

# network



for mental health

Issue 5 – Spring/Summer 2012  
www.nsun.org.uk

# together we are stronger

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**N**SUN is helping mental health service users have a greater say in the care they receive.

From April 2013 the government's NHS reforms will mean that local doctors and councils will have more responsibility for organising, or commissioning care. In this new system it is vital that people with experience of mental health distress have a greater say in that commissioning to empower them and ensure value for money.

In Hackney, NSUN is already working with the council and NHS joint

commissioner Stephen Hardisty to put together a network of service users to guide, and ultimately lead, the commissioning of mental health care in the area.

A diverse group of service users are finding confidence and new skills through being given the means to shape provision. Their ideas are being taken forward to ensure that what is provided is actually what the people on the receiving end want.

Mr Hardisty describes NSUN as the 'go to organisation' for service user led commissioning and has asked the charity to continue

supporting the network over the coming year. Recently the Guardian newspaper website ran an article on the scheme that could be adopted all over the country.

Hackney service user Melody Dahlin said: 'Apart from helping to create better services being involved in this project has been great for my confidence and recovery.'

We are writing to all of the doctors and councillors who will take charge of health and social care commissioning offering to help them make the best of their local mental health service users'



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NSUN network for mental health is an independent service user led charity that connects people with experience of mental health issues to give us a stronger voice in shaping policy and services.

## Welcome



Welcome to the new look Network magazine – we hope you like it but please let

us know what you would like covered in future editions.

NSUN network for mental health is first and foremost a members' organisation and we have taken the responses to our last survey of what you want from us seriously.

As a result, and thanks to the generous support of our donors, we have recruited new staff to deliver better communications and more campaigning on the issues that matter to you.

In order to make further progress we need more people to join us and have set ourselves a target of getting five new members to join every working day. You can do your bit to help us get our five-a-day by giving service users you know the leaflets contained in the magazine or pinning them up on the notice boards of your

GP surgery, mental health trust or anywhere you think people might be interested. If you need more please contact the NSUN office.

Between now and next Spring, when the NHS and social care changes come into force, NSUN will be working hard to ensure that mental health service users are listened to properly – we can do that more effectively if there are even more of us because together we are stronger.

If you would like to contribute to future editions please contact me on details below.

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# AGM report



**‘Our first AGM and members’ day can be viewed in many ways as an important milestone in the journey that NSUN has taken’**

Kathleen Lovell, Board of trustees

Our first ever AGM (annual general meeting) has been hailed as a great success with more than 100 people taking part.

Delegates from Newcastle and Manchester in the north down to Brighton, Portsmouth and Bognor Regis on the south coast, gathered recently in Birmingham.

Newly elected chair of the board of trustees Kathleen Lovell said that our first AGM and members’ day can be viewed in many ways as an important milestone in the journey that NSUN has taken.

‘Members, staff and trustees often face obstacles made more complicated by a very difficult economic climate, but we are stronger for being together and that support was at its most

visible when we gathered in Birmingham.

‘We can often be put off by the enormous mountain we have to climb, but let’s not forget to take time to stop and look back to reflect and be proud of how far we have come,’ Kath said.

Delegates discussed a variety of NSUN projects, heard that membership has doubled in the last year and were entertained by music from Refuge and Synergy Creative Community, who are featured on page 7. You can read a full report of the day at [www.nsun.org.uk](http://www.nsun.org.uk)

**NSUN is planning its next AGM for November 2012 – we would love you to join us so get in touch if you want to come.**

# National round up



**'It was useful to be able to tell government officials and the minister directly of our ideas.'** Marian O'Brien, volunteer

## Government's mental health strategy

NSUN has been busy working to try and get the government's mental health strategy - No Health Without Mental Health - delivering improvements for our members and the wider community.

We are part of the group of charities trying to turn the government's promises to make mental health as important as physical health and improve the prevention and treatment of mental ill health into reality.

Recently NSUN representatives attended the government's summit on creating a plan to deliver the

aims of the plan. Volunteer Marian O'Brien attended and produced a briefing document which is available on our website along with a guide to the strategy and the progress and setbacks towards its goals since being launched in February 2011.

The Guardian website also published an article from NSUN on how rising unemployment, increased homelessness, the removal of wellbeing and community cohesion from school curriculums and other setbacks were damaging the goals of the strategy.

This is also available on our website and the Guardian's – search 'NSUN' on the latter.

[the guardian](http://www.theguardian.com)



## NSUN election manifesto

We are not fielding our own candidates just yet but NSUN has produced a manifesto for the London elections. NSUN has written to all of mayoral candidates, London Assembly Members, MPs and senior councillors with responsibility for health in the capital's boroughs to endorse our policy ideas to improve mental health.

Our Manifesto pledges:

- Mental health to be a public health priority.
- Metropolitan police officers to receive training into identifying and treating people with mental health conditions appropriately.
- Commissioners of health and social care services to actively involve the mental health community in the design and delivery of those services.
- Local public transport costs to be subsidised for mental health service users on low income.
- The London Assembly should seek to ensure that poverty is not increased through Work Capability Assessments and Employment Support Allowance.

These pledges can form the basis for manifesto commitments for elections elsewhere in the country and for the UK parliament.



## Minority service users still left out

Mental health service users from ethnic minorities are still not being involved enough in service provision, research commissioned by NSUN has found.

Research consultant Jayasree Kalathil recently reviewed her 2008 Dancing To Our Own Tunes (DTOOT) report on the involvement of service users and survivors from BME (black and minority ethnic) backgrounds in mental health user involvement initiatives.

The original report, also written by Jayasree, explored the barriers that exclude BME service users and survivors from involvement, both within the service user movement and in user involvement structures and systems in external organisations such as NHS trusts, local authorities and social care services.

Now NSUN is leading new efforts to get more ethnic minority involvement and urging providers to sign up to the BME service user involvement Charter which sets out how best to achieve this.

The report and charter are available on our website.

## More say for forensic service users

There is a serious 'lack of clarity' about who is responsible for service user involvement within forensic units, a new report backed by NSUN says.

Joyce Kallevik, NSUN trustee and director of Wish (previously Women In Secure Hospitals), has reviewed service user involvement in forensic mental health settings and said: 'Leadership at senior level is essential for people to have a real say in the policies of the hospital.'

Problems identified include a lack of consistency in defining user involvement, how user involvement systems worked and how (and if) feedback was given. With the aim of encouraging best practice NSUN is working to get forensic providers lined up to our service user involvement standards.



## The new NHS

Controversial government reforms will radically change the NHS opening it up to competition from the private sector. From April 2013 Primary Care Trusts, which currently organise local NHS care, will be scrapped and replaced by Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) made up of local medical professionals, patient representatives and others.

At the same time councils will take charge of local public health, aimed at preventing ill health, and host a Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) of councillors, officials and local NHS leaders to join up health and social care and choose priorities. These new bodies should listen to local service users and NSUN has useful briefings on the website on how to get involved.



Senior Members of Parliament have joined us as 'allies' and have promised to help campaign with us on the issues that matter to you.

Shadow business secretary Chuka Umunna, former shadow health secretary John Healey and health select committee member Virendra Sharma have all joined NSUN as 'ally' members.

Mr Umunna MP said: 'For a long time I have been concerned at the levels

**'..it is great to be able to team up with NSUN to give a greater voice to service users and survivors.'** Chuka Umunna

of mental distress in my constituency and beyond which are particularly high among black and other minority ethnic groups. Since being elected I have not been able to focus enough on this so it is great to be able to team up with NSUN to give a greater voice to service users and survivors.

'It's clear that NSUN is doing some really valuable and innovative work in supporting people with experience of mental distress and enabling them to have a greater say in policy and services.'

Let us know if you want us to try and sign up your MP.

## Members reject NHS change

An overwhelming majority of NSUN members who responded to an online poll have backed the charity in its call for the Health and Social Care Bill to be scrapped.

More than 90% of NSUN members who took part said they did not want the legislation that will open up the NHS to competition from the private sector.

As a result we sent the following to national newspapers: 'Already mental health service users have lost out because some private health providers have refused to accept NHS patients with any sort of psychological condition who need treatment for physical ailments.

'Recent London School of Economics research has proved that private hospitals "cherry-pick" younger, fitter and less complex patients leaving the NHS with reduced resources to treat the oldest, frailest and those with potentially complicating factors such as a mental health condition.

'The evidence is clear – mental health service users and the wider community will be ill served by a top-down reorganisation that gives far more power to the private sector potentially undermining public provision. We call on politicians of all parties to listen to the vast majority of medical professionals and patients who want this market driven top-down reorganisation of care scrapped.'

## Join us on facebook and twitter and watch out for our new website

If you use social media you can now find NSUN on facebook and twitter. We are also working on a new website homepage that will provide daily news on issues that affect our members from politics and announcements to updates from local service user led groups and the latest on NSUN's work. You will find us here:

w: [www.nsun.org.uk](http://www.nsun.org.uk)

🐦: @NSUN news

📘: NSUN



# Regional round up



## North West

Stockport User Friendly Forum (STUFF) has won a council 'Proud of Stockport Volunteering Champions' award for their mental health course.

The group's volunteering and mental health programme is run over 10 weeks and is aimed at people who are thinking of volunteering, but unsure if they have the skills or the confidence to proceed.

Margaret Hall, from STUFF, told Network: 'The course will improve people's confidence and assertiveness as well as looking at many aspects of mental health and recovery to enable them to decide whether volunteering is the way forwards.'

To sign up for or get involved:  
e: [stockport\\_uff@hotmail.com](mailto:stockport_uff@hotmail.com)

## South West

Speak Up Somerset needs pictures created by service users for their 'positive steps' diary featuring a different piece of original artwork every week.

The Art of Recovery is a project to enable people with mental health issues to recover their place in the world. Simon Heyes, from the group, told Network: 'This project looks at ways of creatively overcoming mental health problems. It also provides a platform to showcase the creative talents of people affected by mental distress.'

Speak Up Somerset is a non-profit organisation run by people directly affected by mental distress providing support to each, run training courses, promote recovery and campaign on mental health issues.

Email pictures to:  
e: [info@artofrecovery.com](mailto:info@artofrecovery.com) or  
w: website [www.artofrecovery.com](http://www.artofrecovery.com)



## West Midlands

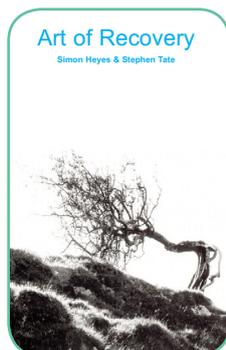
Birmingham's Mashriq Challenge Resource Centre (MCRC) is going from strength to strength with mental health service users helping themselves and each other.

Now in its eighth year of providing care and training for Asian and other ethnic minority women with mental health conditions MCRC is a service user led no-profit organisation formed in response to a chronic shortage of emotional well-being and care for people from this group.

Current activities include: music therapy, laughter and talking therapy, art and craft, computing, ESOL, and Zumba.

Salma Lokat from MCRC told Network said: 'We are aware that amongst the Asian communities there are many stereotypical issues that needs to be dealt with and therefore our organisation focuses on helping our service users to become confident individuals by providing them education about the symptoms they may experience, up to date information on other agencies that can aid them in their wellbeing and also enhancing their personal development.'

For more info or to get involved:  
t: 0121 551 5478  
e: [mcrc21@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:mcrc21@hotmail.co.uk)





## Yorkshire and the Humber

A service user led community interest company in Yorkshire and the Humber is delivering a programme to equip managers to deal sensitively with mental health issues in the workplace. Business Boosters Network (BBN) puts services users and front line staff together to learn the best approaches and help break down barriers to work.

BBN director Stephanie de la Haye told Network: 'The results of this were very positive and line managers reported an increase of awareness in mental health and in some cases a reduced sickness rate. Mental health policy development within the organisations was also highlighted and again this in many cases improved.'

The line managers training and front line staff training is now a core training programme for BBN and can be either delivered as a standard package or a more adapted programme tailored to the organisation's needs.

*For more information:*  
t: 0114 2421700  
w: [www.bbn.uk.com](http://www.bbn.uk.com)

## East of England

Cambridge user led mental health organisation Lifecraft has launched a ground-breaking project to tackle self-stigma.

The aim of 'Shame No More' is to increase awareness of, as well as reduce the number of people suffering from, self-stigma. Self-stigma is the prejudice which people with a mental health diagnosis turn against themselves, resulting in feelings of shame, lack of self-worth and low self-esteem. Through peer support and inspirational peer leadership Shame No More will help individuals overcome debilitating self-stigma, enabling them to accept and celebrate themselves, recover at a faster rate and achieve their life goals.

*To get involved see their website*  
[www.shamenomore.org.uk](http://www.shamenomore.org.uk)



## South East Region

NSUN's South East Champion programme is thriving with one member winning a Volunteer of the Year award from his local NHS Trust.

Gillingham based Colin Mitchell has been recognised by the Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust, where he is a governor, for his hard work over 2010-11.

The 13-strong South East Champions group have been working on projects ranging from a service user involvement programme with South London and the Maudsley to awareness raising around mental health in Bognor Regis.

South East Champion's co-ordinator Saira Walker is always keen to hear from service users and survivors in the region who want to get involved.

e: [saira.walker@nsun.org.uk](mailto:saira.walker@nsun.org.uk)

## Brighton

Peer support is helping recovery for members of one Brighton-based group, Synergy Creative Community.

Synergy runs weekly workshops incorporating collaborative activities including music, art and drama to create a community network of support, recovery and creative exchange.

A community kitchen runs alongside the workshops, where a trained nutritionist leads volunteers in preparing and sharing healthy food, as well as giving talks and advice on the links between nutrition and well being.

The group is run by community members and individuals with previous experience of, or interest in mental health, and aims to empower people in their own recovery and well being.

The service also offers in-house music workshops to existing, formal services, thus creating a link between the traditional mental health service and the wider community.

w: [synergycreative.org.uk](http://synergycreative.org.uk)  
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t: 07785 328765

# Thanks to your support we can be here for you



Our future looks secure, at least for the next two years, as our major funders have given their financial backing to NSUN.

The charity relies on the generosity of Comic Relief and the Tudor Trust to fund our core staff, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for communications activity and Trust for London for regional networking. All four have shown their faith in NSUN's ability to deliver for service users and survivors.

The independent evaluation of NSUN (commissioned by Comic Relief) supported the applications for further funding with statements such as, 'the need that NSUN was created to address has not gone away; and in fact the environment has become more challenging since then. NSUN has made progress, but more needs to be done.'



**'It's a great relief that our supporters have recognised that we are doing a valuable job for our members and the wider community and that we are worth funding for the future. We are very grateful for their support and that given by our staff, trustees, champions and members. Thank you.'**

NSUN manager, Sarah Yiannoullou:

## care to join us?

Membership is free and confidential

Please send to:  
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e: [info@nsun.org.uk](mailto:info@nsun.org.uk)  
[www.nsun.org.uk](http://www.nsun.org.uk)

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Address:	Postcode:
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Area of interest (eg Bi-polar):	
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