

FIRST WORD

PLUS – Promoting Love and Understanding in Society?

In 1995 BBC Everyman screened the story of the Revd. Simon Bailey, a parish priest dying of AIDS; and of the love and support extended to him by the parish in the South Yorkshire mining village of Dinnington. Not perhaps the sort of place that one might expect compassion and love, but prejudice and rejection in such circumstances.

Too, all too often it is stigma and rejection afforded to those of us who have suffered mental health problems that have exacerbated and intensified depression and the feeling of rejection, that have isolated us still further, and for some resulted in suicide.

I worked voluntarily at one time at a place in Norwich, the only condition for working there was that one had to challenge any display of prejudice of any sort. It was one of the happiest places that I have ever worked.

Dinnington Church has a motto, 'Unlimited, unconditional, unquestioning love, freely given with no expectation of return: with comradeship and equality for all.' Might we at PLUS not adopt the same motto?

Rosemary Bailey wrote a book, *Scarlet Ribbons*, about her brother, his illness and death, by its very nature it is not always an easy read, but it is inspirational.

Michael Granger

An Afternoon in the Monastery

Plus Members Meeting Tuesday 7th April. Visitors from Augment (service user led organisation in Arbroath) will join PLUS members in St Mary's Monastery, Kinnoull from 1.30-3.30pm for an afternoon of friendship and understanding. Members will also have the chance to 'catch up' and contribute to recent and future PLUS activities.

Richard Leckerman of Breathing Space will hold his second workshop for PLUS on the topic of happiness. The first one held in Perth Concert Hall during Mental Health Week 07 was greatly enjoyed by those who attended.

St Marys is a beautiful place to meet, set in woodlands at the foot of Kinnoull Hill. There may be the opportunity to have a guided tour around the monastery during the afternoon or have a browse around the working gardens where hens roam free.

Normally our members meetings take place at the Gateway, North Methven St but on this occasion we have had to find an alternative venue due to the room being required for a visit from a member of the Royal family.

PLUS members and potential members are warmly invited to come along to this free event.

As transport will be required can you let me know by the 6th April if you intend coming along.



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

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Letters to the Editor

Dear PLUSpoint,

Get Connected!

I've achieved some goals again-nothing stops me! Having just completed an eighteen week course called Connect based at Perth Association for Mental Health, Milne St, Perth, I found I really enjoyed it. Karen Downs and Mary Amos were great tutors and I would like to thank them for their help. Previous to that I took part in the Asdan course which is really short as it only takes 2 weeks to do. Also I was wondering if anyone out there has a dairy intolerance, like myself, as I am looking for tips and ideas on the meals I could eat.

Many thanks, Linda Campbell

- CONNECT is a training project which aims to help adults who have personal experience of mental health issues benefit from training, study or work opportunities. It is run by Perth College in partnership with Perth Association for Mental Health.
- CONNECT offers pre-vocational courses which can help you:
- Identify skills, qualities and talents.
- Find out about training and work options.
- Improve job-seeking skills.
- Visit local employers and organisations for information/work and study experience.
- Set practical, achievable goals for the future.

Contact PLUS for information about dates of the next Connect Course

The Editor Plus Point

Re: The Consultation on "Smoke Free Mental Health Services"

I am always amused when the word consultation is used by government bodies. Consultation in this context means "Don't expect us to alter our opinions as a result of your arguments because we have already decided but we will pretend to listen for form's sake". If a heroin addict becomes a patient in a psychiatric hospital he is given medication as a substitute which relieves the withdrawal symptoms. If an alcohol addict enters a psychiatric hospital he is also given medication to relieve the withdrawal symptoms. Not so with smokers. Smokers are now told that their addiction (which apparently costs the NHS £1.7 billion but provided the Westminster Government with over £10 billion last year in taxes) is to be given nothing more than "cold turkey" treatment on being admitted to a psychiatric unit. Mental hospitals used to be called Asylums and patients are there for just that - asylum. They seek this asylum till such time as they can cope with their problems and face the outside world again. Forcing them to stop smoking while undergoing treatment is an unnecessary cruelty. It creates yet another serious problem for the patient - a problem which, in turn, has to be dealt with by the staff. Treating a patient with less sympathy than a convicted criminal is surely intolerable. Inmates in HM Prisons are allowed to smoke as prison is their "home". Is not a hospital as much "home" to the patient? If so, why then is this cruel measure being inflicted on the one and not the other?

David Wallace, Perth

Good Mood Food

Dear PLUS,

I'm not one for much psychic stuff but I came across a superb magazine called "Spirit & Destiny". It is full of interesting articles and menus. In the March 09 issue there is a recipe for a drink that could help depression and anxiety. It's called 'Cinnamon pick-me-up'. It says in the magazine that this drink can take off the edge of depression, anxiety and stress. This aromatic spice is also believed

to be a good brain tonic, which helps improve memory, so drink this infusion daily to give mind and body a lift.

Serves 1

- 1 cinnamon stick
- Cup of boiling water

Place cinnamon stick into a cup and pour boiling water over it. Steep for 3 minutes, remove cinnamon stick and enjoy the tonic.

Sheila Robertson

Mental Health Action Week 12th-18th April

Is fear holding you back?

For this year's Mental Health Action week 12-18th April the charity are launching a national campaign to raise awareness about the impact fear and anxiety can have on our lives.

What is the campaign about?

Fear and anxiety are part of the body's natural response to threats or thoughts that something bad might happen. Usually they last for a short time and then pass. But sometimes they last longer and you can get stuck with them. They can take over your life, affecting your ability to eat, sleep, concentrate, travel, enjoy life, and even leave the house or go to work or school.

It can be hard to break the cycle, but there are lots of ways to do it. We want to tell as many people as possible that help is available and that you don't need to suffer in silence.

Get involved

You could help to raise awareness by displaying our poster and distributing copies of our booklet in your workplace, school, community centre or place of worship. Order your pack, our website is www.mentalhealth.org.uk OR Telephone 020 7803 1100



NATIONAL NEWS

Mental Health Media Awards

We would like to know what moved you or made a difference to your perception and understanding of mental health over the past year. You might have become engrossed in a television programme, caught something on the radio or read an article in a magazine or newspaper. If it impressed you, please let us know. To be eligible, your suggestions must have been broadcast or published in the UK, between 9th June 2008 and 10th June 2009. You must tell us about them before the end of June 2009. Closing date for entries will be mid July. By suggesting a potential award winner you will be entered into our prize draw to win a pair of tickets the Mental Health Media Awards. Contact PLUS for a submission form

New Push to End Dementia 'Stigma'

Mr Johnson of the Department of Health told BBC One's Andrew Marr show dementia should be discussed more openly to end the "stigma" and "cruel humour" surrounding it. The aim was to get people to seek diagnosis earlier. At the moment, it took three years, on average, for someone suffering from dementia to seek diagnosis, Mr Johnson said. "It's a bit like cancer was 20 years ago. It wasn't the subject of polite conversation. But unlike cancer, there is some pretty cruel humour attached to dementia and Alzheimer's, which is a form of dementia." He said the government's strategy was aimed at raising the profile of dementia, increasing early diagnosis and improving the quality of treatment. He said there were memory-enhancing drugs and changes to diet and lifestyle which could help the onset of dementia if the condition is diagnosed early enough.

Social Enterprises to Deliver Health Services

Futurebuilders England-led consortium has won the contract to administer the Department of Health's £100m Social Enterprise Investment Fund from June. The fund will offer grants, loans and equity-like products to social enterprises that deliver health and social care services. Futurebuilders will work with Partnerships UK, a public-private partnership that helps NHS staff to create social enterprises.

Charities Report Crunch Time for Scotland's Mental Health

Mental health charities are finding that the economic downturn is affecting Scotland's mental health and causing high rates of depression and anxiety. The Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH) surveyed 376 visitors to their website and describe the results as "surprising and worrying". They found that those who had been affected by the credit crunch were eight times as likely to have sought help for depression for the first time as those who were not affected and four times as likely to have sought help for anxiety for the first time as those who were not affected. People who had been affected by the credit crunch were also more likely to have experienced a more negative emotional state than in previous years.

Vox - National Service User Organisation Focus On Employment

VOX (voice of experience) recently identified employment as one of the areas they will focus upon. They have been involved in a group helping to develop new information leaflets for health professionals, mental health service users who want to return to employment, and potential employers: -

Health Warning:

Being Out of Work Seriously Damages People's Health (*Professionals*)
I Want To Work But . . . (*Individuals*)

It Pays to Look After Your Workforce (*Employer*)

The leaflets are available on the Scottish Government website or for a printed copy contact PLUS

Mental Wealth

Edinburgh University Students Association (EUSA) has launched a campaign to highlight the importance of mental health and help students who are facing difficulties to find help. The Mental Wealth campaign kicked off in February with a Wellbeing Fair and the launch of a website, booklet and posters. EUSA cited pressures of study, managing money and living away from home as issues that can affect students' mental health.

Party in the Park for PKAVS

Local charity Perth & Kinross Association of Voluntary Service (PKAVS) is organising a major community event on Saturday 16 May on Perth's South Inch. With everything from polo and parades to belly-dancing and beer-tasting, this event promises a little something for everyone.

PKAVS Party in the Park will run from 10am to 5pm and will offer opportunities for voluntary groups, businesses, craft-workers and entertainers to join in the big day. Main attractions include a Music & Dance Festival, Arts & Crafts Show, Food Festival Trade Fair and main arena attractions. Radio Tay will broadcast live from the event.

With an expected audience of over 2,000, PKAVS Party in the Park looks to showcase the variety of talents and services within Perthshire while raising funds for PKAVS. One of the larger local charities, PKAVS runs a diverse range of projects supporting young and adult carers and adults with mental ill health or limited mobility, as well as offering training and advice to local charities and community groups.

The one-day event is PKAVS' most ambitious fundraiser in its 36-year history, and volunteer organisers are appealing to local people and organisations to see how they can support the big day.

For further details contact Helen MacKinnon, PKAVS Marketing & Development Coordinator on 01738 567076 or visit www.pkavs.org.uk

Scotland's drinking habit

Industry sales figures suggest Scotland has the eighth highest alcohol consumption level in the world. The country drank nearly 50 million litres of pure alcohol in 2007 - equivalent to 11.8 litres per capita for every person aged over 16.

Scotland's figure is higher than nearly every other country in Western Europe, including Spain (11.7 litres), France (11.4 litres) and Italy (8.0 litres). It is more than double the consumption level in Scandinavian countries like Sweden (6.0 litres) and Norway (5.5 litres) where the relative price of alcohol is considerably higher and the sale of alcohol is more restricted.

Dr. Laurence Gruer, Director of Public Health Science with NHS Health Scotland, said "These figures put Scotland's alcohol misuse problem in context. Taking these figures alongside Scottish Health Survey estimates suggests that around 50 per cent of men and 30 per cent of women may be drinking above weekly limits. The consequences of this level of consumption are only too apparent in our hospital wards, Emergency Departments and on our streets."

Alcohol misuse is estimated to cost Scotland £2.25 billion per year in extra services across the NHS, police, courts, social services and lost economic productivity. For more information, visit <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2009/02/20161722>

LOCAL NEWS

Achieving Smoke Free Mental Health Services Consultation

Wendy McCauslan (VOX) and Susan Scott (PLUS) held a focus group in Moredun B, Murray Royal Hospital on the 25/03 with four in-patients to ascertain views on smoking in mental health services. The consensus within the group was to continue to have access to comfortable smoking facilities. Suggestions were made on having much more in the way of smoking cessation offered such as patches and inhalers. It was felt that smoking was very much a cultural part of being a psychiatric patient-much of this due to having nothing to do and finding that most emotional support was found via other patients in the smoking room.

People felt that a hazard of being admitted to hospital was that you could end up smoking more or even take up smoking but they felt this was not a fair reason to stop smoking in hospitals, but to look at increasing activity and involvement on the ward and to move towards a more general focus on healthy choices rather than banning things that were 'bad for you'. One suggestion was the provision of 'honest' information without spin that would allow people to make their own minds up and stop for the right reasons.

It was also suggested that people may end up taking more medication as a result of a smoking ban. Some of the patients were quite shocked on hearing about the intentions of NHS Scotland to move towards smoke free in mental health services. A full report on this feedback will be used to form both a national and local response to the consultation. If you would like to add your views to this contact PLUS or visit <http://www.healthscotland.com/documents/2387.aspx> Birnam Day Hospital will hold a smoking focus group on Wed 1st April

Tribunal Experiences Survey

Birnam Day Hospital 27th February. Plus, with the help of Kirsty (Birnam DH), arranged a small focus group at the end of February for individuals who have experience of mental health tribunals. The feedback will contribute to the Mental Welfare Commission survey looking at service user views on tribunals and will be part of a national paper and recommendations. A local report documenting the views such as, it being unhelpful and sometimes distressing to be sent piles of papers about the past without any warning, will be taken to the local monitoring group to be looked at and acted upon. The meeting was very productive and those present found it to be a fairly enjoyable experience notwithstanding the wholesome tasty lunch supplied courtesy of Marks and Spencers.

Plus Conference Report

Fit For Purpose - Scottish Story Telling Centre Edinburgh 3rd March. A PLUS representative joined a full house for 'Fit for Purpose '09' which was joined by the Minister for Public Health, Shona Robison. There was a real buzz at the event with a growing understanding of how social enterprises can deliver innovative, responsive services to local communities. It was also clear that there are still a number of significant barriers to overcome. The presentations on the Public Social Partnerships and Community Benefit Clauses offered ideas on how to take plans forward for social enterprise within the NHS and Local Authority. The Minister stressed that the Scottish Government was keen on a bottom up approach from the sector and she hoped to be able to work towards removing any unnecessary barriers. Steve Bell (Healthy Working Lives) presented social enterprises with significant opportunities to deliver on this Government agenda by working in partnership with them.

Upcoming Conferences

Uncharted Territory:

Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh, 27th May 2009

The mental well-being of Scotland's veterans

This event will give public, private and voluntary service providers evidence-based information and approaches that can help veterans and their families build resiliency to prevent and to treat mental health disorders.

Visit www.samh.org to book a place.

Facing the Future:

Edinburgh International Conference Centre, 24-26 June 2009

Forensic Mental Health Services in Change

Key themes include Personality Disorder, Recovery, Legislative Change and Stigma.

Book a place at www.forensicnetwork.scot.nhs.uk

Self Harm in Children and Young People

Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, 4th June 2009

This conference will increase your understanding and knowledge of self harm in children and young people.

Call 0141 201 0441 for more details.

AT THE END OF THE DAY

Hope by Vaclav Havel

"Either we have hope within us or we don't; it is a dimension of the soul, and it's not dependent on some observation of the world. Hope is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere beyond the horizons. Hope in this deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously heading for success, but rather an ability to work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed. Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction, that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out. It is Hope, above all, which gives the strength to live and continually try new things."

Vaclav Havel is a poet, playwright and politician. He was the last President of Czechoslovakia following the velvet revolution in 1989 and then 1st President of the new Czech Republic.

A Saint for Small Kindnesses

Is there a patron saint of small kindnesses,
who'll witness the changing of the sheets in the night,
the popping in of good neighbours,
the gentle kiss to paper cheek when age
has done its work?

Is there a saint who'll recognise
the hand that guides the elbow or the ear that hears
the story, yet again, as if it's new?
Who, against the trend,
will champion the loyal and unassuming;
Quietly, discreetly



Heather Reid