## The Benefits...

Towards the end of my course, however, I noticed that something interesting had happened. As I found myself talking to new people in different roles, I couldn't help but recognise that I found it easier to identify how my successes and failures in the past could inform my approach to new situations. I felt a greater connection to my past experiences, and this left me feeling more confident in my ability to approach new and unfamiliar things.

It started to become clear that reflection isn't just a matter of documenting what happened and when, but it is a powerful tool that can help to turn even our more uncomfortable experiences into an opportunity to learn and grow. It can help us to identify our weaknesses so that we can work on them, to recognise our strengths so that we can play to them in the future, and to find meaning in tough experiences.

As such, reflection is a skill that has found itself being taught across a wide variety of subjects – from healthcare to business – but in my experience, it was helpful to have a bit of a template to help me get started.

## Lessons I've Learned...

Other people can have bad days too – if they're acting "off", it might not have anything to do with me, so now I try not to over- think it.

Sometimes I can find it difficult to keep my head in the game when I'm hungry, so now I try not to book anything important in right before lunch!

I can get caught up in what's in front of me, which can be frustrating. Catching myself when this happens has made life more pleasant – especially driving!

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# Talking... REFLECTION

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## Get into the Habit...

Getting into the practice of reflecting regularly is a worthwhile investment, and can help you on a journey of lifelong learning. Whether you use a model to structure your reflections or simply take time to try and find lessons to be learned, it can be helpful to keep a record of this - such as keeping a diary or journal. Please also remember that some experiences, such as traumatic events might be extremely uncomfortable to reflect upon, and it might be worth considering whether a therapist might be able to help with this.

All the best, Chris

# Artwork

By Louise, Student

Your words are important



When we take care of ourselves, we are able to *think & feel* better about ourselves.

Start with the small things...make your own bed, take a shower, put some clean clothes on, brush your teeth, brush your hair...

This can set you up on the right path for the day!



Positive  
Mund

# STAFF SPOTLIGHT



## Hello to all our Readers,

As a new member of the team, I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself and provide a little bit of information about me. My name is Daniel and I'm an occupational therapist at Thurrock Recovery College.

Occupational therapy is often a misunderstood profession. In essence, occupational therapists help people to overcome personal barriers, enabling individuals to improve their skills and engage in meaningful activities or desired 'occupations' as independently as possible.

Why I became an occupational therapist is because I have a passion for mental health and recovery. I personally love that we focus on being person-centred, holistic and strength-based.

I am thrilled to be working at Thurrock Recovery College because the work we do here is non-judgemental and takes an educational, recovery-focused approach.

I believe that the service is a valuable community asset, which can foster an atmosphere where students can build confidence and knowledge to help empower them to strive forwards and achieve their own goals. I believe that the solutions-based approach that the Recovery College has and how we share success has the potential to create change and transformation.

As someone with varied experience in healthcare settings, I am passionate about the importance of creating an inclusive environment that provides an alternative, educational approach compared to traditional mental health services.

I love that the Recovery College achieves this by delivering courses that are co-produced and co-facilitated by those with professional and lived experience. This ensures equal value, breaks down mental health stigma and helps to overcome the traditional healthcare barriers of 'them and us'.

As an occupational therapist, I do believe it's important to engage in the occupations that are meaningful to us and bring us joy. Outside of work, some of the meaningful occupations that help promote my own wellbeing include hiking, running, swimming, travel, podcasts and the arts. I've also got a big passion for travel.

The picture I've included is of myself at Moraine Lake in Banff National Park, Canada. I included this picture as it was the most peaceful, beautiful view I've ever witnessed. I believe that having a place or space to visualise that brings us calm is so important and I often visualise this view when I need it most. Although I want to see the world, nothing quite compares though to being at home with a nice cup of tea and a good book!

My hopes for the future are to inspire others to overcome their personal challenges and to strive towards their own goals, enabling individuals to identify and re-engage in their meaningful occupations. I believe to achieve this; we must foster a culture where people feel empowered and encouraged to be in control of their own personal recovery.

We all know our own lives the best, so I believe we all therefore have the possibility to identify our own strengths. By understanding and using these strengths, I believe this can enable us to achieve moving forward onto the next steps in our journey towards better mental health and wellbeing.



## When Strangers Change Our MINDS



A little over a year ago I met with a small group of people who were strangers to me at the time. We had come together for a singular purpose, which was to get the Student Newsletter back on its feet.

Each of us had taken part in at least one of the many courses provided by the Recovery College, and all of us can attest to the individual benefits we have gained from the experience (the reader will probably know what I am talking about). So one could say we saw our contribution to the production as an opportunity to give something back.

We discussed our ethos and decided we wanted to create a platform where other students would feel encouraged to share their lived experiences and thereby help somebody else. Hearing somebody else describe a familiar condition from their perspective, and divulging their coping mechanisms can be life changing!

Firstly, it makes us realise we are not alone and there is at least one other person who understands how we feel. Secondly, the more we know about our own mental health conditions the better it is for us, because by having that knowledge, we can actively take

part in our own recovery. We place a lot of emphasis on the things that make each of us unique and our attention has drifted away from the things that we have in common.

We define our identities through the choices we make in dealing with the world, because we have a deep-rooted desire to be individual and to hold on to that individuality at all costs. In doing that we are losing sight of the fact that we have many more things in common with each other, that unite us, than the vanities that divide us.

This issue is the seventh since we started and there has been a different theme (chosen by the students) on each occasion.

Issue #1, from June, addressed the importance of awakening the senses when embarking on a new [healing] journey and since then we have done our best to address other topics including the different perspectives that exist for almost everything, the need to occasionally step off the 'treadmill' to re-evaluate and reset, drawing attention to our diversity and, last month, men's mental health.

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This month, issue #7, we are reflecting on the miles we have already travelled.

When I look back I see a quite different person from who I am now. Back then I couldn't tell whether the light at the end of the tunnel really was a light, and not a train rushing towards me. I felt worthless, useless, unwanted.

I do not feel like that as much these days. There is something about working with a group of good people all sharing a common goal that brings a certain type of peace into the mind. And that is good because that peace is better than the turmoil that was always there before.

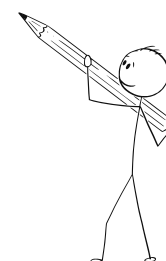
I did not arrive here on my own. I met some strangers along the way and those strangers taught me a thing or two about myself, that did indeed cause me to see my own situation from several different perspectives.

Being part of the Student's Newsletter I have had an idea to add something to it; I am giving a shoutout to any of my fellow students to volunteer your services.

I would love to have a cartoonist on the team who will have a half-page in every issue to display a little cartoon strip. I am hoping one of our students will see this and say, "hmmm, I fancy myself as a cartoonist/caricaturist and I wouldn't mind having a go."

If that's you, please contact the R College. We would be delighted to hear from you.

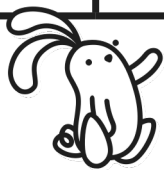
**Email: [thurrockRcollege@mpft.nhs.uk](mailto:thurrockRcollege@mpft.nhs.uk)**



# KINDNESS BINGO

You can cut the individual boxes out below and pop them in an envelope, then every morning pull one piece out and try and follow the instructions.

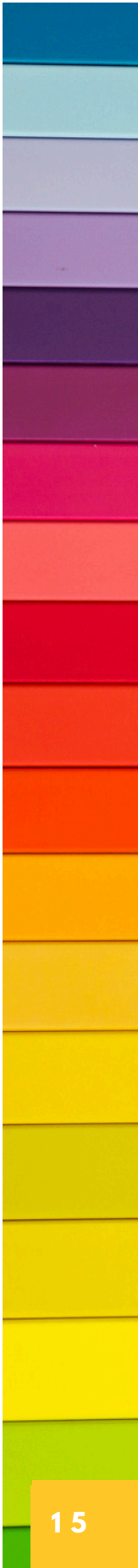
|  |   |   |  |  |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| Stayed in my pajamas all day to read or watch my favorite movies | Welcomed a newcomer to join my group            | Unexpectedly replaced something that was broken | Bought a meal for someone that did not have their wallet | Baked treats for a neighbor                                |
| Used reusable water bottles                                      | Offered a tissue to a person that needed it     | Cleaned up a hiking trail                       | Shoveled snow from my neighbor's driveway                | Cooked a meal for someone just returning from the hospital |
| Kept a gratitude journal   | Gave a lottery ticket to a stranger             | <b>FREE SPACE</b>                               | Decided to say, 'yes' when someone was expecting a 'no'  | Cleaned up a mess that wasn't mine                         |
| Made a personalized music playlist for a friend                  | Wrote a positive note to myself for inspiration | Sent flowers to someone who needed cheering up  | Left a surprise gift for a friend                        | Smiled at a stranger                                       |
| Offered my phone to a stranger to make a needed call             | Gave money to a person in need                  | Held open an elevator door                      | Shopped locally instead of at a big box store            | Picked up litter   |



**RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS  
FOUNDATION**

[www.randomactsofkindness.org](http://www.randomactsofkindness.org)

CARD 9





# UPCOMING COURSES

## **Communication Skills (online)**

**Monday 2 & 9 of December, 10am - 12pm**

Life is full of times when we want to communicate with confidence. We may want to speak up, ask for help, or simply feel confident to chat, all of which can be hard for many people, especially when feeling low or anxious. Communication is important to interact with family and friends as well as wider social connections and to getting the right help from services. This online workshop of 2 sessions of 2 hours each aims at providing the group with definition and different types of communication as well as identify the meaning of the term "confidence", techniques to build confidence and participants will have the opportunity to identify their own strengths and the barriers to communication. This online session serves as an introduction to the regular Communicating with Confidence which normally runs over 4 sessions of 2 hours each.

**NEW**

## **My Rested Self: Relaxation**

**Tuesday 3, 10 & 17 of December, South Ockendon, 11am - 1pm**

This course explores our relationship with relaxation. Following on from our shared learning in My Rested Self: Sleep, we will build upon our understanding of the rested self. What is relaxation? Which activities count as enjoyable but are not actually putting our bodies in a relaxed state? How can we bring simple little moments of pause into our daily lives? We will explore why we need to relax and the benefits to body and mind when we do. The course will be interspersed with the opportunity to try various techniques for relaxation. There will also be an opportunity to work on a relaxation plan, including understanding our patterns and balance of activity, so that we can make small changes to help us feel more refreshed, focused or at ease. This in-person course will be 3 sessions (2 hours each). We recommend also attending My Rested Self: Sleep.

## **Creating Mindfulness**

**Wednesday 27 November, 4, 11 & 18 of December, 2 - 4pm, Grays**

Life is challenging and messy; sometimes our minds are filled with worrying or negative thoughts or we feel stuck. Sometimes we might feel that we live our lives on autopilot or things are happening around us that seem out of control. Are you curious about "Mindfulness"? Mindfulness-based training is an ancient approach, now recognised scientifically for promoting well-being. It involves non-judgementally paying attention to thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations in a way that can increase our awareness and compassion and help us to manage difficult experiences and develop ways to see things differently. This 4 week course introduces mindfulness for everyday living. We consider how it can help our well-being, what techniques form part of mindfulness practices, ways you can be mindful in your own life and where you can go to learn more about mindfulness.



## **Ways to Wellbeing: Be Active**

**Thursday 5 of December, 10am-12pm, Grays**

Regular physical activity is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups. Exercise is essential for slowing age-related cognitive decline and for promoting well-being. But it doesn't need to be particularly intense for you to feel good - slower-paced activities, such as walking, can have the benefit of encouraging social interactions as well providing some level of exercise.

In this session we aim to provide you with support, tips, techniques and skills to improve your wellbeing.

## **Mindful Walk**

**Friday 6 of December, 10am - 12pm, South Ockendon**

**Friday 20 of December, 10am - 12pm, Grays**

Walking has so many benefits. It can improve our mood, reduce stressful feelings, benefit our physical health and help us become more aware of our surroundings. Join us for an outdoor walk in nature, where we will undertake a gentle pace along a designated route.

## **Identity & Personality (online)**

**Thursday 12 & 19 of December, 10am-12pm**

This course provides an introduction to a series of courses we are developing on the theme of identity. Over two sessions, we will begin to explore what identity and personality means to each of us. This introductory course will consider the relationship between our identity and society, explore the notion of identity as a changeable, evolving process and, with support, you'll learn to identify your strengths list. This is a great way to begin thinking about activities, hobbies and roles that would make best use of your unique strengths and abilities. There will also be an opportunity to reflect on areas of personal growth you may wish to work on, in-line with your own values. Then we'll explore sign-posting and support to empower you in your next steps going forward.



# Community connections

**mind** Thurrock and Brentwood

## Are you an Expert by Experience?

What stories do you have to share? What could you bring to the conversation around mental health? Be part of the process to develop our new lived experience panel.



## Join us today!

Scan the QR code or  
Tel: 01368 391411  
Email: [livedexperience@tbmind.org.uk](mailto:livedexperience@tbmind.org.uk)



## Thurrock Cares Roadshows



Find out what support is available to help you with the rising cost of living



The Beehive Resource Centre, Grays  
Friday 13 December  
10am to 1pm



[thurrock.gov.uk/thurrockcares](http://thurrock.gov.uk/thurrockcares)



[thurrock.gov.uk](http://thurrock.gov.uk)



## Information Marketplace

12pm – 2pm  
Launching 29th November  
then the last Friday each month

**The Ship Pub**  
Little Thurrock, RM17 6EX



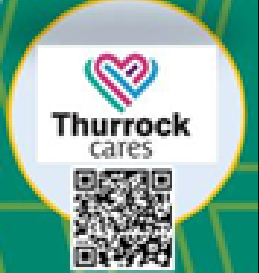
Come along, meet the teams and find out more



## Information Marketplace

10am-12pm  
Every 3rd Thursday of the month

**Stifford Clays Medical Practice**  
Crammavill Street, RM16 2AP



Come along, meet the teams and find out more



## Newsletter Feedback



Thank you for my Newsletter.

I like to just let you know how amazing it looks and how much it has developed since I was helping at the Recovery College. It looks fantastic!

I really like the article about the mask. Even though I am not a man I could relate myself and also as I haven't had it myself it helps me understand them a little more and the challenges they may have (if that makes sense?).

I also like the article on RSD (if that's right) and would have loved for it to continue more. Some advice perhaps, as it felt like it just stopped and I was really enjoying reading it.

I'm also so pleased to see you have a course on finding work. I struggled for years (over ten) to find and then to obtain a job though my own fears of

not being good enough, feeling inadequate etc and I'm still working on that today after being in a job for nearly a year now.

It would be lovely, if you ever do run this course of an evening, if could come along, as I'm interested to see how the course helps others and even if I could help in any way.

Anyway, I just wanted to say how amazing the newsletters are and how much they have developed .

Thank you for continuing to send me the newsletters and I wish you all the best in reaching so many isolated individuals.

Keep well,  
Regards,

Tracy

## Apology

I would like to apologise for the non-end to the RSD article for last month's newsletter. I did not realise that had happened until somebody wrote in (above) to express their disappointment and I had a look.

Oops, I am terribly sorry. The last three lines of the article were on another page which I did not notice when I sent it to the publication team. I will pick the subject up again in a future issue as I agree with the student who wrote in; it is an interesting subject, and I welcome the opportunity to talk about it in more depth.

## REMINDER

If you are interested in contributing to the newsletter we would love to hear from you. Please contact us to arrange attending our next informal meeting.

Meetings are held regularly in and around Thurrock.

The venues offer accessible facilities and free parking on site.



## SCAN ME

Scan the QR code below or visit  
**[www.recoverycollege.inclusionthurrock.org](http://www.recoverycollege.inclusionthurrock.org)**  
to read more!



### Contact Us!

**Email:** [Thurrockcollege@mpft.nhs.uk](mailto:Thurrockcollege@mpft.nhs.uk)

**Call:** 01375 809 708

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