



Happy New Year, and I hope everyone reading this has made the best of things and enjoyed the holidays despite the restrictions we have had.

I think most of us will be pleased to see that 2020 is over and, with the vaccine rollout, hopefully we can look forward to a much better 2021.

January is always a time when people pledge to change themselves and break unhelpful habits. Good luck to anyone who's deep into Dry January and to every person who's trying to mould themselves into someone healthier, happier and generally better.

Our resolution at The Living Room is simple: help more people to beat their addictions and change their lives for the better. We're already making good on that resolution, with more online support, more

counsellors and we're improving the way our service looks and feels wherever you find us.

Wish us luck and if you think of something that may help us to further our mission, please let us know.

~ Adrienne, Chief Executive

Covid Restrictions and Our Centres

Current restrictions, and the risk posed by covid currently, mean we won't be reopening our Stevenage and Watford centres for in-person counselling until at least the 22nd February.

It was frustrating to make this decision but the physical health of the people who use our services, and our staff, is the most important priority right now.

Our staff will consult with anyone using our services before we make any decision to reopen on the 22nd February, so don't worry, we won't be rushing into any decisions.

We're still here for anyone who needs us – our online groups are running as usual and if you know anyone who needs support, encourage them to refer themselves. They don't have to feel trapped by their addiction until this virus is gone.



A reminder of why we are here... A testimonial:

"Since I started with The Living Room I have started to think more about myself, what I am doing to my body and my mind, knowing that there were other people just like me really gave me the strength and courage to speak about my problems and get where I am now."

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Thank You

For everything. Last year wasn't just difficult because of the logistics of running our service, it was also a worrying time for us with fundraising.

We've been overwhelmed with the amount of support we've had from our shop staff, community fundraisers, local people who've donated to us or pulled out all the stops to get others to donate to us, the community groups and organisations that have awarded us funding.

We've had sponsored haircuts, people sleeping out during

November, donations from grateful clients and families, some truly awesome quiz nights and so much more.

All of you have enabled us to get on with the job of helping people beat their addictions during the biggest health crisis most of us have ever seen. Thank you.

Take it Easy During Dry January

Many people take part in Dry January every year to help build healthier habits, detox after the excess of Christmas and New Year, maybe as part of weight loss or other fitness goals or to raise money for their local charities.

Thanks to anyone who's taking on the challenge and raising money for The Living Room at the same time. We are very grateful for the support.

But there are people who may have been worried about their drinking for some time or have been encouraged to cut back by a friend, who might need to take things slow. We want to help people give up alcohol for life, but please be careful.

If you're drinking every day and experience unpleasant symptoms like sweating, shaking, feeling sick or seeing things, do not stop suddenly. This can be very dangerous, and you'll be much safer with someone to help you.

Speak to your doctor and take it slow, reduce your alcohol by no more than 10% every week.

Our partners at Change Grow Live have a useful [alcohol quiz](#) that can guide you on the best action to take to cut down your drinking safely.

New Year, New Faces

We're very excited to announce that we'll be hiring some new staff to help us make good on our promise to improve our services.

We've already restructured some of our departments, so our counsellors have more support with things like admin, freeing them up to do what they do best.

We're also really excited to see our staff promoted to more senior roles and people who have volunteered with us become paid employees.

This is still a work in progress, but we hope to introduce you to our new family members soon.

On the Horizon

Keep your eyes out, we're hoping to hold our first quiz of the year sometime in February. Thanks to everyone who has come up with really creative ideas to fundraise for us in 2020 – we really appreciate your support and if you want to lend a hand this year, let us know.

After the success of last December's Families Living in Recovery online forum, we're happy to announce that we are holding two new forums in February; one for professionals in criminal justice and housing services, and the other for people involved in community equality, diversity and inclusion projects.

If you're interested in either of these events, [let us know](#) and we'll give you more details.