

MEETING PLACE FOR SHARING NEWS AND VIEWS

PERTH & KINROSS / EDITION 53 / April 2011

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

FIRST WORD

'Knowledge is Power'

The Impact of Benefits Changes workshop at the end of last month gave people the facts about what is happening with regard to Incapacity Benefit under the governments welfare reform. A bit surprisingly to me there was a positive atmosphere in the room at the end of the meeting – a feeling of empowerment. People had been given all the information there was and instead of creating more despair it had opened up possibilities about what people could do. They felt more in control. No longer in free fall hoping that someone else would sort out the tangled parachute. Treating people who have suffered mental health problems with kid gloves, protecting them from the outside world, limiting information in case they become ill does not work. Knowledge is indeed Power. If ever I have seen this in action it was at that meeting. For those of you who didn't get to it go to the back page of the newsletter for the summary.

Also in this months newsletter a potted history of PLUS through photography. Some images to remind or inform people of our journey so far.

We hope you like it!

MISSION STATEMENT

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

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)	

MARKING THE END OF AN ERA

Original Murray Royal building to close after almost 200 years

In May 2012, on completion of the new hospital campus, the Murray Royal Hospital 'old building' will close its doors, marking the end of an era.

At that time the unused surrounding land and buildings, including B listed main hospital and chapel, former Gilgal, Dunsinane and bowling pavilion will become surplus to NHS Tayside requirements. Many people believe the land will be sold off to the highest bidder with the possibility of a future private housing development but a working group called the Surplus Land Group comprising service users, carers, people from the local community, chamber of commerce and council have been working over the last 2 years for the joint purpose of retaining the surplus land and buildings for community benefit.

During the early stages of the Surplus Land Group a lot of creative thinking and considerable legwork resulted in various suggestions for the use of the land including allotments, social businesses archive space, budget accommodation and artist workshops. *The group also saw opportunities to boost local employment opportunities and training for people moving on from psychiatric services.*

But first things first the Board of NHS Tayside still have to be convinced that selling off the land for a quick financial gain may be a missed opportunity for them in putting into practice their new equalities strategy 'Communities in Control' which promotes wellbeing, inclusion, equality and a sense of common ownership, responsibility and pride. PLUS representatives are involved at present in lobbying the individuals who will be making the final decision on the future purpose of the MRH.

The Murray Royal Hospital has long been viewed as a treasured and important resource for the people of Perth. Opened in 1827, for the princely sum of £20,000. The then 'new' Scottish Royal Asylum was bequeathed by James Murray for the benefit of the people of Perth and surrounding districts. It appears to be the wish of many local people that the soon to be former hospital building and surrounding land continues to fulfil that original philanthropic purpose.



Murray Royal Chapel.

PLUS

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OUR MAD HISTORY?

Oor Mad history is a community history project in Edinburgh and the Lothians, Scotland run by volunteers who are or have been involved in collective advocacy in the Lothians. It is supported by our Community History Worker, hosted by Independent Advocacy and funded by NHS Lothian. **We** celebrate the achievements of the mental health service user movement in the Lothians and preserve our history **by** recording oral history interviews with activists and allies – the interviewees are volunteers who use or who have used mental health services and creating and organising an archive of written material such as reports and posters, and other objects.

We do this because It is important for us to look back and acknowledge our achievements, learn from mistakes, and better understand our ability to make a difference. Knowing our history strengthens us as groups of mental health service users and helps us fight better for more improvements and progress.

PLUS'S Mad History <http://oormadhistory.blogspot.com>

Reflecting then on the history of PLUS since beginning in 2002, the following are photographs which illustrate important events in our journey. Do you remember these momentous occasions. Where you there yourself? What will the momentous occasions of the future be?!!



2002 – 'Service users' begin having meetings to promote 'involvement'.



2003/2004 – Partnership formed with 'see me' and PLUS begins local anti-stigma campaigns.



2004 – Launch of Summer Campaigns, Perth Show.



2005 – Launch of PLUS DVD 'Recovery, a Journey of Hope'.



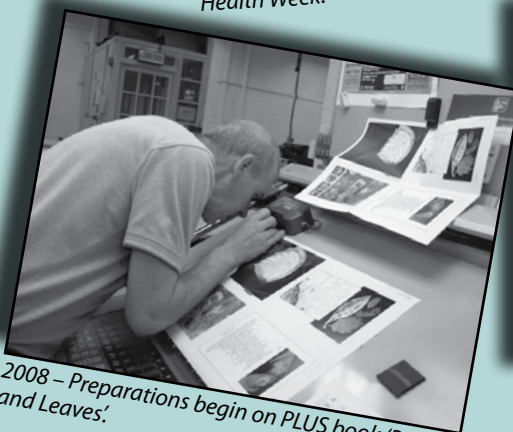
2006 – Working with service providers to raise awareness.



2007 – Comedian Karen Dunbar launches Mental Health Week.



2007 – St Johnstone lend support to our campaigns.



2008 – Preparations begin on PLUS book 'Poems and Leaves'.



2009 – Provost Dr Hulbert promotes the 'Joining Hands' Art Project.



2010/2011 – PLUS nominated Charity of the Year for the Kinross Ladies Circle.

PLUS NEWS

PLUS CONFERENCE AND AGM 1ST SEPTEMBER

A date for the PLUS AGM and conference has been set for 1st September. Venue Perth Concert Hall. Jo McFarlane, the poet from the Scottish Recovery Network Conference has been booked to delight us with her work as part of the afternoons proceedings. We are hoping to include other lively speakers and performers to make the day both enjoyable and interesting so please put forward any suggestions.

ROYAL BINGO TEA 28TH APRIL

Tickets (£4) are selling fast for our Royal Bingo Tea and raffle at the Kinnoull Club, city centre on Thursday 28th April 7pm. Why not look out your family jewels and don them for what will be a great night- I must find that old tiara of mine! Raffle donations most welcome. Telephone the office for a ticket.

NEXT PLUS MEMBERS MEETING

The next PLUS members meeting will take place at the Gateway, North Methven St on Tuesday 26th April at 1.30 – 3.30pm. All full members welcome.

PLUS MOVIE FOR MENTAL HEALTH FILM FESTIVAL IN OCTOBER

David Wallace PLUS volunteer and board member has offered to make a PLUS film for possible entry into the Scottish Mental Health Film Festival in October. Any of our members with ideas or interested in getting something off the ground please get in touch.

PLUS TRAINING FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS

The first training session to inform and upskill potential new volunteers took place on the 14th March. 6 people attended and indicated it has been useful in getting more knowledge about PLUS. Mission, objectives, values and future aims were discussed in depth. The second of four sessions which will include looking at manning campaign stands is scheduled for April and will be the same group of people. The training will be repeated for others who are interested. Put your name forward if keen to take part.

PLUS FUNDING

We have still not heard if our funding is to be cut by from next financial year although it is likely we will see a 5% reduction to our funding in the financial year 2012-2013.

This years funding is to be at the same level. The council are having a meeting on the 16th April to take decisions on who will and wont be cut from 2012. Update in next May PLUSpoint.

LOCAL NEWS

P&K ACUTE MENTAL HEALTH RESPONSE TEAM

The Mental Health Service's Alternative to Admission Team (ATAT) will be now called the Acute Mental Health Response Team (AMHRT).

The service provides an emergency/urgent response to those in a mental health crisis. The main purpose is to prevent unnecessary admission to hospital.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Gardeners' & Countryside Market

Saturday 14th May 2011

Has it felt like a long winter?

Then come along to our first market of the year on Sat 14 May 2011 in King Edward Street (9am – 5pm). Come and browse round stalls offering plants, beauty products, wine, woodcrafts and much more.

Art on the River

Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th May 2011

This popular market returns at the end of May as part of the Perth Festival of the Arts programme

Organised by Perth City Centre Management this great ever popular event is situated on scenic Tay Street and offers 40 stalls of all styles of arts and crafts.

NATIONAL NEWS

CREATIVE SCOTLAND'S ROADSHOWS

Chief Executive Andrew Dixon is hosting a series of roadshows across Scotland in April 2011 to share Creative Scotlands vision for the arts, screen and creative industries in their recently published plan: Investing in Scotland's Creative Future. They will be visiting Inverness, Aberdeen, Glasgow, Dunkeld, New Galloway and Edinburgh. For more info and to sign up for one of the events visit <http://www.creativescotland.com>

DISABLED PEOPLE AGAINST CUTS (DPAC)

DPAC is running a campaign against the disability benefit cuts. If you are unable to attend a protest in person, you can still join their campaign on their website and send a message of support. www.dpac.uk.net Disabled people are also being encouraged to write to, or speak to, their own MPs about the benefit cuts.

VOX OVER 50'S COFFEE MORNING GROUP

Vox Voice of Experience national service user organisation is looking to attract new folks to the next meeting of the over 50's coffee morning group which will be held on Monday 18th April 2011 at 10.30am in the Winter Gardens, Peoples Palace, Glasgow Green Glasgow. New members will be made very welcome. The topic for conversation this month will be the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival 2011. Some members of the group made significant contributions to last year's festival and it is hoped that they will further contribute this year. The theme for this year's festival is "Memory and Dreams" If you would like to be involved in the coffee morning group please contact the office on 0141 572 1663 or by email: jsteel@mhf.org.uk

NEW HELPLINE OPENING HOURS FOR DEPRESSION ALLIANCE SCOTLAND

The Depression Alliance Scotland helpline is a key element of their work giving access to high quality, impartial and confidential information about depression. Over a year they receive over 800 calls and spend around 20,000 minutes listening and talking to callers - mainly people experiencing depression and their families and carers. They also receive many calls from other people seeking information such as professional carers.

DAS have revised their opening times of the helpline and the new times are: Monday to Thursday 11:00 to 13:00 and 14:00 to 16:00 - the number remains the same, 0845 123 23 20.

SCOTTISH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE USER RESEARCH NETWORK

The Scottish Mental Health Service User Research Network Steering Group is recruiting members who have an interest in service user research to attend meetings of the Steering Group These meetings are held on average every 6 weeks and are held at venues in various parts of the central belt. The next meeting is due to be held on Friday 20th May 2011 at Penumbra Head Office, Norton Park, 57, Albion Road, Edinburgh, EH7 5QY at 1.00pm to 3.00pm. There is a particular need for more involvement by service users for the steering group. Should you wish to attend or become involved please contact the VOX office on 0141 572 1663 or email: jsteel@mhf.org.uk

COMBAT STRESS

Combat Stress, a military charity specialising in the care of veterans' mental health, has launched a new 24-hour helpline for the military community and their families seeking help and advice when it comes to combat-related mental health issues. It is delivered by Rethink and funded by the department of health. The number is 0800 138 1619. The helpline was created in response to Dr Andrew Murrison MP's report 'Fighting Fit'.

Apology

Is My Glass Half Empty or Half Full

We would like to convey our sincerest apologies to Therese M Liddy for including the piece of writing 'Is My Glass Half Empty or Half Full' in the December edition of PLUSpoint without prior consent. We pride ourselves on the standard and ethics of this publication but in this case made a considerable error of judgement. We will not print any subsequent literature from Therese M Liddy without first asking permission. We are very sorry for any upset caused.

Susan Scott, PLUS editor.

PREPARE FOR CHANGE

The Move to Employment Support Allowance ESA

People presently on incapacity benefit will be assessed within the next 3 years to move on to Employment Support Allowance.

In 2008 Employment and Support Allowance ESA, was introduced for new claimants focusing on what people can do rather than what they can't do. The Westminster government is now focussing on people already on incapacity benefit with the first letters to assess people for capability to work going out on Monday 4th April.

10,000 claimants every week in the UK will be reassessed using the Work Capability Assessment (WCA). This process will continue until March 2014 by which time everyone who is on incapacity benefit will have been assessed.

The WCA includes a **self assessment health questionnaire** and an **independent medical assessment**. Main concerns over this process include; people either underestimate or over-estimate their condition and lack detail of how they are affected when filling in the assessment form. Also people not opening their mail and/or being poorly informed about what the changes in the system.

The medical assessment has been criticised for its poor reporting and lack of insight into mental illness.

The three decisions that can be made following the assessment is that you are Fit for Work and not entitled to ESA (formerly incapacity benefit), have limited capability for work-related activity and will be placed in the work-related activity group whilst continuing to receive your benefit or thirdly have limited capability for work-related activity and you will be placed in the support group and also continue to receive your benefit.

Preparing for Change

Many people are extremely anxious about these changes but it is important to be aware that there are things you can do to prevent your concerns growing worse.

Being prepared by having the facts in front of you can be one of the most useful things you can do. Don't avoid the issue. If you are worried speak to your family or support workers. They should know what is happening too during this change in the benefits system. Many do not know.

PLUS held a meeting last month - 'The Impact of Benefit Changes' and found at the end of the workshop people felt more positive because they knew what was happening and felt more in control. The speaker Chris Whyte is a reliable contact for subsequent updating on new information

Getting the correct information out to carers and workers is very important too so they can support the individual through the process. We also intend to lobby the services to upskill their staff in this area so, at the very least, they know the main facts.

PLUS will as a priority, update people on what is happening in a regular column in the newsletter. Members can also join us at PLUS events or workshops to find out info specifically around the welfare benefits changes.

It may also be useful at this stage to:

- look at how your illness affects daily life and your ability to work
- consider how the new mental health descriptors might apply to you. (the descriptors are in the assessment form which PLUS intends to get a copy of for circulation)
- consider who is the best person to help you complete forms
- think about who might be able to provide additional evidence to help your claim
- think about whether you would be able to do some part time work, how would this affect your health, find out how this would affect your finances; and what support might be available.

Campaigning

Earlier this year mental health organisations across Scotland provided evidence of problems with the Work Capability Assessment Following this the government have promised to:-

- If a claimant appeals an ESA decision, the DWP will ring them to discuss their claim
- improve the decision making process
- improve the information about the assessment process
- ensure Atos (the assessor) has greater expertise in mental, cognitive and intellectual conditions
- review the mental, intellectual and cognitive descriptors and a revised set of descriptors will be introduced from March 2011

PLUS are setting up a meeting with Pete Wishart MP later this month in order to articulate the concerns that people have around this huge issue. Please put any views forward that you may have as soon as possible. We may not be able to change the decision to stop this happening but we can contribute to making sure it is fairly done and takes into account practical considerations which may have been overlooked in the planning stage.



PROJECT ABILITY VISIT

PLUS visited Project Ability in Glasgow at the end of March with ideas of setting up something similar up in Perth.

Project Ability is a Glasgow-based visual arts organisation which creates opportunities for people with disabilities and people with mental health issues to express themselves and achieve artistic excellence.

Over three hundred people each week take part in their year round programme of workshops, events and exhibitions which are held in their centre in their Glasgow premises and in community venues throughout the city.

Project Ability work in partnership with people with disabilities and their support agencies across the UK and develop local and national arts projects, creating opportunities for people to network, share their practice and exhibit their work.

There has for a long time been a need for more access to the arts for a more diverse section of the community.

During our visit we enjoyed a tour and thought it was a wonderfully therapeutic space, a beautiful building and relaxing environment too.

There were workshops taking place whilst we were there. Everyone seemed totally nonplussed about us walking around. In fact they were so engrossed in their work I don't think they even noticed us!

AT THE END OF THE DAY

"You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
call to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things."

Mary Oliver

MEMORY, SLEEP AND DREAMS.....

Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival Theme 2011.