



**Invitation to Join the Virtual Thinking Ahead Programme**

**An online wellbeing course for people living with incurable cancer and their family members across Harrogate, Calderdale & Huddersfield, Leeds and Mid Yorkshire NHS Hospital Trusts**

**Helping you look after yourself, find out about support services and plan ahead.**

Dear……………………………………………………………..

This letter is to tell you about the Thinking Ahead Programme, with an invitation to join the course if you are living with an incurable cancer, or supporting a family member through it. This invite letter includes information about what the Thinking Ahead Programme involves, how it runs, what people have said about it who have done the course before, and how you can book a place.

**What is the Thinking Ahead Programme?**

Thinking Ahead is a Health and Wellbeing Education Programme for patients living with incurable cancer, who may or may not be receiving cancer treatment, and their family members/carers. Patients from Harrogate, Calderdale and Huddersfield, Leeds and Mid Yorkshire NHS Hospital Trusts can book onto the course. It is presented by a mix of professionals from across the four areas.

**The aims of the Thinking Ahead Programme are:**

* To help keep patients as well as possible for as long as possible.
* To encourage living life to the full in a supported, self-managed way.
* To offer support to family members.
* To give advice on local services and how to access them when needed.
* To allow an opportunity to consider future planning towards the end of life.
* To give an opportunity to meet key people who may be able to help in the future.
* To offer time for questions and concerns.

**What’s included in the programme?**

Lots of professionals join the sessions to talk about important topics such as managing uncertainty and fatigue, sorting financial affairs, diet and appetite, keeping active, managing cancer progression, faith and spirituality, relaxation and an introduction to hospice services. The course introduces ‘Advance Care Planning’, helping people start to think about and plan for the end of life, recording wishes and making these known to family members and medical teams.

**How does the Thinking Ahead Programme run?**

Thinking Ahead runs online for seven weeks, plus an optional introductory session. The weekly sessions last for 90 minutes on Microsoft Teams, which means people can join from the comfort of their own homes, and don’t need to come to the hospitals to take part. To join, people will need a computer/laptop/tablet with a microphone and camera. Course facilitators can help patients get set up with Microsoft Teams before the course starts. Patients and family members are welcome to join the course and family are welcome even if the patient does not want to join.

**What have people said about the Thinking Ahead Course?**

We understand that this can be a hard course to book onto due to some difficult and emotional topics. However, people who have attended the course in the past have said how helpful the course was, that they felt supported and calmer, and that it was sensitively and professionally delivered. Families said it helped them talk for the first time about difficult topics around end of life and find peace knowing that issues were dealt with.

**‘**The Thinking Ahead Programme has been excellent with great guest speakers who spoke with compassion.’

**‘The course is really about caring for the whole person rather than being lost as an NHS number.’**

**‘The course answered questions I didn’t know I had.’**

‘I wasn’t brave enough to ask things on my own, but being together in a group of people in the same situation, helped me to ask about things that were on my mind.’

‘I would not have talked to anyone about my future wishes if I hadn’t joined this group.’

**What’s the Course Timetable?**

There will be three Thinking Ahead Programmes run in 2024 and the dates for these are:

Tuesday 30th January until 19th March; Tuesday 7th May until 25th June; and Tuesday 3rd September until 22nd October, 2024. All sessions run from 1.30pm until 3pm. Though we encourage you to join each week, we understand that sometimes people may feel unwell or have hospital appointments, so may be unable to join every session.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Week: | Session Content: | Course 1 | Course 2 | Course 3 |
| Introductory Week | * IT
* Welcome
* Sharing stories/introductions
* Course overview.
 | Tuesday 30th January | Tuesday 7th May | Tuesday 3rd September |
| Week 1 | * Keeping Physically Active
* Benefits and Travel
 | 6th Feb | 14th May | 10th September |
| Week 2 | * Estates and Financial Matters
* Managing Fatigue
 | 13th Feb | 21st May | 17th September |
| Week 3 | * Introduction to ACP and EoL Conversations
* Introduction to Mindfulness and relaxation
 | 20th Feb | 28th May | 24th September |
| Week 4 | * Managing Uncertainty (Psychology session)
* Diet and appetite
 | 27th Feb | 4th June | 1st October |
| Week 5 | * Managing deterioration in the last week and months of life
* Further mindfulness and relaxation
 | 5th Mar | 11th June | 8th October |
| Week 6 | * Carers Support Session
* Introduction to local hospice services
 | 12th March | 18th June | 15th October |
| Week 7 | * Faith & Spirituality
* Using music to relax & inspire
* Programme review and feedback
 | 19th March | 25th June | 22nd October |

**Confidentiality**

Although this course is a collaborative course run by four different hospital trusts, there is an agreement in place to protect your confidentiality and no clinical information will be shared outside of your own hospital. Only staff from your own hospital trust will know anything about your diagnosis and treatment. Just your name, email address and phone number will be shared with the staff organising each Thinking Ahead Programme, and this data will be deleted after each course. Full details about confidentiality will be given to you in a privacy notice when you book a place and you will also be asked to complete a booking/consent form.

**Thinking Ahead Films**

The hospital trusts have made some films about Thinking Ahead, with attendees talking about the benefits of the programme. Google ‘CHFT Thinking Ahead’ to find the films on You Tube.

**How do I book a place on the Thinking Ahead Programme?**

To find our more information and book a place on the next course, please contact the Thinking Ahead Co-ordinator for the area that you live in:

**Harrogate:** Contact the Macmillan Cancer Information and Support Service – 01423 557317 or email **hdft.cancerinformation@nhs.net**

**Calderdale and Huddersfield**: Contact the Macmillan Information & Support Service on 01484 343614, 01422 222709 or email **cancer.information@nhs.net**

**Leeds**: Contact your Specialist Cancer Nurse in Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust.

**Mid Yorkshire:** Contact the Macmillan Cancer Support Centre on 01924 546072 or 01924 512204 or email **midyorks.macmillan.infocentre@nhs.net**

Thank you for reading the above information and we look forward to welcoming you on the Thinking Ahead Programme soon.

Kind regards

Helen Jones

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