



Your good health

For all staff
and patients

A warm welcome for new arrivals

THE Walthamstow Welcome, a weekly knitting, crochet, sewing and collage workshop, has switched venue. Before the election, it met every Thursday, 10-12.30 at the Labour Party rooms in Orford Road, but now it has moved to the first floor in the library at the top of High Street. As well as local people, it also welcomes migrants, helping them adjust to life in a new country and offering advice on immigration matters.

Walthamstow Welcome was started in October last year by Debbie Bliss, the local knitting expert who produces wool under her own brand name, and two of her friends. They provide social and practical administrative support.

In its first 10 months, the Welcome has had four different venues, including Addison Road surgery for one week, but Bliss says the latest library site will hopefully be permanent. "Last week we had a woman and her children from Sri Lanka working with us in the workshop, while her husband was downstairs sorting out their immigration status at the drop-in centre," she said.

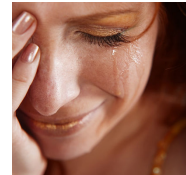
Wellness Day

THE third annual Wellness Day has had to be cancelled for various technical reasons. It was planned for Saturday September 21, but was then expanded into an event for all five surgeries in the Walthamstow Central primary care network to be held at Wood Street Medical Centre. However, that coincided with a car-free day in that area and the necessary permissions could not be obtained.

INSIDE

FOCUS ON DEPRESSION

Three perspectives on the condition that has prompted a surge of patients into the surgery
Pages 2-3



AN UNFAIR FIGHT

Why the GP who helps gamblers fight their addiction faces an uphill struggle
Pages 6-7



STAT'S A STORY?

Can you separate truth from fiction in media coverage of the NHS?
Pages 8-9



"We are very sorry the Wellness Day has gone west," said a surgery spokeswoman. "It is an important event in the surgery calendar. We fully intend to ensure it does happen next year."

Patients' meetings

THE Patients Participation Group meets on the last Tuesday of the month (bar August and December), 5.30-7pm on the top floor of the surgery. Turn left at the top of the stairs or lift. Next meetings: September 24, October 29 and November 26. All welcome.



The havoc that depression

THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

COACH: ALEX KYRIAKIDIS

‘Be kinder to yourself’

At Addison Road, I have met hundreds of people with varying levels of depression and I would like to share some insights and tips with you:

1. Know you are not alone.

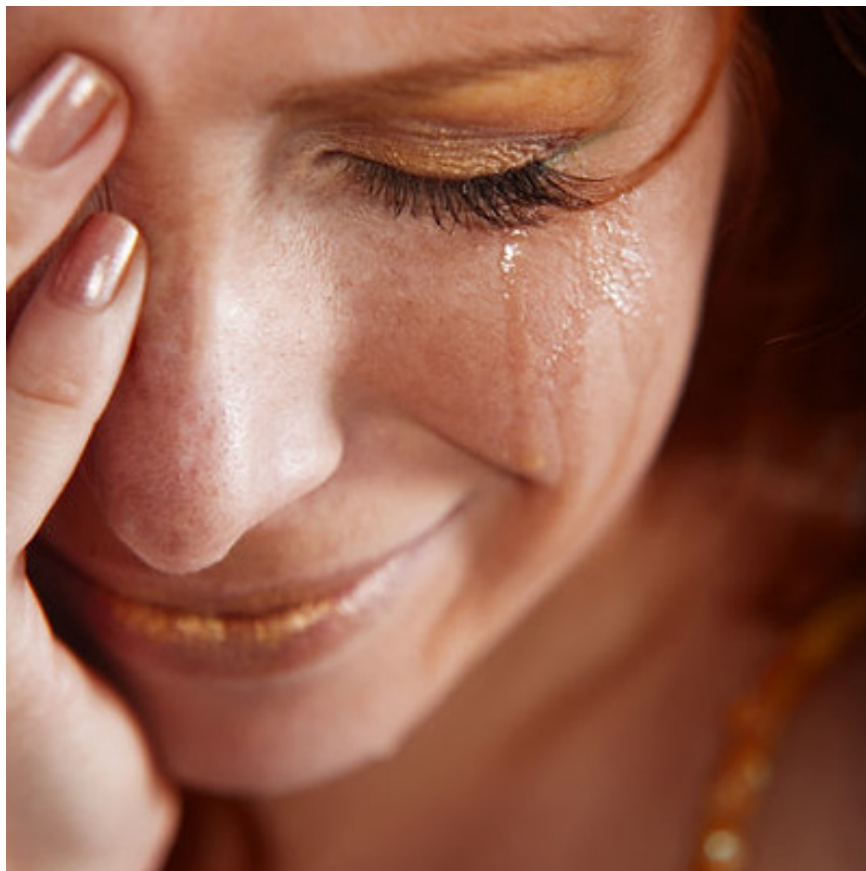
Depression can be very isolating. It is easy to think that no one really understands. Although it is a personal journey, know there are people out there who are going through it, too, and there are also sources of support.

2. Reach out for support.

It can be difficult to change how we feel without the right support to guide us. Some patients feel they should just try and find a way to manage it themselves. If you broke your leg, you wouldn't try to fix it yourself; you would get help. Working with mental health is no different than physical health - we need the best support to be able to manage it and heal.

3. Self-compassion is a

superpower. I believe strongly



Photograph: casadagini/Flickr

that anyone going through depression benefits from showing themselves more self-compassion and kindness. Typically, this is lacking. I see people who are really hard on themselves for not being able to “get over it” or “push through it” or “just deal with it”. Such inner criticism and lack of kindness to oneself causes an additional layer to an already burdened person. Depression requires patience and understanding, compassion and kindness, rather than frustration, judgement, or criticism. Whatever you are

going through, try to speak to yourself as you would to a dear friend, or someone you love. When times are hard, we need to be as loving towards ourselves as we can be.

4. How you feel is not a fixed

state. At times it can feel as though we are stuck, that it will always be this way. Yet I know for certain that is not the case. Depression can be lifted; how we think and feel can change.

Alex Kyriakidis works with patients from the five surgeries in the Central Walthamstow Primary Care Network, which includes Addison Road

wreaks: three takes

WHERE TO FIND HELP

- Your GP
- [Hub of Hope](#), a charity for 11-18s
- [Mind](#), the mental health charity

Support: 0300 102 1234

Infoline: 0300 123 3393

THE PATIENT: BEVERLEY MAYERS

‘Exercise is good. Now I can walk for a whole hour and feel healthier’

I started the community walks last November when my GP surgery suggested that this might be good, not only for my physical health, but my mental health as well.

I really hated exercising on my own, I had no motivation. The walks have been great; I’ve met some really lovely people, I’m getting some much needed exercise and I’m finding out a lot about Walthamstow that I had no idea about. I have lived here for more than 30 years but, because I worked in central London and was raising a family, I never really had time to enjoy where I lived.

I can wholly recommend the walks. I feel healthier; when I first started I could barely keep up with the other walkers, my breathing was poor and I felt tired in mere minutes. Now I can walk for the whole hour and really enjoy chatting and sharing thoughts with the diverse group of people I’ve met since joining group.

I do the Walthamstow village and the Wood Street walks but there are many others taking place in the borough.

Details of walks are advertised in this newsletter. Try also [Waltham Forest’s walks page](#)

THE PARENT: HELENA VARGA

‘It’s painful, embarrassing and frustrating’

I don’t enjoy family occasions any more - not since our youngest son, Marcus, was overwhelmed by depression and fell out with his three siblings. It caught all of us by surprise because initially we didn’t recognise what was happening: we struggled to divine what was upsetting him - before the penny dropped and we realised it was the state of his own life that he was reacting against.

So we can’t relax if he joins us all for Christmas lunch, say: we know that one wrong word will spark an angry outburst and probably a dramatic walkout which will leave us feeling deflated, guilty and unlikely to rekindle any seasonal goodwill.

What sparked it was a fallout with his only sister, the one he is closest to in age. As children they forged a special relationship and often seemed inseparable. After university, they lived in different cities, but that was not the only distance between them. Mary got married at 27 and pursued a successful career in telecoms. Marcus was unlucky in love and he struggled to fulfil his potential at work - his aim was to be a high-flying barrister but success proved elusive.

When Mary got a big promotion, he took it personally and cut her and her husband out of his life and slagged them off to the rest of us. Painful. Embarrassing. And frustrating because it was almost impossible to refute his arguments without him taking real offence.

What frustrates me is that Marcus turns up to family funerals and weddings, giving the impression that everything is OK. What sadden me is that when we, his parents die, our funerals will be the last time he sees his sister and brothers.



A GP'S BLOG

Obesity: the hidden pandemic

Poor diet and lifestyle choices are damaging too many people, writes **Dr Seamus Cooney**



The World Health Organisation lists clean water as the primary contribution to improving human health and vaccinations as the second. The NHS offers many jabs but uptake has been disappointing.

Some parents believe there are unproven risks to their children. Many older adults have not taken up the shingles vaccine. These decisions have consequences on the health services, producing extra, preventable demands.

When refined sugar was added to the national diet 300 years ago, people did not realise the dangers. Humans have not been able to evolve to cope, so now we have a diabetes pandemic equal if not greater than Covid-19. I call it a pandemic because when 68% of the adult population is overweight and 26% is obese, it is not going away.

And we won't find a vaccine; it is an economic and political issue. Food suppliers continue to supply products laced with sugar - but they are trading legally. The only immediate protection we have is lifestyle choice. Don't buy the 90% of products available to us which contain refined sugar. Easily said. We generally know which substances are bad for us. Poor choices contribute to poor health.

Statins are good for over-40s

We have had serious developments in medical care over the last century. We have weapons which help preserve our bodies to function longer. Dentists have shown that regular tooth brushing and modern toothpastes help prevent the build up of plaque, toothache and loss of teeth.

But plaque in your arteries is not being addressed. We know that statins slow such

build up - and can reverse it. This will delay the onset of angina, heart attacks, strokes and lower limb circulation problems.

All it takes is one medication every night for life. Lifestyle choices also help: healthy eating, avoiding or giving up smoking, good diet and regular exercise to help control high blood pressure.

If you are going to have a heart attack or stroke, why not put it off for a few more years by taking a statin daily if you are over 40.

Beware cotton buds

We all produce ear wax. The growth of skin from inside the ear canal to the outside produces a natural conveyor belt which carries the wax out. Social norms do not accept such embarrassment so many people use cotton buds.

Unfortunately, people often push the wax back in off the conveyor belt where it gets trapped and eventually blocks hearing. You can use your little finger wrapped in tissue paper to remove the wax at the outward extremity to avoid any embarrassment. You can use ear drops to soften the wax. But do not let cotton buds near your ears.

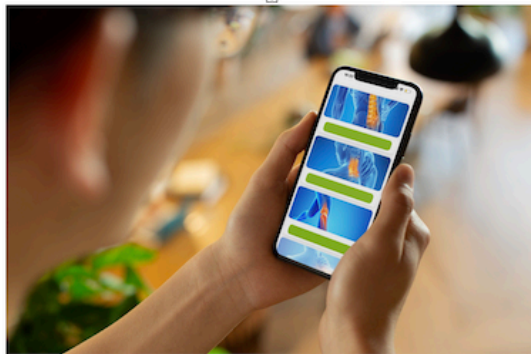
However, there is a place for medical intervention. The wax can be extracted by various means but the NHS offers little and advises people to visit private irrigation/extraction agencies. There are inexpensive products available (online) to attach to your smartphone to extract the wax under your own supervision. But take great care.

Mask your germs

I have had to endure many viral illnesses from patient contact over the last 35 years. GPs tend to build up an immunity and resistance which meant that I rarely suffered with significant respiratory illness, cannot recall having fever for more than a day and did not miss work.

This changed with Covid-19. Despite vaccinations, I have had a couple of episodes of debilitating flu-like illnesses confirmed as Covid that I never experienced before as a GP. I don't have the answer but it makes sense not to share viral illnesses with the people who provide your healthcare.

Need help with muscle or joint problems?



Here's a free app to help you

Full of tips, advice and exercises to relieve aches and strains all over your body

Legs, neck, back, shoulders, elbows, ankles, knees and hips



A fully-NHS-backed app to help patients find relief from musculoskeletal problems. Ask at reception in your surgery



Walthamstow Village Walk

TAKE THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS BETTER HEALTH, WELLBEING AND HAPPINESS

FREE every Wednesday

2-3pm

WALTHAM FOREST COMMUNITY HUB
18a Orford Road, E17 9LN



CHANGE GROW LIVE WALTHAM FOREST

1 Beulah Road, Walthamstow, E17 9LG

We offer drug and alcohol support services for adults and young people (11-25 yrs). We also offer outreach for rough sleeping clients.

Change Grow Live Waltham Forest offer a wide range of drug and alcohol interventions for our clients. These include OST (Opiate Substitute Prescribing), 1-2-1 support, groupwork, harm minimisation (BBV screening, Hep C clinic, needle exchange, Naloxone), aftercare support, referral to inpatient detox and residential rehab.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

We work closely with primary care and local partners such as IAPT, Smoking Cessation, Hep C Trust, Barts Health (Hep C clinic), Waltham Forest Sexual Health (monthly clinic)

HOW WE CAN WORK WITH PRIMARY CARE

Provide direct referral for patients via EMIS (direct referral form on EMIS) to support with drug and/or alcohol misuse. We also offer bespoke training for practitioners.

Examples of bespoke training includes:

ADULT SERVICES:

Substance use awareness.
Early brief interventions

HARM MINIMISATION

Overdose awareness and Naloxone training

YOUNG PEOPLES SERVICES

Young people and substances
Hidden harm and family work

Believe in people

PLEASE EMAIL CGL.WALTHAMFOREST@CGL.ORG.UK FOR ENQUIRIES



WALTHAM FOREST ADULT LEARNING SERVICE

Wellbeing Yoga

Unlock Your Potential: Join Our FREE Wellbeing sessions

Are you ready to prioritize your wellbeing?

Take the first step towards a happier, healthier you by joining our transformative FREE wellbeing workshops.

Gain valuable insights, practical tools, and expert guidance to cultivate resilience, reduce stress, and foster overall wellbeing. Don't wait any longer.

Place: Adult Learning Service, 97 Queens Road, E17 8QR

Date: Monday 2 September – 7 October (6 weeks)

Time: 7.30pm – 8.30pm

To enrol contact: teng.cheung@walthamforest.gov.uk
roisin.reilly3@nhs.net

Or come along to the first sessions and enrol on the day



Betting's billions vs local councils: it's not a fair fight

Gambling is a predatory industry. If you try to disengage, they'll chase you, by putting free bets in your bank account on payday or sending you push notifications as you walk past a betting shop.

If you think about gambling as you do alcohol, something marketed on the TV, widely accepted, that makes it even more difficult if you become addicted. Why are you struggling with something that is presented as normal?

Research shows that up to 10 people are affected by one person's harmful gambling: spouses, parents or children. We talk about legacy harms: children who have to go without because of their parent's gambling. Evidence shows that 20% of those we call "affected others" are harmed to the same degree as the gambler.

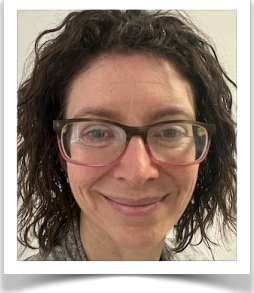
Lots of people I treat have very fond memories of gambling. They remember going with their dad to Walthamstow dogs when he had a big win. They felt like a grown up, sharing dad's excitement. It is important that I don't make them feel shame about their own gambling.

There's a lot of advertising putting emphasis on the individual stopping themselves gambling. If the message is on the individual changing their behaviours, it can lead to increased shame.

I first got interested in betting addiction when my husband's friend was struggling with it. I volunteered to drive him to Gambler's Anonymous in Loughton. Should I wait outside in the freezing car or go in for a cup of tea with Gam-Anon, the organisation that supports those in the grip of betting? Not a difficult decision. I met mainly the parents but I found a real support network there.

The gambling industry pays for most of the research into the problems it causes. Inevitably, that affects what is studied, what questions are asked and who carries out the research. I started my PhD after working as a GP in London. I met

ON THE JOB
Dr Jenny Blythe
weighs the odds as
she tries to limit the
damage gambling
deals to patients



May Van Schalwyck, a public health doctor and PhD researcher, examining national policy on the harm gambling does, so I focused on what was happening in local government.

Local council's most influential role is approving premises licences, so it should be able to control the number of betting shops locally. But it's not a fair fight with a rich industry. The way the national legislation is designed means it is difficult to stop new places opening. You have to show the new shop will cause damage. How can you until it has actually opened? Decisions are very difficult to challenge. Should it go the council's way, the gambling firms simply take it to appeal.

A lot of the original treatments for addiction were based on the model of people with substance issues. The language used, such as "problem gamblers", means you're locating the problem with the person, not with the product.

Evidence suggests that one person with gambling problems commits suicide every day. A chilling statistic. The Gambling Act was put under review in December 2020. When the white paper was published three years later, it concluded that we need more evidence. It makes me very angry when you think about the human cost of delaying change. Many would argue there is adequate evidence of harm from "lived experience".

Gambling is not classified as a health issue, but as leisure, so it comes under the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Until gambling harms



From gargling to gambling: the Bakers Arms in Leyton used to be a pub; today the area has many betting shops

Is online really devouring betting shops?

Politicians concentrate on tackling online gambling, arguing that betting shops are closing. Any problems with the shops and other land-based gambling – bingo venues, arcades and tracks – have been effectively “solved”, they argue, after the stakes in electronic gaming machines, hugely addictive, have been reduced.

No evaluations have been carried out to confirm this, so in my PhD research over the past four years I have surveyed every six months all the London boroughs, including Waltham Forest, where I live and work.

Overall in London, my research shows that

Jenny Blythe explains her research

there are fewer gambling premises, but they are concentrated in areas of deprivation. This is worrying. But in our borough the number of premises has in fact increased. The number of betting shops has gone up, while the number of arcades has decreased by one.

We have had no new bingo premises either, unlike neighbouring boroughs such as Haringey or Islington. As the populations are quite similar, one might ask what is going on here at local government level.

are even conceptualised as a health issue we are on the back foot. GPs have not been trained in gambling harms so may not know the tactics the industry uses or which non-industry resources to direct patients towards.

There's a whole new academic

discipline within public health called the commercial determinants for health: Big Pharma, Big Food, Big Fizzy Drink, Big Sugar. All these products can harm people, but they are marketed legally. Lots of measures, such as raising awareness campaigns, are merely

tinkering around the edges because rules about advertising and availability don't change.

If I saw somebody struggling with betting, I would recommend they go to Gamblers Anonymous. People worry about its religious overtones, the 12-step recovery programme, because it was an offshoot of Alcoholics Anonymous. But I've never found it overly religious. And I like the fact that it is completely free of industry influence.

Interview: Neil Levis



Truth or distortion: you decide

GP shortages: to meet OECD averages per 10,000 patients, the UK needs an extra 16,700 doctors in surgeries nationwide. General practice provides 90% of all healthcare nationwide but receives only 8.4% of the overall funding, while its workload has increased by 20%. Surgeries get just 30p per patient on average – the price of an apple, as one GP representative put it.

Appointments: 67% of GP appointments are face to face;

NHS STATISTICS

These figures have been compiled over the past 18 months. They challenge mainstream media narrative. Food for thought, writes **Neil Levis**

40% of them are conducted on the day they are requested.

Life expectancy: in 1945, the UK was ranked in the top six countries in the world; in 2015 it had slipped to 21st; today it has fallen to 29th in the international rankings.

Cost of seeing patients: A visit to a surgery £38. Visit to

A&E in hospital averages out at £200. Ambulance call-out works out at £400.

Cancer survival: There are more cases today than in the early post-war years and numbers continue to rise, but mortality rates continue to fall. Fifty years ago, only a quarter of patients survived 10 years, but today, 50 per cent last out

**Hubs**
Mobility Service

Going Car Free

Local, national and international accessible travel advice



Do you need alternatives to driving a car?

Looking to travel by public transport using a wheelchair or other mobility aid?

Are you unsure about your travel options with a physical or hidden disability?

Finding social venues for older people to reduce isolation?

Discover the answers and many more travel solutions with the Hubs Mobility Service – your local centre details overleaf.



Scan to find all Hubs centres nationwide or tel: 0800 559 3636

Operated by:



Driving Mobility

Supported by:



Department for Transport

Working with:



ShopMobility UK

COMMUNITY DROP-IN

Our early help community drop-in is here

It's a place where everyone can come to get friendly support and information from local volunteers, community organisations and Waltham Forest Early Help teams in an informal space.

We can help you with information about **local services**, **support for parents**, **community activities**, and **help to use online services** and more.

WALTHAM FOREST FAMILY HUBS
WELLBEING, CONNECTION, SUPPORT

DROP IN FROM 9.45-11.15AM
FREE DROP IN SESSION, NO NEED TO BOOK

TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
QUEENS ROAD FAMILY HUB 215 QUEENS ROAD E17 8PJ	CHINGFORD FAMILY HUB 5 OAKS GROVE E4 6EY
THURSDAY	FRIDAY
WALTHAMSTOW LIBRARY HIGH STREET E17 7JN	LEYTONSTONE FAMILY HUB 2-8 CATHALL RD E11 4LF

CAN YOU HELP?
You can find out how to volunteer here:



Waltham Forest

a decade. But our survival rates compare badly with similar countries: for colon cancer, we came last out of seven comparable countries; for stomach and lung cancer, 28th out of 33, and for pancreatic cancer, 26th out of 33. Last year, only two-thirds of patients diagnosed patients were starting treatment within the target 62 days.

Child mortality: In 1800, one in three babies born in Britain would die before the age of five; by 1930 that figure was still as high at one in ten. Between 1945 and 1950 – the NHS started in

1948 – the numbers dropped by 32%.

Workload: GPs in England conduct 300 million consultations a year. Hospital A&Es are overwhelmed but deal with 23 million patients annually, less than 1/12 of GP contacts.

Too many managers: Of the NHS workforce of 1,200,000, only 2% are managers; this compares with 9.5% of the workforce in most industries.

Salaries: nurses in 2023 were paid 10% less in real terms than in 2010. With

110,000 unfilled vacancies, the question is: would the NHS be more efficient if it were fully staffed?

Hospital waiting lists: In 2010, they were at their lowest since 1948, when the NHS started. By 2024, after the Covid pandemic, they were, at 7 million, the highest since 1948.

Covid: The government estimate of Covid fraud, a finding reached before the 2024 election, is £5bn. Will any of it be recovered?

Source: The Guardian; The Only Way Is Up by Polly Toynbee and David Walker, Atlantic Books



The
**Walthamstow
WELCOME**

Join us for:
**KNITTING
SEWING
CROCHET
COLLAGE
& MORE...**

info:
thewalthamstowwelcome@gmail.com

Walthamstow Library
High Street, E17 7JN

EVERY THURSDAY
10-12.30



**WOOD STREET
THURSDAY
WALK!**

STARTS 16TH MAY

UP TO 40 MINS WALK, EASY PACE
NO NEED TO BOOK – JUST TURN UP HERE!

**MEET AT WOOD
STREET STATION
11AM EVERY
THURSDAY**

BENEFITS OF WALKING:

1. Burn Calories!
2. Strengthen the Heart: reduce your risk of coronary heart disease
3. Blood Sugar Control: Can help lower blood sugar levels.
4. Joint Health: Walking helps protect your joints, including knees and hips.
5. Mood Enhancement: It can help reduce anxiety, depression, and negative mood.

For more information, contact:
sue.kofi@nhs.net
roisin.reilly3@nhs.net

WALTHAMSTOW CENTRAL PCN & FEEL GOOD WALKS



HERE TO HELP

We offer a range of support to help you at this challenging time.

Discretionary Housing Payment

A scheme that can offer additional support with rent payments for residents receiving Housing Benefit or getting help with housing costs through Universal Credit.

Discretionary Council Tax Hardship Scheme

For those experiencing financial difficulty beyond their control. This financial support can be awarded in addition to Council Tax Support and also help residents in temporary financial crisis who are not receiving Council Tax Support. Find out more and apply online.

Council Tax Support

This financial support helps individuals and families on low incomes to pay their Council Tax bill by reducing the amount they have to pay. Applicants of working age can get a reduction worth up to 85% of their bill and those of pension age up to 100% of their bill depending on their circumstances.

Local Welfare Assistance

Help for you or your family if you are in severe financial hardship and cannot afford basic essentials

Wider cost of living support

We are supporting our residents with the cost of living crisis, including financial aid, warm spaces and meal vouchers.

Waltham Forest

www.walthamforest.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport



Beezee

ADULTS

**Say goodbye to yo-yo dieting,
and hello to healthy habits**

Sign up for Beezee Adults today and find **FREE** weight loss support that's right for you.

- Join us for 12 weeks of in-person group sessions
- Log in for 10 online group sessions, with 2 check-in calls
- Enrol into our Academy and learn at your own pace for 6 months

Eligibility criteria apply, please see our website for details.

Scan the QR code to sign up today



wif.maximusuk.co.uk

@ hellowalthamforest@maximusuk.co.uk

03308 186 308



Waltham Forest

1660-72