

There are a variety of roles across BHCP and other organisations we work with in the community. Here we shine the spotlight on the people who carry out a range of roles to keep our communities healthy and supported. Mark Wilson is a Senior Health and Wellbeing Companion at The Well Communities in Morecambe. He has been in his role for two years and eight months.



Through his role, Mark supports anyone with a dual diagnosis of mental health and addiction. He attends the A&E and wards at the Royal Lancaster Infirmary to support patients and works closely with the Hospital Alcohol Liaison Service (HALS), hospital Mental Health Liaison team, local GPs, Lancaster and Morecambe Integrated Care Communities (ICCs) and Voluntary, Charity, Faith and Social Enterprise organisations.

How did you become a Care Coordinator?

Mark said: "I volunteered for four months with The Well Communities as I wanted to give back for all of the support I had received during my recovery. Initially, a six-month role of 'Hospital Engagement Worker' came up and I applied for the role and was successful. My role has since developed and I am now leading a team of three who work in both a hospital, GP and community setting to provide support, guidance and recovery opportunities to all who we work with."

What does your role involve?

Mark said: "There are three of us in the team and I manage my two colleagues who are Health and Wellbeing Companions. When I started out in the role it was focused very much on supporting people in their recovery from addiction. The role now includes looking at the mental health of the individual too as in many cases mental health issues and addiction go hand-in-hand. We offer peer support to individuals which involves sharing our own experiences. I think what has benefitted me in this role is my own story of addiction and how it affected me and my family. By sharing that with people who are in recovery instantly gives them a bit of hope and they can see how far I have come and that they can get there too."

"I am able to refer people who are in hospital to our services including our 'Recovery Housing' programme which offers short-term accommodation with 24-hour support to people with addiction who need a safe place to live. I can also refer people to our 12-step programme for both drug and alcohol addiction. The programme gives people the skills and techniques to overcome addiction with the support of peer mentors and focuses on physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. If someone has an underlying health condition I can refer them to the local GPs. Everyone is different. It may be that they need 1-1 support and others may thrive in group sessions. We have several different groups running including 'New Beginnings' which is a face-to-face session for a small group of people who are at the beginning of their journey. Another group I help to run is the 'Community Group' which is online support group that happens every single morning. We also have social events which I support where people can play pool, socialise in the café and see their families. Part of my role is to build up relationships with our Partners and I regularly attend Bay ICC and Lancaster ICC meetings where I find out about people who may need our support and about other organisations we can link in with."

What have been the best bits and challenges of your role?

Mark said: "The best part of my role is seeing someone in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) flourishing who two months before had been on the Intensive Care Unit at the hospital. If I can play a small part in supporting that person to get to that point, it makes me feel like my job is worthwhile. The downside is when you see people that have not been successful with their recovery. This does make you feel sad but my colleagues are a good support and always there to talk – that's why The Well Communities is an amazing place to work."

Top tips for people wanting to become a Care Coordinator?

Mark said: "My advice would be to try and get involved with some of the projects or social events that The Well Communities is running through volunteering. Not everyone who works and volunteers for The Well Communities is in recovery – everyone is welcome. If people are interested in volunteering at The Well Communities they can contact us on 01524 415278 or email info@thewell2.co.uk."