

MEETING PLACE FOR SHARING NEWS AND VIEWS

PERTH & KINROSS / EDITION 54 / June 2011

Past editions of PLUSPoint can be downloaded from our website at www.plusperth.co.uk

FIRST WORD

PLUS recently took part in two exciting national events to promote the concept of co-production in Scotland - Tuesday 10th May a practice development day organised via the Scottish Development Centre and Thursday 12th May a masterclass presented by Dr Edgar Cahn, social justice lawyer, author of "No More Throw-Away People" and the father of the USA Timebanking movement.



Susan Scott & Jayne Kettles
pictured with Dr Cahn

Delegates at the co-production practice development day were tasked to prepare a personal narrative to share with others on the day. A personal perspective by Jayne Kettles illustrates the importance of having the chance to give back. We would welcome contributions in the form of storytelling in particular from our readers on this subject.

MISSION STATEMENT

"To improve the lives of people living in Perth & Kinross who experience mental distress and to promote more positive public attitudes towards mental health and to those suffering mental illness"

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

by Jayne Kettles

I have first hand experience of living with a mental health problem, having been "in the system" for over twenty years. Having been through many support services, I am fully aware of how "being done to" can take away coping and developing strategies.

My recovery journey began with an informal interview to become a volunteer for PLUS. This focused on my skills and potential rather than on my incapacities and difficulties. For possibly the first time, I was given some hope for a brighter and more rewarding future. This was an opportunity for me to give something, at the same time improving my self worth.

In a relatively short time, I was encouraged to use these skills and develop them through attending strategic planning meetings alongside the Involvement Officer. Initially, my internal stigma took over, "these people in suits and with mile-long job titles are better than me". I was, over time, to realize I was just as good as them. I had as much, if not more experience of what helps and what hinders recovery from mental ill-health. This, along with formal training led me on to become a trainer in Recovery. I've worked for NHS Tayside, Perth & Kinross Council and Scottish Recovery Network

Through my work with Plus, I started to move out of my comfort zone, faced challenges, taken risks and although, at times, I've had some bumpy rides, my new found life and coping skills together with some great support has got me through the other side.

As someone who couldn't leave the house on my own, I have progressed to travelling alone to events locally and nationally and on occasions had to stay overnight to attend conferences. Not bad for an OCD sufferer!

Over and above the Recovery work, I promote anti-stigma work, am passionate about Mental Health and Wellbeing for All, I believe partnership working between The Third Sector, NHS and Councils is a priority and most importantly the use of Life Story and Peer Support is vital to good practice.

In today's world of economic and social reforms, as service users, we cannot rely on government benefits and services to continue as before. We have to be prepared to change, become more responsible for our lives and behaviours and embrace the information and skills available to us. As someone labelled as "severe and enduring", I hope through PLUS and living in the community with a good partner for support, I can make these changes to the best of my ability.

Helplines

Breathing Space	0800 83 85 87
Depression Alliance Scotland	0845 123 23 20
Samaritans	08457 909090
Cruse Bereavement Care	0844 477 9400
Saneline	08457 678000
Eating Disorders Association	0845 6341414
Mental Health Out of Hours	08454242424
Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide	0844 561 6855
Pet Bereavement Support Service	0800 096 6606
Support Line (8.30am – 8.30pm)	

PLUS

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GREY MATTER by Cameron Horn

INTRODUCTION

There are many books about depression and mental illness. But this one is both my story and my observations of people I know who will remain anonymous. There are many forms of mental illness, schizophrenia, unipolar depression, bipolar depression, anorexia nervosa, OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder), bulimia and psychosis. There are others but this will suffice for now. I am not a doctor or psychiatrist, psychologist or mental health professional, I am a layman and a sufferer. The purpose of this book is to help others.. I have known several people who have committed suicide because they just couldn't cope with this life any more and their illness got the better of them. Each one of them has been a sad loss and such a waste. I hope that through this booklet, that I can offer hope and good reasons to live a constructive life.

CHAPTER ONE

SOME BACKGROUND

I think a bit about myself will help you to see where I am coming from. I am fifty seven years old and have suffered periodically, from deep depression since 1989. It all began when I went through a very difficult divorce. Then I met my present wife, Judy. My ex wife became very bitter that I had met someone else and poisoned the two children as a weapon to get back at me. This broke my heart and I have had no communication with them for fifteen years. I know nothing about their lives, not even what they look like. This has left a huge void in me and a source of depression. When I was younger, I lived in the United States and it was there that I began to drink heavily and was introduced to street drugs like cannabis, LSD, crystal methedrine, speed, PCP and magic mushrooms. I was so high most of the time that I cared about nothing, but partying all the time. I feel sure that this contributed to future mental health problems but at the time, I never even thought of the consequences. It's amazing to me that I didn't kill myself from a drug overdose.. Some years later, I had a profound spiritual experience, that to this day has changed my life and my way of thinking. It hasn't stopped the suffering but it has given me faith to see me through it.

DEPRESSION

Depression is a very strange malady. It seems that life's events and personal disasters can initiate a bout of depression and most people with a little help can get assistance from their GP, to then go on about their daily lives. For others though, things seem to be ingrained in their minds and depression and other forms of mental illness become a chronic illness. If this is the case, a Psychiatrist is usually called in and he/she will assess the patient and will most likely prescribe a form of medication, sometimes more than one. Psychiatrists work in teams. Within this team is usually a CPN (community psychiatric nurse) a psychologist, a pharmacist, a social worker and an occupational therapist.. So, there is a vast array of support available on the NHS. Accessing that support starts with the GP. There are also outpatient groups like day drop in centres, group therapy sessions and some churches are available to help. Medications are many and it takes a little time to get used to them, also to find the right balance. It may be trial and error to find the right balance of medications for you individually, we are all different.

More next issue

USING PEER SUPPORT IN CRISIS ALTERNATIVES

"For many of us, crisis has been a patterned response to difficult experiences. Yet in the mental health system we've been told that it is something that happens to us.

If we maintain that belief, the best we can do is simply get through it as gracefully as possible. If we continue to keep 'getting through' the difficult times, how will we learn to rethink the experience all together? In peer support we need to remind ourselves that we have essentially three tasks, no matter what the program:

- Looking at how we know what we know and trying some new ways of seeing/doing
- Building mutually responsible relationships where help goes both ways
- Moving towards what we want rather than away from what we don't want"

Shery Mead - Peer Support USA

PLUS NEWS

PLUS ROYAL BINGO SUPPER.

The venue for the PLUS Royal Bingo Supper had to be changed at the last minute to the Caladh Centre(PAMH) due to the sudden closure of the Kinnoull Club. However the evening turned out a great success with many prizes being won and raising a grand total of £260 on the night. A huge thank you to Jenny and Carolyn for organising and Marilynne and Craig for helping on the night. Also to all the people who generously supported the event with raffle donations and joining us on the night.

PLUS MEMBERS MEETING TUESDAY 7th JUNE.

The next members' meeting will take place on Tuesday 7th June from 1.30 - 3.00pm in the PLUS Office in Canal Street.

PLUS CONFERENCE AND AGM 1st SEPTEMBER

1st September has been set for a PLUS Annual conference and AGM. Part of the programme will include 'Jo the poet' who proved to be a great hit at the Scottish Recovery Network Conference – catch a sample of one of her poems on the back page of the newsletter

The event, free to PLUS members will take place in the Norrie Miller Suite at the Perth Concert Hall. Get the date in your diary now as it should prove to be a lively, informative and fun event.

MP BACKS PLUS INVOLVEMENT IN WELFARE REFORM

PLUS members met with Westminster MP Pete Wishart last month in a bid to convey our concerns about the UK governments welfare reforms. This was a follow on from the Welfare Benefits talk that Chris White gave to mental health service users at the end of March in Perth. The government work programme was also discussed and it was agreed that steps would be taken to form a local stakeholders group for the purpose of ensuring the sub contractors delivered the work programme in a fair and just manner and staff understood the particular problems faced by people who have suffered mental health problems.

THE WORK PROGRAMME

The Work Programme is a new UK Government scheme which is due to start in July. The programme is for anyone who is unemployed, whether you have lost your job, or whether you haven't been able to work because of health problems. The idea is that out of work people who are able to work will be helped to get a job. At the moment, we don't know who will run the Work Programme in Perth or what sort of help they will offer. Some people will have to go on the Work Programme or they may lose benefit. Some people with severe illness or disability may not have to go on the Work Programme.

PLUS wants to campaign to make sure that the Work Programme can offer the right kinds of employment support to people who have had mental health problems AND that the right decisions are made about whether people are ready for work.

Please contact PLUS if you would like more information, or if you want to share your opinions about the Work Programme and the PLUS campaign.

PLUS OFFICE OPENING TIMES

The PLUS office will be open for general enquiries from Tuesday – Friday 9.30-2.30pm.

PLUS RECEIVES CHEQUE FROM KINROSS LADIES CIRCLE

Following their second comedy night fundraiser PLUS met with the Kinross Ladies Circle at their recent AGM to receive a cheque for £1450. PLUS has been their chosen charity over the last year. A million thanks to the Kinross Ladies.



CONFERENCE/WORKSHOP REPORT

PLUS AT NZ CONSULTANT MENTAL HEALTH WORKSHOP

PLUS members met Mary O'Hagan, international thought leader on mental health service user perspectives at a 'Service User Participation and Leadership' event in the Scores Hotel, St Andrews in March

Mary O'Hagan spoke about her work of over 25yrs promoting the recovery approach in mental health services, from the time when she herself used psychiatric services in New Zealand as a young woman. This experience propelled Mary into human rights work in mental health, including NZ Mental Health Commissioner and Advisor to the United Nations and World Health Organization. Participants at the event were encouraged to consider the power balances in decision making and that service users, and carers, should be enabled to set the agenda in terms of mental health leadership and improvement. More information about Mary on her websites: www.maryohagan.com and www.wellbeingrecovery.com.

PLUS NEW INITIATIVE

INSPIRAL - RECOVERY FROM SUBSTANCE MISUSE

P&K Alcohol and Drugs partnership have commissioned PLUS to act as managing agent for an involvement group led by people with former substance misuse issues. Objectives of the group 'Inspiral' will include, providing a service user perspective for the purpose of improving substance misuse (and wider) services, challenging stigma and media reporting, training staff and providing information and knowledge. Inspiral will promote the fact that people can and do recover from substance misuse and will be a guiding light for people from the earliest stages of recovery.

LOCAL NEWS

NEW LEAD CLINICIAN FOR ADULT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Dr Werner Pretorius, Consultant Psychiatrist has been appointed as Lead Clinician for Adult Mental Health Services in Perth and Kinross from 1 April 2011. Dr Pretorius takes over from Dr Moyra Guthrie who has led the service over the past few years and is now focussing on her Tayside portfolio.

INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY OPEN DAY 6TH JUNE

Independent Advocacy are holding an open day on Friday 6th June, 10am-4pm. This will give a chance for people to find out about the service they offer and an opportunity to meet with the staff.

Independent Advocacy are based at 90 Tay Street, Perth.

VOLUNTEER STREET MARKET

PKAVS will hold their 11th annual Volunteers Street Market on Saturday 11th June in King Edward Street, Perth between 10am and 3pm. It provides local voluntary and community organisations with the chance to promote their services, to raise some funds and to recruit much-needed volunteers; it also allows those interested in volunteering and those who have never considered the idea to learn, in a fun way, more about volunteering opportunities and about how they can make a difference to local people's lives.

NATIONAL NEWS

DEBT AND MENTAL HEALTH-NEW RESOURCES

A new booklet aimed at people with mental health problems has been produced by the Money Saving Expert, Martin Lewis and is available to download at the following link: www.moneysavingexpert.com/mentalhealth

The Royal College of Psychiatrists' website is an excellent resource for people with debt issues and they produce a standard form that support workers can fill in to give clear and relevant evidence about how your mental health affects how you deal with money. The Debt and Mental Health Evidence Form (DMHEF) is quick to fill in and has been recognised by major UK creditor and advice membership organisations.

For more information on their services go to the link www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfo/problems/debtandmentalhealth.aspx 02072352351 EXT 6259 LEAFLET DEPARTMENT

NEW RESEARCH ON THE COSTS OF MENTAL HEALTH IN SCOTLAND

New research commissioned by SAMH (Scottish Association for Mental Health) as part of a major campaign reveals that the social and economic cost of mental health problems in Scotland has reached £10.7 billion per year: an increase of nearly a quarter on figures from 2004/05. The new report, entitled What's It Worth Now?, makes clear the full cost of mental health problems across three areas of Scottish society - employment, human costs and health and social care - and highlights the potential savings that employers could make by paying more attention to mental health in their workplace and by joining the SAMH "Dismissed" campaign for fairness in mental health and employment.

THE JOURNEY HOME *by Lorraine Nicholson*

REVIEW - *Tom Brown, Consultant Psychiatrist*

I first met Lorraine Nicholson when she spoke at a meeting of the Scottish Division of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. She gave a memorable account of her experience of mental illness (in her case a severe and lengthy depressive illness) and of her "recovery journey". She refers to giving this talk as a "personal milestone" on her website www.hope4recovery.co.uk. The presentation allowed Lorraine to amply demonstrate her obvious artistic gifts and their role in her recovery. Lorraine is generous in her praise of those nurses and doctors (GP and psychiatrist) who facilitated her recovery and clearly sees mainstream psychiatric and medical services as important. She is equally clear however that full recovery involved much more than taking tablets or engaging in therapy. The love and support of family especially her mother, and friends were central in allowing her to regain confidence, increase her resilience, and to help her express herself through her art and writing in a way which helped her complete recovery.

This book is the product of both her illness and her recovery. It is a collection of Lorraine's poetry, artwork and photography. It is beautifully produced and contains within its pages stories and images expressing the range of emotions experienced in the depths of illness and on the recovery journey. The book is full of hope and completely devoid of bitterness. It resounds with the message that things can be different. Even in the poem entitled "Arrested Under Section" describing her detention, this emerges:

"Never give up Hope

There are two ends to every tunnel

It's just sometimes you have to go through Hell to find Heaven"

The author talks about the "opportunity" of illness. In the introduction she writes "The second chance at life that my illness has afforded is to me a privileged opportunity which this work is part of", and in what follows she ably illustrates that what she is now would not have been possible without her experience of illness.

Another crucial element in this journey is the way in which the author takes responsibility for herself, there is a real feeling of her gradually assuming responsibility as she became able to do so and the importance of allowing those recovering from mental illness to do this stands out.

Lorraine's recovery was not a smooth one. There have been relapses but the experience of having recovered made her more robust and able to see that relapse didn't mean "being back to square one".

For psychiatrists, especially those who have never themselves been depressed, anything which increases our knowledge of our patients' inner world is valuable. This book certainly does that. It adds to our knowledge of things outside of medicine which are essential, and help complete recovery for those we treat. This book should be read by many doctors, nurses, patients and carers alike. It is an uplifting book which could usefully be left lying around any inpatient or outpatient facility. Lorraine's journey continues. She is now about to start studying time based media at Jordanstone College of Art in Dundee, further evidence that there can be life and hope after severe mental illness.



PLUS see me volleyball team finished sixth in the recreational league despite a valiant effort of winning four out of the four remaining games of the league, including beating top of the league Rodneys Trotters. Great effort guys!

AT THE END OF THE DAY

Light In My World Again

A short sentence this time
Yet no crime committed.....
Punctuated by memory loss, confusion,
Emotional distress, caught in a whirlpool,
A re-emerging life-force.
Gifts of love and support, human kindness,
Light in my world again
And an inner contentment.
I walk free from my cell
To find ample space to dream.

Lorraine Nicholson

Returning Joy

The days I worked for nothing
but the joy
of having made a difference
were the happiest of my life.

The purpose which propelled me
to get up each day, the knowledge
I was part of something big,
however small.

And though I didn't know it then,
the little acts of kindness I received
would stay with me
for all these years to come:

the homeless man who taught me
that a smile could melt the harshest winter,
or the colleague in the busy office
who pretended not to notice
that I couldn't work
without a stress ball in my hand;
the skills I gleaned
from other peoples' patience
as they filtered good from my mistakes.

I learnt so many things
that far outweigh the ticks on my CV

I learnt the greatest value
of my volunteering
was the joy it brought to me.

Jo McFarlane - Edinburgh Poet