



## PRESS RELEASE

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### For Immediate Release

#### **MBE Awarded to local man for Mental Health Achievements**

Graham Morgan, Advocacy Project Manager, Highland Community Care Forum has been appointed an MBE in the New Year Honours list for his services to Mental health in the Highlands.

Graham has over 20 years experience in the field of mental health and first became involved in the 1980's in Sheffield after witnessing the harsh and often undignified treatment of people with a mental illness. He initially became a volunteer with an organization helping young people live in the community. After this he helped set up a drop in center run by people with mental illness before moving up to Scotland where he quickly became involved in a campaigning group in Edinburgh. He then helped set up the Lothian's User Forum before moving to the Highlands in 1997.

Speaking about his award, Graham said:

"Historically people with a mental illness have found that their views have not been listened to and acted on. Being acknowledged with an MBE gives recognition to the power and importance of the voice of people with mental illness. It shows that the views and achievements of HUG and its members are now been listened to and acted on in the Highlands and nationally".

**More....**



Graham was instrumental in the development of HUG in 1996 as a way of speaking out about services, educating the professionals and the public about mental illness and challenging the injustice and stigma many people with mental illness often experience.

Graham, who is still actively involved in the work of HUG, said:

“Many people with a mental illness experience stigma. At its extreme stigma is shown in abuse and discrimination. It is wrong, it is deeply wrong, to think that an illness can cause this, to think that we can be marked out with shame or disgrace for something over which we have no control and degrades all of us. This is why the work of HUG in challenging stigma and actively involving members is so important, it is essential that people learn about mental illness directly from those who suffer from it.”

Since its development HUG has grown quickly and now represents over 300 people in the Highlands with mental health problems based on a network of 13 local branches. HUG’s work in bringing a unique user-perspective and has been recognized as a model of good practice both nationally and within the Highlands.

ENDS

### **Contact**

For further information, please contact **Karen Maclean-Yuille**, at: Highland Users Group, Highland Community Care Forum, Highland House, 20 Longman Road, Inverness IV1 1RY Tel: (01463) 718817 Email: [hug@hccf.org.uk](mailto:hug@hccf.org.uk)

### **Editor’s Notes**

The **Highland Users Group** is a network of 300 users of mental health services across the Highlands which campaigns to improve the rights, services and treatments of people with mental health problems and to challenge the stigma of mental illness. HUG works on a local, Highland and national level to influence policy and planning, and to encourage improvements in the management and delivery of mental health services.

### **Recent Achievements of HUG**

- Member of See Me Alliance (Scotland’s First Anti Stigma Campaign)
- Member of the National Advisory Group for the Promotion of Mental Wellbeing in Scotland
- After many years campaigning for out of hour services statutory services recognition of the need for these services
- Development of places of safety across the Highlands
- Production of video testimonies of direct experiences of service users
- Involvement in the Highland Framework for the Reduction in Suicide
- In collaboration with Eden Court ran a stigma play touring 19 Highland schools reaching over 1500 school children