

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

FIRST WORD

Changes ahead- new welfare reforms

PLUS has been gathering information about the new welfare reforms for since the beginning of the year. Keeping our members informed about what is happening is very important to us. Knowledge can make the difference between feeling hopeful not hopeless.

During a recent talk by Welfare Rights on the reforms we heard that removing tax credits could take people OUT of work and put families INTO poverty. There are also fears of ghettoisation of people on housing benefits due to the rate being capped at £400. This is most likely to have the biggest impact on people living in the city of London but will also affect others elsewhere. The speaker said that people born on or before 6th April 1952 will be safe from ESA migration but for those who had been assessed in the Aberdeen and Burnley pilot sites things were pretty stark - 30% of people assessed were refused ESA with only 6% of people remaining in

the non conditional group and staying on their present level of benefits. In P&K there are 4420 people in receipt of Incapacity Benefit; going by the results of the pilot there is potential for 1326 to be refused benefit.

The Government stands to save 18 billion if the Welfare Reforms become an Act with an enormous loss to the Scottish economy. The reforms have not yet been passed by the government so there is still time to stop this going through. PLUS previously met with Pete Wishart MP to voice our concerns on this and he is taking them, alongside others views, to parliament.

In continuing the stream of information we are arranging for further talks from organisations such as welfare rights and other pressure groups. It is vital to keep up this pressure to make sure things are done fairly, and if and when, the reforms go through, there is adequate preparation and support to cope with the impact on people of them.

Finally for any more info visit our website www.plusperth.co.uk where you will also find details on how to voice your concerns, links to other campaigning organisations and various report.

FOOTBALL PROMOTING RECOVERY IN PERTH AND KINROSS



An exciting game of football recently took place on McDiarmid Astro turf which saw 2 teams of users of mental health services take part in an 11-a-side fixture. The team from Perth (pictured left) has been receiving regular coaching over the past year from 2 members of the Saints Community Coaching Team as part of an initiative organised by PLUS funded by Perth and Kinross Council and the Lotteries 2014 Fund. They took on a team from Falkirk Association for Mental Health in this fixture and won 7-4. Saints are committed to tackling the stigma associated with mental health and signed the 'see me' pledge to support that campaign last season www.seemescotland.org.uk. The programme of coaching for the team will continue into the season ahead and they are looking forward to more regular fixtures.

For more info contact PLUS 626242 or John McDonald on 562303.

NEW GOVERNMENT REPORT PROMOTES PEOPLE POWER

The Christie Commission Report, a very significant government paper in terms of empowering people to be the solutions in their own communities was launched on 29/06. It has the potential to promote a new way of working where the third sector (our sector) is not seen as a frilly add on but providing services that people really need. The report also highlights the need for public services to do 'with people' rather than to them and advises much more of a preventative approach in service provision.

To view the 'Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services' visit <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/06/27154527/0>

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)	

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GREY MATTER by Cameron Horn

CHAPTER TWO

MY EXPERIENCE OF DEPRESSION

I can share a bit of what depression is like for me. I also suffer from OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder) I can go from feeling quite well and positive then all of a sudden, there is a black cloud that descends upon me. Within this depressed state enveloped by this cloud, there are voices. When I say voices, they are more like intrusive thoughts, thoughts I don't want in my head. They fill me with fear, guilt from the past and fear of the future. They create scenarios in my mind that scare me. I try to fight them off but this only seems to make them more powerful. This is obsessive rumination OCD and depression working hand in hand to make my whole existence a misery. At one point a few years ago, I hardly came out of the house for two years. I unplugged the phone, drew the curtains and ate huge bars of chocolate, watched scores of movies, until I was morbidly obese. I felt that all my neighbours were against me so I only went out with my dogs at night. I couldn't work a job or do the slightest thing around the house. In short, I was completely incapacitated. I've spent a spell in a psychiatric ward twice thus far, which I hated at the time but it ended up being quite beneficial.

Sometimes it feels like my life has been wasted and that I am in oblivion, a black hole in my mind where I can see nothing but darkness. Everything seems colourless and trivial and the things I used to enjoy hold no sparkle any longer. Sometimes I'd rather just be dead or go to sleep for a very long time. In this place I lie there and wait for the dark cloud to pass, and it does, eventually. I am not good at being around a lot of people with conversations going on around me. I feel awkward and clumsy and end up saying silly things. A few years later I developed diabetes and suffered a series of mini strokes. This brought on a serious depression and I spent a good deal of time indoors and often in bed. Gradually though, I am recovering to the point where I can function again.

EFFECT ON OTHERS

Others around me are deeply affected by my mood. My wife (we are very close), friends, relatives, co workers (when I was working), and I blame myself for all of this which serves to deepen my depression. I worry over the slightest thing and imagine awful things in my mind. I sink further and deeper into the abyss. I begin to see myself as a waste of space, a poison to others. The world becomes lacklustre and everything looks grey. All I want to do is sleep to try to escape from it, besides the fact that I feel tired all the time. A grim state of affairs indeed. I have considered suicide on many occasions, i.e., that is, it enters my mind. I very often go to bed early in the evening just to get away from my head.

STIGMA

Mental illness carries quite a stigma with it. Especially with other men. I live in Scotland, where the old "pick yourself up by the bootstraps" is prevalent. I wish it were that simple!

I did join a local group for mental health and found that I could speak freely there. After all, we were all pretty much in the same boat. There were some there who were worse off than me and some that were recovering. Being around people who have mental health problems can be helpful but there is a danger that it becomes one's identity. Employers are also very dubious about hiring someone with mental health problems. It would be depressing to discuss depression itself continually, and so I would like to speak about hope. First, something about fear.

FEAR

This is a predominant factor in depression, fear of people, fear of the smallest of things, fear of hell, fear of death, fear of a heart attack or cancer, fear of crowds, fear of a whole myriad of things. Fear of certain things is healthy and wise, for instance, dangerous dogs, traffic and many other things but the fear of depressed persons is very often, unreasonable. I used to think that my neighbours all hated me, so as much as possible, I avoided them. I have had **panic attacks** where I was in a crowd and felt I was going to have a heart attack, I could hardly breathe and had to return to the car. Fear can be managed though by planning ahead of events that one is going to be involved in. Self talk is important by weighing whether our present fear is reasonable and then taking a deep breath and pushing through it. This takes practice and has to be cultivated. I am still having to learn this myself.

I am afraid of phone calls so my wife answers the phone, mail through the letterbox can unnerve me, bumping into people that don't like me (or I perceive it to be so) or judge me in certain ways can bring on fear, especially if I have to talk to them when they ask "where are you working now?" immediately, stigma and a need to justify myself kicks in. I have a phobia about small enclosed spaces like lifts etc. Don't get me wrong, fear is a horrible thing, and powerful, but what I'm saying is that we can come through it, sometimes with a little help from medication.

More next issue

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

Vox Conference and AGM

Monday 29th August 2011, The Grand Central Hotel, Gordon Street, Glasgow from 10.00am-3.30pm

Vox "Voices of Experience" is a National Mental Health Service user organisation.

Contact John Steel on 0141 572 1663 or jsteel@mhf.org.uk for more details.

"Somewhere Over The Rainbow" – PLUS AGM and Conference

Thursday 1st September 2011, Perth Concert Hall 11.30am-4.30pm

Contact PLUS on 626242 or plusperth@msn.com to book a place. (Members free)

At the Sharp Edge – a dialogue event

Tuesday 20th September 2011, Carnegie Conference Centre, Dunfermline

"discussions around peer led crisis alternatives"

Guests include Shery Mead & Chris Hansen, Ron Coleman & Karen Taylor, Fiona Venner

Contact Chrys Muirhead on 07981 397570 or peersupportfife@aol.com

CONSULTATIONS

RE-INTRODUCTION OF UNIFORMS AT MRH

PLUS would like to gather views on the re-introduction of uniforms into wards at MRH. This could result in all staff wearing trousers and polo shirt type uniform, not formal dresses and white coats.

If PLUS members have a significant majority view on this one way or the other we will put our view forward. Various pieces of work/research will be needed to put forward our case.

Consider what the impact would be on patients recovery and quality of care if the staff reverted to wearing uniform.

Timescale wise, all views will be fully considered over a few months so we have time to think about this and respond if necessary.

Your thoughts/views please!

AGE DISCRIMINATION CONSULTATION

The Banning Age Discrimination consultation was launched on 3 March. It sets out how this provision in the Equality Act 2010 will be implemented by health and social care organisations. Having no exceptions to the ban, means that from April 2012, any use of age in decision-making will need to be objectively justified if challenged.

This requirement will also apply to organisations that provide goods or services to, or on behalf of, NHS and social care organisations. It is the final part of the act to be implemented.

The consultation is available at www.equalities.gov.uk and the Department of Health is seeking views from across the community, including people of all ages and people working in relevant industries.

SPENDING CUTS SURVEY

The last two years has seen significant cuts to public sector spending affecting the social care funding across Scotland. These changes may have a significant impact on the lives of people living with a mental health condition, particularly in relation to quality of life, mental health and well-being and recovery.

Mental health organisations (including: VOX, HUG, Bipolar Scotland, ACUMEN, Stirling Users Network, Scotia Clubhouse, Mental Health Network (Greater Glasgow), and Peer Support Fife) have launched a survey to gather evidence from across Scotland on the extent of the spending cuts and how they impact on the services people receive, and whether the spending cuts have resulted in negative social outcomes affecting people's mental health and recovery.

If you would like to contribute contact PLUS or visit www.surveymonkey.com/s/YQFVNYQ

LOCAL NEWS

'CAIRN WELL' REPLACES BAROSSA

The former Barossa St, CPN service has now moved to PRI maternity unit, lower level one. The service is operating under the new name of 'Cairn Well'. All enquiries for this service contact 01738 413070. St Leonards bank CPN service has no date for moving as yet but it is anticipated to be later this year.

NEW OCD (OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER) SELF-HELP GROUP -

A new group for people with OCD will meet at 1.30 on Mon 11th July at Perth Association for Mental Health, 6 Milne Street, Perth. If you are interested in being part of this please tel. 01738 639657 to have a chat with Robert or any of the PAMH team.

NEXT WEDNESDAY GROUP - 27th JULY

The Wednesday Group is a group for people recovering from mental health problems requiring support to take part in social activities.

This month's activity is a bus run. Please meet at 6pm, PAMH, Milne Street. Contact John or Mandy on 562303 to book a seat.

MRH GARDEN PARTY - SATURDAY 1st SEPTEMBER 2012

There has been one meeting regards this and a follow-up meeting will take place in a couple of months— more details later. If you have any ideas you want to add or know of anyone with a large marquee for hire, please contact Pamela on pamela.coventry@nhs.net.

SPL FIT – GET A NEW LEASE OF LIFE!

Become more active with your local Scottish Premier League Club. A new initiative at McDiarmid Park, Perth for people to lose weight and to get fitter.

If you are a man aged 35-65 years old and you want to feel better about yourself then why not sign up for SPL fit? Call 0800 389 2129, Text FFIT to 88802 or Email ffit@sphsu.mrc.ac.uk

CHANGE OF PREMISES FOR CENTRAL HEALTHCARE

Central Healthcare have moved from their address at 79 South Street and are now based in Drumhar Health Centre.

Central Healthcare is dedicated to providing care for anyone who is homeless, or in a hostel or temporary accommodation. They also have an outreach team of specialist nurses who can arrange to see clients in the community.

The new telephone number is 01738 564261

MAD HATTERS AT THE WALLED GARDEN

The Walled Garden are holding their open day on 20th August, 10.00am at the theme is "The Mad Hatters Tea Party".

There will be live music, along with plants and fruit and veg for sale. Contact the Walled Garden on 01738 562430 for more details.

NEXT PLUS MEMBERS MEETING - TUES 5TH JULY

The next PLUS members meeting will take place on Tuesday 5th July at Servite Housing (next door to PLUS). Any members wishing copies of note of last meeting please contact the office. Some PLUS members pictured below at June meeting.



NATIONAL NEWS

MAKING CHANGES IN OUR OWN LIVES

"Outside the Box" have produced a new resource to help people make changes in their own life. Includes information on finding out what your rights are, getting advice on money, housing, employment, keeping well, getting access to care and support services, keeping safe, help for anyone who is being hurt or threatened, making a plan, useful contacts for more information and help, tips and hints and case examples - how some people made changes.

"Just knowing that it is okay to ask makes a big difference".

For more information and to download the publication go to: http://otbds.org/index.php/project/view_details/99/



STEPHEN FRY TO BECOME THE NEW PRESIDENT OF MIND

Stephen Fry is to become the new President of Mind, UK mental health charity, succeeding Lord Melvyn Bragg who last week revealed that he is to step down after fifteen years in the role.

Stephen Fry has been a Mind supporter for a number of years and was named Mind Champion in 2007 for his award-winning documentary *The Secret Life of a Manic Depressive*, which explored his experiences of living with bipolar disorder.



DEPRESSION ALLIANCE SCOTLAND NOW ACTION ON DEPRESSION

Action on Depression is the new name for Depression Alliance Scotland. The move coincides with a major new campaign and fundraising initiative to highlight why everyone in Scotland can and should take action on depression. Ten per cent of the population of Scotland – around half a million people – are taking anti-depressant medication which the charity believes is unacceptable.

FOOTBALLERS' GUIDE TO MENTAL HEALTH

The suicide in 2009 of the Hannover and Germany goalkeeper Robert Enke, who had been depressed since the death of Lara his two-year-old daughter raised the issue of mental health in football and authorities in England have acted by producing a booklet on life as a professional footballer and how to handle it.

Those who have gone public over depression include Paul Gascoigne, Andy Cole, Neil Lennon and Stan Collymore are quoted in the guidebook.

CATHERINE ZETA JONES AND STIGMA

Rethink, mental health charity believes that Catherine Zeta Jones recent revelation that she has bipolar will help to challenge stigma. The stigma that surrounds mental illness often means that people stay silent and try to cope alone. When high profile people speak out it makes a huge difference to the millions of other people facing mental illness as it shows they are not alone.

MORE CHOICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA

A new online resource for people with dementia, family, carer and social care professionals is available from www.mentalhealth.org.uk/dementiachoices

The range of free online and print resources has just been recently launched by the foundation.

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES



The Caterans – 2011

Congratulations to "The Caterans" (pictured above) who recently walked 50 miles of the Fife Coastal Path. This follows on from last year's successful completion of The Ceteran Trail.

The members got together through their local mental health services and the purpose of the walks are to raise awareness of the benefits of exercise, in particular walking, and improved mental health.

Most of the group have ongoing mental health difficulties however by regular walking are able to experience increased self esteem, confidence and have met many new friends. There are additional physical benefits and weight loss is evident. Overall these activities are of enormous benefit to each member on their road to recovery.

During this recent walk we rented a cottage in Elie which was very comfortable and allowed for socialising, rest and recreation as desired. The group completed a 'reflection diary of the week' and included comments such as:

"Feeling much healthier and fitter. Enjoyed the beautiful scenery and sea. Enjoyed the camaraderie and friendship, chitter chatter and laughter."

"Enjoyed the company, experience and also weight loss."

"Enjoyed exercise, loved the scenery, nice getting away."

"The experience, the friendship and the laughs."

"Added some structure to my days, making me feel like a better person."

The group intend to "keep on walking" with regular day walks and an annual long distance trail. For further information on group and activities contact Annmarie Gorrie, Trades Lane Community Mental Health Team, Coupar Angus, Tel. 01828 626000.

Once again, congratulations to all who took part and roll on next year!

Anne Marie Gorrie

Point of View

Some of us may have had the misfortune to be labelled 'severe and enduring' by the psychiatric establishment. Consigned to the role of 'revolving door patient'. Given special teams to look after us or otherwise control and manage. Excluded from certain services that could aid our recovery. Put on a path that defines us in terms of our 'mental illness'. Made to fit the criteria. A square peg in a round hole.

And yet some of us have refused to believe the label. We have gone our own way. Taken control of our own mental health. Navigated the system. Reduced and even come off the psychotropic drugs. Recovered. Against all odds, or so they would have us believe. After all, they tell us, we have an 'illness' that is lifelong. Researchers have been looking for the gene. Brains have been scanned in an attempt to prove the theory. Psychiatry is grasping at straws to maintain their status quo. And still we recover. It's a miracle.

Or it could just be that they've got it wrong. That our mental ill health was episodic and related to the stresses and strains of life. A normal reaction to an abnormal situation. An escape valve to relieve the pressure. And all we needed was time out, a break from reality. Sanctuary and healing. A listening ear and therapeutic treatment, gently done.

Psychotherapy rather than psychiatry. A real person centred approach. And a different world from the 'severe and enduring' cul-de-sac.

Chrys Muirhead, Peersupportfife

AT THE END OF THE DAY

Afterglow – *Lasting Happiness*

<http://www.actionforhappiness.org>

Afterglow is the type of happiness you experience after having done something you feel good about. It is more durable than pleasure, which tends to wear off soon after stopping, or having too much of, whatever it is you enjoy. When you've done something especially important to you, like succeeding in an area you've been struggling with, helping a friend in a way that really makes a difference or dealing well with a difficult situation, this can leave a warm inner glow of contentment still felt months, or even years, later.

Action for Happiness is a movement for positive social change bringing together people from all walks of life who want to play a part in creating a happier society for everyone.

For fifty years we've aimed relentlessly at higher incomes. But despite being much wealthier, we're no happier than we were five decades ago. At the same time we've seen an increase in wider social issues, including a worrying rise in anxiety and depression in young people. It's time for a positive change in what we mean by progress.

And continuing on the theme of happiness

Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.

Buddha

Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day.

Henri Nouwen

Happiness is as a butterfly which, when pursued, is always beyond our grasp, but which if you will sit down quietly, may alight upon you.

Nathaniel Hawthorne

Smile

A smile costs nothing, but gives much -
It takes but a moment, but the memory of it usually lasts forever.
None are so rich that can get along without it -
And none are so poor but that can be made rich by it.

It enriches those who receive, without making poor those who give -
It creates sunshine in the home,
Fosters good will in business,
And is the best antidote for trouble -
And yet it cannot be begged, borrowed, or stolen, for it is of no value
Unless it is given away.

Some people are too busy to give you a smile -
Give them one of yours-
For the good Lord knows that no one needs a smile so badly
As he or she who has no more smiles left to give.

Author unknown