

MEETING PLACE FOR SHARING NEWS AND VIEWS

PERTH & KINROSS / EDITION 56 / August 2011

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

FIRST WORD

Some PLUS members have received the (dreaded) letter from the DWP regarding the move to Employment Support Allowance. Some have been through the 'process' already and some placed on a work preparation group or Work Programme. The UK governments Welfare Reform Bill has well and truly reached Perth & Kinross but there is a tremendous amount to be gained from continued pressure on the government to get this right before the bill is fully passed. It's never over until the fat lady sings - as they say - so keep lobbying your elected members or write to your local MP if you haven't already. Details on how to do this are on the PLUS website or for those without a PC give us a phone. One of our volunteers has decided to keep a diary of the process as she goes through it in the hope of helping others. Some of her own fears were allayed by another PLUS volunteer who was one of the first to move to ESA.

September is going to be a busy busy month in the area of mental health sharing and learning as you will see from our conferences and events section. The Scottish Recovery Network has chosen to hold 'Developing Peer Support', its latest conference in Perth which is great, but places go fast so get registered quickly if you intend going. Bi- Polar Scotland's event on the 17th September 'Be All you Can Be' has a practical as well as interesting programme with talks on Bi-Polar disorder and Substance Misuse and Coping with Benefits Changes.

There is plenty reading in this months newsletter, whether it be snippets of practical info or more thought provoking submissions such as Cameron Hornes 'Grey Matter' or Jane Andrews view on celebrities and bipolar in the PLUSpoint letters section - both excellent pieces of writing.

Finally and most importantly (to us anyway) the PLUS AGM and Conference 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow'- first associated with the movie the Wizard of Oz- takes place on the 1st September in Perth. If there was ever a movie highlighting the importance of following your beliefs, aspirations & dreams I am yet to find it. I must look out my ruby red slippers for that occasion!

Catch up with you in the next edition after the PLUS staff have their week long summer break.



YOUR CHANCE TO BE PART OF THE LINK

Following on from the successful *One Leaf - One Link* project and the subsequent book *Poems and Leaves* we would like to invite you or your group to be part of a forthcoming new initiative to create community spirit through the use of the arts.

Based on a Springtime theme, *New Leaves- New Links* will renew and strengthen our links to one another, celebrate people as valued assets to their communities and show the importance of hope and optimism in recovery.

From the end of 2011 workshops will be organised locally for individuals to come together and create painted leaves and poetry to be exhibited at a community event in Perth in March/April 2012.

New Leaves- New Links aims to rekindle human values such as friendship, purpose and belonging - values that matter most to individual and collective wellbeing. Please join us in our effort to achieve this.

Anyone who would like to take part contact:

PLUS 01738 626242 plusperth@msn.com www.plusperth.co.uk

THE PLUS OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED
FROM MONDAY 8th UNTIL
MONDAY 15th AUGUST



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

CHAPTER THREE

HOPE

I had a very profound spiritual experience with God (or whom I call God) some thirty two years ago whilst I was living in the United States. I was alone at the time, I called out to Him and He responded with an inexplicable peace. Please realise that I am not speaking of organized religion here although some seek their spirituality that way. This peace seemed to come from within me. Suddenly everything was alright. After a time, I realized that everything has a purpose in the grand design. It wasn't that I ceased from suffering, in fact, things got worse at times but I had a new found faith to help me through it.

There is a point to my suffering now. It is to identify with and help others. I still can't work, not even a voluntary job because I can't guarantee that I'll be there all the time. I have other physical ailments also and this prevents me from doing many of the things I used to do. I hope for recovery at least from depression but I am willing to accept whatever comes my way, as from God. I can thank Him for the good times and the bad. So, the spiritual journey (which is an inward journey to where our spirit lies) is to be recommended. It can begin with even a faint plea for help during a quiet moment.

NATURE

God speaks to me through nature, trees, birds, animals, even my own pet dogs. One has to have an eye to see this. For instance; I used to work with a man who was a keen gardener. On one occasion, I asked him to teach me how to prune. He took me to a plant and showed me where to cut so as not to damage the plant. He remarked and I quote "if you see any branches going inward, cut them off right away". I asked why? He said "that they would choke the plant". I saw right away that I had many inward growing shoots that needed to be pruned! I was continually looking inwards at my health, finances, character deficiencies, and felt generally toxic to my family and friends, if I have any friends? These are all surface things though, one must look deeper to find God and inner peace.

I decided to allow God to take over my life and I asked Him for direction and the power to follow Him. He started to show me all sorts of things. A Loch on a day that is calm is like a mirror and will reflect all the life around it and the sky above but the slightest breeze will darken the water and it loses its reflection, so it is with us! The wind to my mind signifies troubles (and unrest) some real, some imagined and just ends up in fear and anxiety. In this condition I cannot reflect anything but illness. The water has to be calm.

However, if I look below the surface I can see a place of calm and just wait until the storm blows over. There are many such illustrations that I could cite but I would encourage you to seek out the One who loves you and has a plan for your life. Try to find ways to relax.

MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

They come in all sorts, some clinical and deal with psychiatric drugs which for a while (depending on the individual) may be trial and error. These drugs may help with your symptoms but they will not cure you. It took me to try various drugs until the correct balance was struck. I had a couple of lousy psychiatrists and two who were brilliant, including my present one. I also have a CPN (community psychiatric nurse) who I meet in town for coffee every two weeks. She listens, is very patient and encouraging, she also suggests things that are within my grasp and present ability but without being pushy. Writing this booklet is one of them. Fortunately I also have an excellent GP (general practitioner) who sees to my physical needs, so all in all I have a good support network. I hope this is the case with you too.

SIDE EFFECTS

Medications have the potential to bring on side effects. These are unwanted and if they are severe, contact your GP right away. Different drugs are prescribed from a short course of anti-depressants to much longer, stronger and even life long prescriptions. I won't make a list of them here but usually there is an information slip inside the packet that gives pretty comprehensive information about the drug. Otherwise, the doctors and the internet can supply you with the information.

OTHER THINGS THAT MAY HELP

Many people have latent talents and gifts and it is a good thing to explore those things. Things like arts and crafts, writing and poetry, sports like walking running and swimming, photography and others. The problem for a depressed person, is motivation. One almost has to take himself by the nape of the neck and force oneself to give it a go. Lets make no bones about this, when we are ill and depressed, the slightest chore can seem like a mountain to climb. We need help but if we can confide in someone who is patient and kind perhaps we can work with them to take the first small step. Another thing is to live in the now, the present moment. The past is gone and the future has not arrived yet. What we have is now, live now. This takes practice but can be cultivated and can make a huge difference. On a submarine or ship at sea, the first thing they do is "shut all watertight doors". We can learn a lesson from that by looking at each day as a day tight compartment. It's alright to plan for the future or recall the past for some genuine purpose but then immediately return to today. We live in the now! We live today!

More next issue

CONFERENCES & EVENTS

"Painting with Light a Journey out of Darkness"

Runs until 4th September 2011 - University of Stirling, Mon-Fri 8.30-5.00

Included as part of the Art on the Park initiative, this exhibition comprises poetry, photography and paintings, and is intended to carry hope for others in terms of recovery.

Lorraine Nicholson, the artist, says of the exhibition: "The darkness in the exhibition's title refers to severe depression which deprived me of light and colour and the ability to create for several years but ironically it has led to the light becoming even stronger and my work prolific."

Recovery Learning Communities: An Alternative American Experience

Tuesday 6th September 2011 - Renfield Centre, Glasgow

A workshop on the development of recovery led peer support projects for people with mental health problems drawing from the experience of projects in the USA

Book online at www.workingtorecovery.co.uk or call Karen on 01851 810060.

Bipolar Scotland AGM and Annual Conference

Saturday 17th September 2011 - Menzies Hotel, 27 Washington Street, Glasgow

The main speakers at the conference will be Phil Barker and Poppy Buchannan-Barker, who will talk about the Tidal Model of nursing. To book a place for the conference please contact the Bipolar Scotland office on 0141 560 2050 or e-mail info@bipolarscotland.org.uk

Suicide Prevention: Supporting Scotland's Communities

Saturday 17th September 2011 - Glasgow

The SAMH national conference is aimed at people who have been bereaved by suicide. It will let people share their experiences in a constructive way.

More information from www.samh.org.uk or call SAMH on 0141 530 1000.

Experts by Experience Conference

21st September 2011 - Perth Concert Hall, 9.30 - 4.30.

The SRN's national conference on peer support is intended for those interested in developing recovery focussed services, including mental health strategy leads and planners, service providers, people with personal experience, peer workers and those interested in providing training.

Experts by Experience will provide a platform for people across Scotland to come together to learn about the exciting developments in peer working happening around the country and to explore its development.

There's still time to register for the conference before the 5th August deadline, call Scottish Recovery Network on 0141 240 7790 or register at www.scottishrecovery.net

2011 Healthy Working Lives Conference

Thursday, 29th September 2011 - Carnegie Conference Centre, Dunfermline

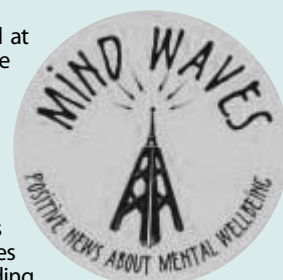
Open to any organisation who is interested in developing health, safety and wellbeing policies, practice and awareness raising activities.

Please e-mail Diane Murray at hwlife@nhs.net for more details.

Mind Waves

Mind Waves is a pilot programme aimed at promoting mental health through positive use of the media. The aim is to raise awareness among the general public about mental wellbeing and recovery and what makes a healthy community for everyone. The programme will make use of a wide range of ways to promote messages about mental wellbeing, such as social networking, blogs and internet sites such as YouTube, newspaper articles, recording pieces for the radio and using the creative arts.

We are looking for people who would like to get involved, there are many different ways to do this. To find out more please go to http://otbds.org/index.php/project/view_details/9



PLUS NEWS

SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW PLUS AGM & CONFERENCE 1st SEPT

All PLUS members will have received an invite to this event at The Queens Hotel (next to the Perth bus station). Start time 10.30 for AGM at 11. Lunch around 12.30. Finishing 4pm. We are delighted that Simon Bradstreet of the Scottish Recovery Network will be speaking at the event, with 'Jo' an Edinburgh poet lifting our spirits with some delightful verse. The event will be focussed on the theme of positivity, love and community spirit. PLUS members free. Non members £10 to cover catering costs.

MEMBERS MEETING

The next PLUS members meeting will take place on Thursday 8th September. Meet at PLUS office at 1.30pm. this forum gives our members the chance to set the future work of PLUS and volunteer to make it happen.

NEW MRH JOBS POTENTIAL

PLUS rep attended the MRH Engagement meeting on 27th July and raised awareness of the potential for work for former patients and people finding it difficult to get work due to stigma within the new service (such as peer support workers or ancillary staff) number of new jobs are anticipated at 100 - the majority will be for trained nurses in the secure care complex.

Discussed the role of the NHS in setting an example in employing people who have experienced mental illness. Social businesses were potential vehicles for doing this as many trained and offered employment to marginalised and excluded individuals. The MRH is presently linked in with the Health & Social Care Academy, Perth college which trains people furthest away from the job market for possible employment in the caring professions. PLUS agreed to look into what was happening elsewhere on this and revisit earlier work on promoting social clauses in public procurement.

NATIONAL NEWS

SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK

Suicide Prevention Week runs from 5th-11th September. 'choose life', the national strategy and action plan to prevent suicide in Scotland, will be highlighting this with special events and promoting media awareness. The website is at www.chooselife.net

THE MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION

The Mental Health Foundation have recently completed a project which was aimed at finding out which outcomes people felt were the most important to measure when evaluating the success of mental health interventions. The findings, published in the 'Journal of Mental Health', revealed that people with lived experience should be more involved in research on mental health interventions and that they should be asked what they feel is working best for them.

THE WELFARE REFORM BILL

The Welfare Reform Bill is halfway to becoming law. It has completed its passage through the House of Commons and was to have been debated by the House of Lords in late July. So far the Government is succeeding in pushing through its reforms: but SAMH and other mental health charities such as PLUS are lobbying for change. The next debate in the House of Lords has been postponed until September, for ways to voice your concern about these changes see PLUS website at www.plusperth.co.uk

NEW ONLINE MODULES FOR BIPOLAR DISORDER

The Department of Psychological Medicine and Neurology at Cardiff University, have developed three new online modules that cover:

Bipolar Disorder for Partners, Families and Carers –
http://www.beatingbipolar.org/families_and_carers/

Pregnancy and Childbirth in women with Bipolar Disorder –
http://www.beatingbipolar.org/women_and_bipolar/

Diagnosing Bipolar Disorder for Primary Care practitioners
http://www.beatingbipolar.org/primary_care_practitioners/

NEW EATING DISORDER GROUP

A new user-led group had its first informal meeting on Saturday 6 August to raise awareness and campaign about eating disorders. They are looking for people wishing to get involved. The purpose is to fill the current gap in awareness raising, campaigning and networking around the topic of Eating Disorders in Scotland. The group is being organised through Action on Depression, Scotlands National Charity for Depression CONTACT 0131 467 3050 (open 11am - 1pm and 2pm-4pm, Monday to Thursday).

LOCAL NEWS

MEETING WITH ELECTED POLITICIANS

**Friday 9th Sept 2011, 10.00-12.00, The Gateway,
North Methven Street**

The event will follow the format of last year's event *Question Time* with two panels, one of elected politicians and the other of voluntary sector representatives. Questions can be on any topic relevant to the work of the voluntary sector and should be posted or emailed to Bob Gillespie at The Gateway, who will ensure that the questions on the day cover a range of topics.

Contact Bob on 01738 452210 to book a place.

LOCAL FUNDING SURGERIES

Funding Surgeries will take place in The Gateway. There are two hour-long appointments at each Funding Surgery. Telephone or e-mail Bob 01738 452210; Bob.Gillespie@pkavs.org.uk to arrange an appointment. Before you attend, you should have some idea of how much funding you need and what for.

Tuesday 30th August: 11am and 12 noon

Thursday 15th September: 1pm and 2pm

Tuesday 27th September: 11am and 12 noon

ARTSPACE –HELP WANTED

Artspace, local arts charity are renovating Loves former auction hall in Perth. They are running an auction to generate funds and are looking for general sale items for the auction..... reserves can be set..... They will take 5% commission and can pick up from a 30 mile radius or will accept drop offs at the venue in Perth. It is intended that the former Loves building be used as a community space.
Tel. 01738 587 565

BI POLAR SUPPORT GROUP

This falls on the 4th Monday of the month 7.30-9pm at Perth Association for Mental Health, Milne St. Tel 639657. All welcome. Dr Lisa Gadon was the speaker for the June meeting and there was a talk on psychological therapies used in the treatment of mental illness. The group would like to thank Leanne for her input to the group meetings over the past year and to welcome Victoria Ross the new group facilitator.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE ACADEMY OPEN DAY 2nd SEPT

The Health and Social Care Academy who run an 8 week full time course designed to get people ready for working in health and social care are holding an Information Day on 2nd Sept at Perth College (main building) at 10am. Interviews will be held on the 9th Sept for anyone who is interested in enrolling on the course.

OCD (OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER) SELF-HELP GROUP

A group for people with OCD will meet at 1.30 on Mon 8th August at Perth Association for Mental Health, 6 Milne Street, Perth. If you are interested in being part of this please tel. 07881 650786 to have a chat with Robert, or contact any of the PAMH team.

WOMAN FACING CHANGE

A new CATH Project aimed at supporting women towards a more independent, inclusive and fulfilled life.

Many of these women will be disadvantaged in some way but they all have one thing in common – they want to move their life forward in a positive direction, and see having a befriender as a step towards this.

CATH are seeking Volunteer Befrienders who are reliable, empathetic, non judgemental and good communicators with a few hours to spare weekly.

In return you will receive all reasonable expenses, a comprehensive training and support programme, and the satisfaction that you have helped someone move their life forward.

For further information or an application pack please contact: Michelle Holden on 01738 580188 or email m.holden@cath-org.co.uk

Under Schedule 9 of the Equality Act 2010 only women are eligible to apply.



Footballers Big Day Out

A local football squad made up of individuals who have used mental health services travelled to Glasgow to take part in their second 11-a-side fixture recently. The group is coached by members of the St. Johnstone Community Coaching Team in an initiative which has been arranged by PLUS (the local Mental Health Users Forum) and funded by Perth and Kinross Council and the Communities 2014 Fund. Despite a plucky performance the group suffered a seven goal defeat to a talented Glasgow side linked to Leverndale Hospital, although the game was closer than the scoreline would suggest. The squad will continue their development with a further block of coaching sessions commencing again in August at Murray Royal Hospital as Saints continue their commitment to supporting those with mental health problems which they demonstrated by signing the 'see me' anti-stigma pledge last season.

Point of View

Dear PLUS Perth

If anyone in any way does feel supported or less stigmatised by the knowledge that Catherine Zeta Jones, too, has bipolar disorder then, great; otherwise, unlike Rethink (and with no disrespect to the actress), I don't think that yet another celebrity 'endorsement' of 'bipolarity' is unequivocally a good thing (PLUS Newsletter, July 2011) or, at least, it may have unintended consequences.

Bipolar disorder is often now presented as a prestige diagnosis: "you don't have to be gay or Jewish to get on in Hollywood, but, by God, you have to be bipolar" ("The Secret Life of the Manic Depressive", BBC, 2006). This may well have contributed to a new phenomenon of increasing numbers of people presenting to psychiatrists with self-diagnosed bipolar disorder ("I want to be bipolar...a new phenomenon", The Psychiatrist, March 2010). It seems some people do not need to overcome stigma to claim the diagnosis: 'bipolarity' is already believed to confer positive status, and any stigma is offset by the personal and social gains it appears to carry, such as feeling, or being thought, artistic, creative, intelligent.

This image of bipolar disorder is an acceptable face of 'madness' and, if it does reduce stigma in one way, in another, it also feeds into a hierarchy of stigma within mental illness. It is an image at once remote from the reality of many people's experiences and at the same time insidiously demoralising: not everyone feels unambiguously blessed to be bipolar. Celebrity accounts of being bipolar can be seen, in effect, as a form of advertising which, coupled with a recent expansion of the diagnosis to include more types and degrees of bipolarity, play a role in its purported rapidly growing prevalence - a gift for the drug companies. That more and more of our difficulties and distress are named and defined as illness, seen as arising in constitutionally predisposed individuals separate from the social context of their lives, should not go unexamined.

*Yours sincerely,
Jane Andrew*

THE WALLED GARDEN ANNUAL OPEN DAY

Saturday 20th August 2011, 12.00-4.00pm

Join The Walled Garden Team for a magical Alice in Wonderland / Mad Hatters tea party at their **Walled Garden Open Day**. With tea and cakes galore, a sizzling BBQ, live music and stalls, this Alice in Wonderland themed event will celebrate summer in the garden and raise funds.

Entry is by donation.



MAD HATTERS HAT COMPETITION

As part of the Open Day, The Walled Garden are also running a hat competition for this event.

Design a Hat – anything goes!

Entries will be judged on the open day.

The Hat Parade will take place at 2pm

Winner will receive a £20 voucher and afternoon tea at Hettie's Tearooms, Pitlochry.

For more information please call The Walled Garden on 01738 562420.

AT THE END OF THE DAY

It's the end of the day,
darkness is upon us
and the moon is shining bright
Stars twinkle in the sky
on this beautiful night
No more worries, no more cares
as sweet dreams enfold us
and we drift off to sleep.

Marion McKinstery

"There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so"

Hamlet - William Shakespeare