

strategies for living

www.mentalhealth.org.uk



ISSUE 18
Spring 2003

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Welcome to the Strategies for Living newsletter, incorporating news on survivor/user-led research, adult mental health and user empowerment.

uk-wide

We are constantly aware that our remit in supporting user-led research is to cover all areas of the UK, not just England. Although we are already supporting a project in Northern Ireland looking at the coping strategies people use to relieve mental distress in a psychiatric hospital setting, we always intended to aid more user-led activity in the Province. We are now planning a joint conference with Down Lisburn Trust in May 2003 on 'User-led Research in Mental Health' and we hope that it will be a day of sharing knowledge and experience in a friendly atmosphere for service users, survivors, and people with experience of emotional distress from across Northern Ireland. See page 5 for updates from projects based in England and Wales.

more strategies

Strategies for Living will be supporting service user research at the Centre for Citizenship & Community Mental Health (CCCMH) at Bradford University. Local service users will be supported to identify priority areas for research to be undertaken by CCCMH and assisted in designing the research proposals, including ascertaining the most useful methodology for the research. The project will also help identify training and support needs among service users wishing to take these proposals forward with CCCMH. Also see page 4 for more on a project related to people with the label of personality disorder who experience difficulties in engaging with mainstream services.

what helps you?

We would love to hear about the things that you feel positively impact your mental and emotional health. If you would like to contribute to the newsletter in the form of an article, poetry, illustration or artwork, or even have a piece about your experiences on our website, please get in touch with us at the Foundation's London office. ■



a new axis of compassion?

Vicky Nicholls reports on the General Synod debate on the draft mental health bill.

On the day after 121 Labour MPs voted against the Government's plans to go to war with Iraq (for the time being), and the day before Dr Rowan Williams was enthroned as the new Archbishop of Canterbury, the General Synod unanimously called for the Government to revise the draft mental health bill

to take account of the many concerns expressed about its current form, and to properly resource any new legislation.

human comfort

In a sometimes impassioned and moving debate, the Synod, the ruling body of the Church of England, heard from members about the crying need of many for human comfort, and the need for a 'corporate ownership' of mental health difficulties in local faith communities. Arthur Hawes, Archdeacon of Lincoln, presenting the excellent report on *Emerging Issues in Mental Health*¹, highlighted some of the problems with the current proposals, which are due to be subject to a scrutiny stage before they reach legislation. These problems include that the

bill no longer contains the principle of the 'least restrictive alternative'; that it is preoccupied with public safety; that it focuses on the individual with no recognition of race, culture, gender or spirituality concerns; and that the proposed abolition of the Mental Health Act Commission will leave us with a body that has no duty of inspection of the conditions in which detained patients are kept.

fear

The most inspiring contribution to the debate came from Reverend Nezlin Sterling, ecumenical representative, speaking from the Black majority churches, who reminded everyone that too many young Black men are still culturally misunderstood, misdiagnosed and mistreated; that so much distress stems from fear, and that during times of distress people are looking for reassurance and understanding not a response of fear from others. The plea to not be afraid of people experiencing distress was echoed by Arthur Hawes and the Bishop of Chelmsford, saying that churches are called to be hospitable, compassionate and open-hearted, and that this involves partnerships with service users and professionals. The Church of England's Division of Mission and

Public Affairs is now working with Mentality and the National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE) to write a training resource for parishes on religion and mental health.

spirituality

The Synod debate reflected some of the concerns of service users and survivors voiced in the Somerset Spirituality Project, which has now produced a brief leaflet² aimed at people experiencing distress. Thanks to a generous donation the Mental Health Foundation will be building on this over the next few months to produce a booklet on spirituality and mental health. The Foundation is also seeking funding for a substantial research programme that will further illuminate what can help people who have a diversity of religious and spiritual beliefs when they are experiencing distress, and seeks to guide future practice in this area. ■

¹Mission and Public Affairs Division (2003) *Emerging Issues in Mental Health*, London: General Synod of the Church of England. Available from the Church House bookshop, 31 Great Smith St, London SW1P 3BN, price £3.

²The leaflet includes contact details which are local to Somerset, but the text is relevant to all. Free copies are available from *Strategies for Living*. Please send an A5 SAE and indicate how many copies you would like (up to 6 copies for 19p stamp).

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Jesus by Kim Campbell of Centrepieces (see opposite page)

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centrepieces

The development and benefits of being involved in a service user led artwork project by Debbie Mayes.

In 1999 a group of us, service users at a mental health day centre in Bexley, Kent, formed an arts project named Centrepieces. Our



Flowergirl by Miranda Davis

aim was to promote positive images of mental health through the quality of the artwork which we produced. We decided to exhibit our art work as a way of letting our local community get to know us as artists and see us as having something of value to offer, rather than judging us for having mental health problems. With a small national lottery grant, we equipped ourselves with art materials and created a workshop area in the back of the day centre. We created a public sculpture, a large billboard poster

and a travelling exhibition. This whole process was so empowering, because at each stage we were making the decisions. We were forming project groups, with different people bringing their individual skills to create an end product. This was giving lots of people more responsibility than they usually had. It was enabling people to feel they had succeeded and had made a difference to the outcome of the project. We have developed different relationships with service providers and other professionals. Instead of being seen solely as recipients of services, we are now seen as having talents, skills and being able to offer services of our own. This has enabled us to grow in confidence and increased our self-esteem.

creativity

Through producing artwork, we can begin the process of re-defining ourselves. We can start to move away from our mental

health labels and think of ourselves in other ways. This may be as straight forward as calling ourselves artists, or as complex as recognising that there are many facets to our personality and our creative side has just as much validity as our 'ill' side and needs to be given just as much room.

flourishing

Centrepieces continues to flourish and grow, with over 50 members taking part in projects, workshops and exhibitions. In July we will be running our second conference on art and mental health, through Pavilion Publishing. We have also launched a picture loan scheme and been commissioned to create a sculpture for the administrative centre of Oxleas NHS Trust. For further information on Centrepieces contact Geoff Norris or Debbie Mayes c/o Crayford Centre – 4-6 London Road, Crayford, Kent DA1 4BH; tel. 01322 521162; email debbie_mayes@hotmail.com. ■



Watching the Chicks by Barbara French



Eye by Debbie Mayes

real life

A Life in the Day is a quarterly journal that covers 'real life' daytime activities for people who use mental health services, and provides an accessible way to keep up to date with latest news and developments in the field. Contributions from new writers are welcome. It has Toby Williamson, Head of Strategies for Living on the editorial board and offers a special discount to service users.

For information, call Pavilion on telephone 0870 161 3505.

writing wrongs

by Jason Pegler

Writing my autobiography on living with manic depression saved my life, and when it started helping others I set up Chipmunk publishing, the mental health survivors publisher.

Through writing about one's experience you can learn to accept and manage your label. Whatever my philosophical beliefs were as to whether madness was a social construct or not, I was tired of hiding the fact that I had a mental illness.

the last taboo

As the mental health movement strives for equality, Chipmunk publishing grows and works in partnership with other like minded charities and organisations. Every time we discover that one of our authors has helped someone we are revitalised in our lifelong

mission to bring down the last taboo of the twenty first century. Chipmunka empowers people with mental health issues by encouraging them to get actively involved in the promotion of their books. We are a stepping stone for people to fulfill their ambitions. We are currently working very closely in a number of areas with the Big Issue.

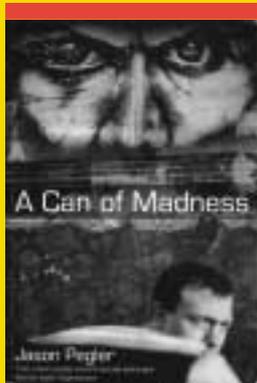
bravery

There are some amazing stories of bravery out there. The more of us who stand up and hold our heads up high, the more powerful we will become as a movement. The more of us who can tell our stories, the more people will empathise with us. Then we can break down the stigma, discrimination and injustice that stand in our way. People become less isolated and

see that they are not on their own when they see that other people have suffered.

read for free

You can read the first chapters of our five publications on our website at www.chipmunkpublishing.com: Jason Pegler's "A Can of Madness"; Dolly Sen's "The World is Full of Laughter"; John Breeding's "The Necessity of Madness"; Sue Holt's "Poems of Survival"; and Suzy Johnston's "The Naked Bird Watcher". ■



If you are interested in publishing your work, either email it to jasonpegler@yahoo.com, or post to Chipmunk publishing, PO Box 6872, Brentwood, Essex, CM13 1ZT. Chipmunka works in partnership with other organisations and charities by allowing them to advertise their services within our publications in return for sponsoring an author. Payments from £500 and upward are accepted so that we can do a print run for an author. All proceeds go back into developing new and existing authors.



finding positives in difficult

Strategies for Living has recently received Department of Health funding to develop ways of supporting people with the label of personality disorder who experience difficulties.

Mainstream primary and mental health services are often not able to assess and provide appropriate support for people with personality disorder due to a range of factors including inadequate resources, staff experience or even stigma. It is often felt that personality disorders are 'untreatable'.

diversity

The good practice guide will be developed with the active involvement of service users, carers and professionals. It will include criteria along with case studies demonstrating good practice to highlight diversity and identify good practice. This will be disseminated to assist service developers, mental health practitioners, service users and carers. Due to funding reasons the project will cover England only and will run for two years, commencing in 2010.

Speak Up Somerset

Speak Up Somerset is a county wide service user and carer organisation. It was founded in 1998 with a Mind Millennium Award. Simon Heyes one of the founders of Speak Up Somerset, who now works for the South West Mental Health Development Centre, describes its main activities.

- Promoting a positive image of mental health. We attempt to take a proactive approach in seeking to change attitudes about mental health. Speak Up Somerset has had stalls in various shows and festivals across Somerset. During the foot and mouth crisis, members had a stall at farmers markets handing out mental health information. Maureen Street, the secretary of Speak Up Somerset, spoke on local commercial radio about mental health issues during a Speak Up Somerset mental health

promotion event in the middle of Yeovil.

- Campaigning work. Speak Up Somerset has taken a positive role in campaigning around mental health issues both locally and nationally. Members have attended lobbies of Parliament over the proposed new Mental Health Act.

support

- Mutual support. Speak Up Somerset members provide a great deal of support to each other. Members all share either the experience of mental distress or care for someone who does. We try to work as equals and



Woman by Verity Edwards

reach out to all service users and carers in Somerset.

- Newsletter. Speak Up Somerset News is a bi-monthly newsletter that goes to all the GP surgeries, libraries, MPs, County Councillors, Citizen Advice Bureaux and mental health services in Somerset. Except for the final printing, members of Speak Up Somerset do all the writing, editing and layout. We do not have any paid workers and try to encourage service users and carers throughout Somerset to be involved.

- Diary. For the last three years we have produced a popular Positive Steps Diary. The diary features artwork by people using mental health services (featured on this and page 6). 5000 diaries were distributed in 2003 and we will be producing another diary for 2004.

momentum

- Keeping up the momentum. Members of Speak Up Somerset have tried to create an organisation in Somerset that acts as a voice for people who use mental health services. We have difficulties in funding and working across a rural county, but we feel we are making progress. We plan to produce another Positive Steps diary and to keep producing our popular newsletter. ■



Booked Barrow
Memories of Tom Vels
Coping with Bereavement



Calm before the Storm by Mel Gutteridge

ult places

up and disseminate a good practice guide on effective difficulties engaging with mainstream services.

ropriate treatment for service users with a label of personality ma. And some services exclude such service users on the basis

and other experts in the field. It will include good practice what works, where and how. The guide will be widely

encing early this summer.

For more details please contact Maureen Street, c/o Mind in Taunton and West Somerset, 32a North Street, Taunton TA1 1LW Tel: 01935 850654 Email: speakupsomerset@talk21.com

guiding lights

Carole Lovett, Guiding Lights Project Worker, gives an update on the Strategies for Living project that is looking at what constitutes good practice in user-centred initiatives.

To start the ball rolling two seminar events were held in December 2002, one in London and a second in Manchester. The aim of these seminars was to gather as much information as possible about people's views and experiences of different examples of good practice in order to try and identify some of the key features. Each event had

between 60 – 70 people attending with presenters and delegates coming from a broad range of service providers, voluntary sector, user organisations and individual experience.

main themes

The themes that evolved during the seminars broadly fell into five categories.

These were:

- Partnership/ collaborative working
- Being valued
- Individuality
- Well being
- Money.

Participants provided many examples of approaches that led or could lead to

good practice, from this a self-evaluation tool is being developed. The aim is for any organisation, service or individual to self-audit how their practice matches up to the elements identified as contributing to good practice.

The tool is to be piloted and will be available through a web site with a tentative start date of April 2003

(log on to www.mentalhealth.org.uk for more information). From feedback from the comments section of the self-evaluation tool and continuing collaboration, a directory/resource base will be developed. ■



artwork by Jane Southgate from Speak Up Somerset (see page 5)

Carole can be contacted at:
Tel: 0161 371 5093
Email: clovett@mhf.org.uk

the TRUE project

Service user researcher Tina Gillingham describes the Training in Research for service Users: Evaluation Project.

The aim of the TRUE project is to find out what training is available for service users of health and social services so they can become more involved with research. Consumers in NHS Research have commissioned us, and the work is being undertaken by CAPITAL: Clients and Professionals In Training And Learning, University of Brighton and Worthing Hospital. We plan to see how many training programmes there

are around England and in what specialist areas. We will also be talking to people who have taken part in these training programmes and the trainers themselves. This is to find out about their experiences, and what they feel are the components of 'good' training. The project has seven mental health service user researchers, a research supporter and three project supervisors.

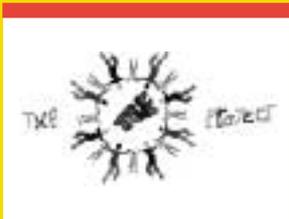
outcome

At the end of the TRUE project, we hope to be able to develop some guidelines for evaluating training courses. Currently we are still interviewing trainers. We

have found this an ongoing task due to the 'snowball' effect of trainers recommending other trainers for us to contact. We completed one case site last year and have five more coming up.

confidence

As service user researchers, we still have a lot of training days and team meetings on a monthly basis. I can only talk for myself but doing this project has and is giving me so much confidence, and meaning to my days. If you know of a training project that may be of interest to us or would like more information please get in touch. ■



Contact the TRUE team on
Tel: 01903 205111 ext. 4193
Email: rachael.lockey@wash.nhs.uk

research updates

a rainbow nation: black women speak out by Karan Essien

My project is investigating the experiences of women in mental distress who identify themselves as being of Black African or African Caribbean descent, living in Bradford, a city where they are a minority within a larger minority ethnic population.

These women are an under researched group: Black women are hidden statistics because they are rarely given the opportunity to talk about their needs as service users in their own right as most research about Black service users is

about Black men. Also Black women are rarely identified in research about women's experience of mental distress.

the issues

I conducted semi-structured interviews with six women. The important thing was to let them speak out about issues that affect them based on their own experiences such as: how the impact of being Black played a significant role in their mental distress; what they thought they needed in terms of external support as well as identifying their own coping strategies; as most of them

were in contact with services they were asked what they thought were the most important skills in mental health workers. The women were also able to identify what could be done to ensure that services were more culturally aware.

I have really benefited from this user-led research project; it has given me an insight into the qualitative nature of in-depth interviews. I enjoyed the research training days and having the opportunity to speak at the Big Alternative conference. I also have personal experience of being a service user and accessing mental health services in Bradford. ■



mental health problems and employment by Jo Harris

I am investigating the experiences and strategies of people with mental health problems who wish to return to work.

My research aims to ask three key questions: what strategies and services have helped people with mental health problems prepare for and cope with work; how do people explain a considerable gap in their work history to potential employers; and what changes within service provision and the workplace do participants feel would make it easier for people with mental

health problems to rejoin the labour market?

There are ten participants in the study who had to meet the following two criteria: they are either working or wishing to return to work; or due to



mental health problems have been unable to work for a minimum period of two years.

findings

Findings so far indicate a wealth of different strategies used by participants and have been collated into the following categories: meaningful occupation; how mental health problems affect ability to work; preparation strategies; coping strategies at work; what would help; self-disclosure; benefits system; advice for others and acceptance as I am. At the time of writing, my main concern (other than finishing on time) is to do justice to the participants who have trusted me with their experiences. ■

For more information contact Sarah Wright, Research, Training and Support Worker for England
Tel: 020 7802 0335
Email: swright@mhf.org.uk

For more information contact Rachel Waters, Research, Training and Support Worker for Wales
Tel: 029 2039 5123
Email: rwaters@mhf.org.uk

making decisions

The Making Decisions Alliance, a group of organisations including the Mental Health Foundation, is lobbying the Government to make parliamentary time for crucial mental capacity legislation.

- define what mental capacity is
- enable people to make as many of their own choices for as long as possible
- make sure people have access to support to communicate their decisions
- allow people to nominate a person to manage their affairs when they are unable to do so
- allow people to make plans for the future

Currently there is no legal framework in England, Northern Ireland or Wales covering mental capacity (Scotland introduced such legislation in 2000). Once assessed as incapable you have no legal right to say what services you want, make decisions about treatment or have your past or current views considered.

The Alliance believes that legislation is needed to:

New legislation would benefit the lives of millions of people, including those with dementia, learning disabilities, autism and severe head injuries, as well as mental health problems.



You can support the campaign by completing the postcard to the Lord Chancellor attached to the enclosed leaflet, visiting the Alliance website at www.makingdecisions.org.uk and filling out a postcard online or writing to the Lord Chancellors Department, Selbourne House, 54-60 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6QW, copying the letter to your MP. ■

what's going on . . . at the mental health foundation

conferences

values online

The Foundation will launch its groundbreaking, online conference centre on Thursday 27 March 2003 with a consultation on the Government's National Framework of Values for Mental Health.

Delegates will be able to discuss key themes about the role of values in mental health in relation to social inclusion, the user/survivor movement and the Mental Health Act. You can register free online at www.connects.org.uk/conferences, and then move through the virtual conference centre, meeting other delegates in the Foyer, reading papers about the key themes and finally moving onto the Discussion area.

You will be able to read and contribute to the discussion both on and for at least 2 weeks after the 27th March.

recent publications

Supporting women with learning difficulties through the menopause

Based on work carried out by the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities, this training resource provides materials suitable for service users and their carers, which informs, advises and encourages women with learning disabilities to cope better with what can be a distressing transition. For more information contact Pavilion on Tel: 0870 161 3505

To order any publication please call the Publications Department on 020 7802 0300

strategies for living is edited by Stephanie Wells

Print & Distribution by L&T Press, Luton.

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Registered charity no. 801130

Company limited by guarantee number 2350846

Strategies for Living is supported by:

