

C.A.U.S.E. for Mental Health newsletter

Spring 2006 Edition



C.A.U.S.E. for Mental Health provide peer-led emotional and practical support to carers and families of people with mental illness.

C.A.U.S.E. Welcomes New Carers' Strategy

A new strategy aimed at improving support for local carers was published at the start of 2006. The Strategy 'Caring for Carers: Recognising, Valuing and Supporting the Caring Role' has been developed around six key areas of concern, including the identification of those acting in a caring role, information for carers, support services, the special needs of young carers, training and employment.

Marie Crossin, **C.A.U.S.E.** Chief Executive, welcomed the Strategy commenting:

"I would echo the sentiments of the Health Minister, Shaun Woodward, when he states that recognition and support are key to caring for carers.

The Strategy sets out a vision of how carers should be provided with the practical support they need to allow them to continue caring and to access the same opportunities as other members of the population.

Whilst we agree with the proposals contained in the Strategy, we are however concerned that the urgent need for Carers' Assessments, detailed in the Government's 'Valuing Carers' report of 2002, continues to be an issue.

We hope that, amongst the other positive outputs the Strategy will deliver, it will impress on local health trusts the importance of carrying out Carers' Assessments, which benefit both carers and those they care for".



A full copy of the Report is available from **C.A.U.S.E.** Head Office on 028 9023 8284, or www.dhsspsni.gov.uk.

Tribute To Professor David Bamford

C.A.U.S.E. has paid tribute to Professor David Bamford, Chair of the NI Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability, and NI Association for Mental Health, who died recently. Marie Crossin, **C.A.U.S.E.** Chief Executive, commented: "Professor Bamford's dedication and expertise in the field of mental health will be missed, both in Northern Ireland and other parts of the world.

Professor Bamford's conception of the NI Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability – often referred to simply as 'the Bamford Review' – was one of inclusion and communication and it is sad that he is no longer with us, just as the Review's findings and recommendations are published.

The Board and staff at **C.A.U.S.E.** would like to pass on our heartfelt sympathy to Professor Bamford's family and colleagues, and remember the contribution he made during his life".

Meet the Staff



Deirdre Kearney was appointed as the **C.A.U.S.E.** Office & Finance Manager in November 2005. Deirdre, a native of County Sligo, joins the **C.A.U.S.E.** team from the

University of Ulster, where she previously worked at both their Magee and Jordanstown campuses.



Nicola Masterson joined the **C.A.U.S.E.** team in December 2005 as Office Administrator. Having previously worked in an estate agency in Belfast city centre for 4 years, Nicola will

assist with all aspects of administration in the **C.A.U.S.E.** Head Office

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Thank You!

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Who cares?

'There is hunger for ordinary bread, and there is hunger for love, for kindness, for thoughtfulness, and this is the great poverty that makes people suffer so much', Mother Teresa

Life has a tendency to throw up surprises. Some are welcomed, others can leave us feeling helpless, bewildered and ambivalent. We can be overwhelmed by the effects of personal tragedy, life events that we never expected or even knew were possible. There are few people who know better about the effects of personal tragedy than someone who has experienced a period of mental ill-health and their carer.

'There is no coming to consciousness without pain', CJ Jung

Relationships are at the heart of recovery and no one recovers without the involvement of others. The journey of recovery therefore becomes a communal one. Friends and family who find themselves involved in someone's recovery have their own journey to travel running parallel to their loved one. A major part of the journey can be rebuilding and redefining relationships. Not only personal ones, but our newly defined relationship with the wider community. For service users it can feel as if we have somehow been judged and now ostracised by our communities. Any sense of understanding, compassion or

acceptance from others seems distant and far removed from our situation.

There is much talk about care in the community but little talk about 'communities that care'. Yet I cannot see how care in the community can be fully effective if communities continue to alienate the so called 'mentally ill' and their family and friends. Talk about 'mental illness' being a genetic and biological disposition can only lead to conclusions that the problem is solely with the person, somehow located only within them, not out there in the environment.

The family lineage is often 'blamed' for the onset of 'illness'. Communities and society at large tend to overlook the environmental variables that cause many people to become psychologically and emotionally distressed. Recovery becomes a pipe dream, rarely if ever possible, as society refuses to acknowledge that mental health is 'everyone's business'. Recovery can only be achievable for many people if we focus our energies on creating communities that care, that are compassionate toward the so called 'mentally ill', that embrace differences and reject a medical response to a human crisis.

**Article by Jim Walsh,
Mental Health Alliance,
Down Lisburn Trust**

L.A.M.P

(Life After Mental health Problems)

In 1998 North & West Belfast Health & Social Services Trust set up user and carer groups to assist in the development of mental health services. The user group evolved into L.A.M.P and is well established in the Trust area. L.A.M.P aims to provide support and advice to users of mental health services. L.A.M.P have an office in Rosemary Street, Belfast which was opened in 2001 and is staffed by volunteers from the group.

L.A.M.P provides information for users / survivors of mental health services. This can be from GP services right through the whole spectrum of mental health and social services. L.A.M.P also provide a listening ear and support for people who are experiencing mental health distress. As well as the input into statutory agencies and training, L.A.M.P also give talks and presentations on a community level, i.e. to schools, groups, youth clubs etc.

L.A.M.P also provide a peer advocacy service. All Peer Advocates have been trained in mental-health peer advocacy. This is the only accredited course of its kind in Europe. Through this training and Advocates' own personal experience, Peer Advocates can offer users / survivors support at a time when they most need it. L.A.M.P can support people in the community or while they are in hospital. L.A.M.P also organise a weekly ward round in the Mater Psychiatric Hospital in Belfast where Advocates can be accessed on the wards.

L.A.M.P can be contacted at 3 Rosemary Street, Belfast on 028 90 242982.

Book Review

**'Who's Hurting Who?
- Young People, self-harm and suicide'
by Helen Spandler ISBN: 1 900782 00 6**

This book documents the results of a study on the needs and experiences of 15 young people who have attempted suicide and/or who self-harm.

The personal accounts told of a wide variety of reasons and personal reactions which had prompted the young people to harm themselves. Some information seemed to be contradictory, e.g. sometimes self harm occurred when the person felt that they had come under too much scrutiny or questioning because of their behaviour, while others harmed themselves because they did not feel that anyone cared enough to listen. For some, self-harm reinforced their feelings of having control over their lives - of personal freedom and individuality - while others became more marginalised.

The book gives many examples of things which the young people found unhelpful to the situation, such as being constantly asked 'why' they self-harmed, or being told they were 'just looking for attention'. Unhelpful too, were well-meaning suggestions from others like 'have a bath in lavender oil', 'take vitamin C instead of overdosing', or 'put tomato sauce on your arms instead of cutting yourself'.

Suggestions that were most useful included being listened to at the right time by the right people, and building trusting relationships which allowed people to examine and explore their self-harm and find ways to take control. Spending time with others who self harmed also proved useful.

The books' ethos strongly emphasises the need to attentively listen and really hear what people in similar situations are wanting to say. Almost every page is interspersed with accounts from the brave young people involved in the study. I'm sure their many comments can provide valuable insights and hope for anyone who is affected by attempted suicide or self-harm although its topic and frankness means that it is not a book for the faint-hearted.

**Rosamund Smyth, C.A.U.S.E. Carer
Advocate, Armagh and Dungannon area.**

Local Carers

'Invest for Health'

With the support of the Southern Investing for Health Partnership's (SIHP) Small Grants Programme, a series of Stress Management sessions took place recently throughout the Southern Health Board area.

Local holistic therapist Mary Donnelly delivered the sessions in Armagh, Dungannon and Lurgan. Each session included Indian head massage, reflexology, and hand massage, and were provided under the supervision of local **C.A.U.S.E.** Carer Advocate, Rosamund Smyth.

PHOTO: Mary Donnelly with one of the carers at the stress management session in Armagh





Mayor Recognises Carer Support In Dungannon Area



PHOTO: Pictured at the Civic Reception are Rosamund Smyth, C.A.U.S.E. Carer Advocate for the area (fourth from left) along with a range of local healthcare professionals.

The Mayor of Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council, Councillor Francie Molloy MLA, recently hosted a reception at the Council Offices to honour the work of C.A.U.S.E.

Special guest speakers included C.A.U.S.E. Patron, Professor Monica McWilliams and the Charity's Chief Executive, Marie Crossin.

Welcoming guests the Mayor paid tribute to C.A.U.S.E. and the work carried out in providing practical and emotional support to people caring for a loved one with a

severe mental illness over the last decade. He paid further tribute to the local C.A.U.S.E. Support Group (who meet on the third Thursday of each month in the Beacon Centre, Dungannon).

Other guests included local carers, C.A.U.S.E. Carer Advocates and members of the medical profession. To mark the occasion the Mayor made presentations of Tyrone Crystal and Council Coat of Arms to Professor McWilliams and C.A.U.S.E.

Dual Diagnosis

Rethink employee Liz Roberts has worked inside the mental health system for many years and has seen for herself how poorly some people with substance misuse are dealt with. Liz talks below about Dual Diagnosis and the complexities of the condition:

“Dual Diagnosis is a term describing the simultaneous presence of two independent medical disorders. The term is most often used to describe the co-existence of a psychotic mental illness and drug, and/or alcohol, addiction.”

Patients who are admitted to psychiatric wards suffering from Dual Diagnosis initially show florid signs of psychosis. The symptoms will normally subside if the staff can keep them free of their drug for at least one week. This has led to a culture within the Health Service that the addiction causes the mental illness and therefore the solution to the problem lies in the area of drugs and alcohol abuse. Rarely a full assessment, including a history of mental illness, is carried out, and seldom is antipsychotic medication prescribed.

However, in typical patients the onset of the mental illness is some five years prior to the addiction problems. The mental illness tends to develop slowly and early symptoms are minor and often not recognised as such. Teenagers with mental health problems are more likely to develop addiction problems as they get older, which may be because of the feelings of isolation and anxiety or may be due to attempts to self medicate: heroin in particular will depress the psychotic symptoms. In reality illegal drug and alcohol usage will lead to deterioration in the patient's mental state. This five year 'window of opportunity' to treat the mental illness and prevent the addiction issue is rarely grasped by the psychiatric system.

A new culture among the medical and drugs agencies needs to be adopted. The word Dual needs to be removed from the vocabulary of mental illness. The diagnosis and treatment of the condition needs to be the full responsibility of the psychiatrist who needs to work closely with the drugs workers and use them at appropriate times during treatment.

Source:
Rethink (www.rethink.org)
'Your Voice' newsletter

Work in Progress

Over the last few months, C.A.U.S.E. staff have been continuing to work hard representing and supporting carers. The following are some of the initiatives which staff have been involved in, or will be involved in, within the near future:

- The innovative project working in partnership with pharmacists in the Armagh and Dungannon area continues to develop. Participating pharmacists are now receiving training through the project, and it is hoped that carers throughout the Armagh & Dungannon area will soon start to benefit directly from the partnership.
- The Carers Reference Group of the NI Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability - chaired by C.A.U.S.E. Chief Executive, Marie Crossin - continues to meet, most recently reviewing the Forensic Services report and Social Inclusion report. The Review's Alcohol and Drug Misuse report has also been released for public comment.
- May McCann, temporary C.A.U.S.E. Carer Advocate for the Sperrin Lakeland area, recently attended a number of conferences in relation to 'carers and equality'. An international equality conference at Queens University Belfast, was followed by a conference featuring user and carer groups from throughout the UK at the Head Office of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in London.

C.A.U.S.E. Bringing Mental Health into the Public Arena

A BBC NI Newsline investigation - 'Out of Sight, Out of Mind' - into local mental health services was broadcast recently and featured, amongst other contributors, Anne Cunningham from C.A.U.S.E. Interviewed by BBC Newsline Reporter Tara Mills, Anne commented on the lack of resources allocated to the psychiatric unit at Belfast City Hospital, and highlighted the prevalence of suicide amongst the 18-25 age group.

Zoe Price - C.A.U.S.E. Carer Advocate for the East Antrim and Antrim & Ballymena areas - also appeared on seasonal local radio station, Carrickfergus FM (107.6).

Funded by the East Antrim and Antrim & Ballymena Local Health & Social Care Groups, Zoe can be contacted c/o C.A.U.S.E. Head Office on 028 9023 8284, or 07738 210628 (Tuesday-Thursday).

PHOTO: Zoe Price and DJ Justin McCartney at the Carrickfergus FM studios





Huge 'Shake Up' In Local Government

The biggest shake up in local government history has been announced by Secretary of State Peter Hain. The current four health boards across Northern Ireland (i.e. the Eastern, Southern, Northern and Western Health and Social Services Boards) will disappear and be replaced by one large regional body under the Department of Health. The new single body will have seven local offices, based on the same boundaries as the proposed new district councils.

Dr Brian Patterson, British Medical Association commented: "The BMA is cautiously optimistic that the proposed future structures could provide the opportunity for the reform the Health Service in Northern Ireland really needs. It is imperative that reforms are implemented in a way that benefits patients, and we are willing to work with the department to achieve this".

Meet the Board

Continuing our profiles of **C.A.U.S.E.** Board members, in this edition we hear from the Board's Treasurer, Geoff Cannon;

"My involvement with **C.A.U.S.E.** started in 2003 after a family member was diagnosed with depression. After learning about **C.A.U.S.E.** from a leaflet in Ards Hospital, my wife and I contacted the local Carer Advocate and met with her on a number of occasions and attended support group meetings. I'm glad to say that my relative is improving, and my wife continues to attend the local support group, meeting others with similar experiences to our own.

Our family has been involved in the area of mental health for many years, most notably when my father-in-law founded the charity, ITO (now Action Mental Health). Having been involved personally on the Boards of a number of organisations over the last decade, latterly with the Ulster Farmer's Union, I therefore decided to put my name

forward for nomination at the **C.A.U.S.E.** AGM and was pleased to be elected. Since then I have enjoyed participating in regular Board meetings, getting to know **C.A.U.S.E.** staff and other Board members, with the aim of helping **C.A.U.S.E.** support local carers and families like my own.

My election as Treasurer means that I am now able to bring some of my experience to the Board who will play a more proactive role in the management of the Charity over the next few years. It's an exciting time to be involved in **C.A.U.S.E.** and one of the aims that I have is to ensure that the Charity's financial software and reporting structures are improved, leading to more efficient and improved procedures.

I would commend the work of **C.A.U.S.E.** to any carers reading this newsletter for the first time, and encourage such carers to get in touch with the Charity"

'Folks on the Hill' Support Good 'C.A.U.S.E.'

Representatives from the local business, healthcare and voluntary sectors were among guests at a recent, sold-out Christmas Business Lunch in the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings, Stormont in aid of **C.A.U.S.E.**

Many of Northern Ireland's most high-profile politicians were also there - 'in spirit' at least - as Sean Crummey aka Johnny Day (from BBC NI's popular 'Folks on the Hill' series) was the after-lunch guest of honour at the event. Viridian, Independent News & Media, Medicare and the Bank of Ireland were a few of the companies who secured tables for the event, with guests including representatives of the US Consulate General, BBC Northern Ireland and the Press Association.

The next major fundraising event in aid of **C.A.U.S.E.** is a Mid-Summer's Formal Ball

in The Grand Ballroom at the Europa Hotel on Saturday 10th June. Tickets and further information on the event are available by telephoning the **C.A.U.S.E.** Head Office on 028 9023 8284.



PHOTO: Sean Neeson MLA, Dr Chris Kelly, and Sean Crummey along with **C.A.U.S.E.** representatives at the event

Thank You!

Over the last few months, the following have been kind enough to donate towards **C.A.U.S.E.'s** work with carers and families:

- The Honourable The Irish Society
- Maureen, Dunmurry
- Southern Investing for Health Partnership
- Armagh/Dungannon Community Development Team
- South & East Belfast Health & Social Care Group
- Tughan Trust
- Ulster Bank Staff Charity Fund
- ESB Electric Aid Ireland
- Maureen Boal Charitable Trust
- St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast (Christmas Sit-Out)

As well as established regular supporters of our work, we appreciate the generosity of these supporters. If you know of a local company, school, individual or group who would be interested in making a donation towards the work of the Charity, please contact Peter at the **C.A.U.S.E.** Office.

And Finally....

The following '12 Steps To Mental Health' were published in a recent edition of the Mental Health Today magazine:

- Keeping physically active
- Eating well
- Drinking in moderation
- Accepting yourself and others
- Caring for yourself and others
- Talking about your feelings
- Keeping in touch with friends and loved ones
- Getting involved and making a contribution
- Taking a break
- Learning new skills
- Doing something creative
- Asking for help

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Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**



As many of the articles in this newsletter are from external sources, the contents of this newsletter are not necessarily the opinions of **C.A.U.S.E.**