FIRST WORD

Welcome to the April edition of PLUS Point.

There has been a lot in the news lately about loneliness and how it has become an epidemic among young adults. Now it is just as great an affliction of older people. A study by Independent Age shows that severe loneliness in England blights the lives of 700,000 men and 1.1m women over 50, and is rising with astonishing speed. Here in Scotland our parliament has taken steps to look into the effects of loneliness, an essential piece of work. Loneliness is a killer metaphorically speaking and literally too.

George Monbiot writer and environmentalist in a recent article ‘The Age Of Loneliness is Killing Us’ says “British children no longer aspire to be train drivers or nurses – more than a fifth say they “just want to be rich”: wealth and fame are the sole ambitions of 40% of those surveyed. A government study in June revealed that Britain is the loneliness capital of Europe. We are less likely than other Europeans to have close friends or to know our neighbours. Who can be surprised, when everywhere we are urged to fight like stray dogs over a dustbin”.

Strong words but ones that I believe ring true in today’s world. So what can we do to stop this growing ‘disease’ in society. I would say having a purpose in life is one of the most important things that can keep you connected with others and feeling involved but also just getting out of your house and making an effort to speak to others can change your day from being a very potentially lonely and isolated one to feeling part of something and having conversation with others. We would like to hear how people feel about loneliness and perhaps things that they do to prevent experiencing it in the first place.

Enjoy reading this month’s newsletter.

ASDA JOINS BLACK DOG CAMPAIGN

Asda has joined the Black Dog Campaign run by SANE a UK mental health charity. Asda appear to be trying to amend bad press they gained after selling Halloween costumes depicting ‘mental patients’. The Black Dog Campaign reduces the stigma surrounding mental illness and encourages people to seek help early, rather than suffering in silence. www.sane.org.uk/what_we_do/black_dog

P&K COUNCIL LAUNCH ‘MIND YOUNG HEALTH’

‘Mind Young Health’, a compilation of nationally available web based resources created by P&K council was launched at the Young Persons City Base on Friday 20 March.

Councillor Dave Duggan said at the launch;

“This is a fantastic resource. All of us are on the spectrum of mental health, whether it be good or bad, therefore we all need good quality information like this to keep ourselves well, well done to all involved”.

Hannah Kettles who put together the resource with the direction of Marliese Richmond P&K planning officer said that they chose the website from nationally recognised websites to ensure it was safe, and kept the colours bright and bold to appeal to young people.

To view the information visit:
http://www.pkc.gov.uk/youngmentalthewellbeing

Marliese and Hannah pictured at the launch.
CONFERENCE REPORT
First National Conference on Open Dialogue
London March 2015
‘The Great Unfolding Of Our Hearts’

Dr Russell Razzazque introduced the conference to a 600 strong audience and welcomed delegates from Germany, Canada and Scotland. The great interest in Open Dialogue he said was born out of mental health workers feeling ‘we can do better’. He said that better care from the outset was more economical in the long run. In OD 72% of people presenting with first episode psychosis were back to work within 2 years. He said that good mental health works around good relationships. The crucial importance of relationships was repeated by others frequently throughout the day.

John Brouder – Chief Executive of NELFT took the floor next saying OD will be ‘the revolution in mental health services’ and said OD resonates very closely with a mindful approach of ‘being present’. Being present to hear the patient in their distress and not to ‘shut them down’ – for clinicians to be able to tolerate uncertainty frequently not knowing where things will lead - this struck a chord with me in my own experiences of working as a nurse.

Mark Hofenberg quoted Karl Rogers ‘the more a therapist is themselves the more a person recovers’ and said that we needed to keep asking ourselves as clinicians ‘are we doing it good enough’. He described OD as being based on science. It is focussed on three values, openness, authenticity and unconditional warmth or love.

Clinicians needed to practice self-compassion to feel compassion for others and that OD training was ‘a journey of self- discovery and learning to be trusting of the patient’s ability to heal themselves’. A considerable part of the conference was focussed on the wealth of knowledge in families and therefore the importance of families in the process. The ‘Triangle of Care’ an important document in relation to this was mentioned.

Dr Tom Stockman, who had invited me to the conference, said what was different about OD was you could ‘feel the hope’ - that something profound seemed to be happening with the patients receiving the OD approach, ‘though we were still not quite sure what it was’.

There was lively debate in the audience following the presentations with a high proportion of input from mothers of sons with psychosis. A GP also spoke about how he was ‘blown away’ by the approach and asked about its use in primary care.

The thing that left the biggest mark on me from the conference was a story from a delegate who had lost her brother to suicide. He had been diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia and she said he did not get the help he needed. She said she was writing a book about her brother - The Great Unfolding of Our Hearts – where I believe the greatest value of Open Dialogue lies.

http://www.nelft.nhs.uk/mental_health/Open_dialogue or contact PLUS for more info.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

Plus May Day Gathering
Friday, 15th May, Queens Hotel, Perth

PLUS Members are organising a PLUS Gathering for the 15th May and have invited the Minister for Sport, Health Improvement and Mental Health, Jamie Hepburn as their main speaker. Come along and join in the discussions on mental health and enjoy a warm friendly atmosphere with likeminded individuals. The day will be further enhanced by the presence of PLUS friend Jo the Edinburgh Poet.

The event which is taking place in the Queens Hotel, Leonard St, Perth starts at 10.30 until 3.30 with coffee and registration from 10am. Places are free for members. £10 for non-members. Lunch will be provided.

Shaping the Future of Mental Health in Scotland
Thursday, 14th May, Perth. Venue to be confirmed.

The Scottish Government’s Mental Health Strategy is due to end this year, and SAMH wants to know what you think should replace it. 1 in 4 people in Scotland experience a mental health problem every year, so SAMH wants everyone affected by mental ill-health to be at the heart of shaping the future. They will be campaigning to influence the next mental health strategy and want you to help them decide what their priorities should be.

The event will be a mixture of facilitated group discussions and inspirational speakers. Refreshments will be provided.

If you would like to attend the events please register your interest by contacting SAMH. Please note that places are limited and preference will be given to those with lived experience of a mental health problem or those with caring responsibilities. Phone 0141 530 1000 or email enquire@samh.org.uk

Rights for Life: Supporting Recovery and Challenging Discrimination
Tuesday, 2nd & Wednesday, 3rd June, Glasgow

SRN are delighted to announce that we are teaming up with our partners at See Me to deliver a free 2-day national conference in Glasgow on 2nd and 3rd of June. Rights for Life: Supporting Recovery and Challenging Discrimination will be a solutions-focused, mass participation event for people to come together around mental health rights and recovery. Visit http://www.scottishrecovery.net to find out more or phone 0141 240 7790.

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES
First of all I am finding it difficult to write about social isolation sitting here alone in my flat. Basically living in social isolation caused a deterioration in my mental health. It started whilst living alone in the village of Bankfoot where I lived for nearly five years. To be accepted as part of the village community one had to have been born there. Or there might have been acceptance if I had children. There was a school about 3 mins walk away. Once I got into my house over 90% of the time I saw nobody. After having lived up north in Morayshire where I made a lot of friends this was an unwelcome change. But for a while I accepted it. I did try to join organizations at the local church. It would take me too long to write down instances where I felt I was deliberately shunned because I happened to be a middle aged women living on my own. The only living beings I can say I made trusting friendships with are the two cats who for a while lived next door. I have a cat and for one winter it worked to say to myself in my house I have a friend in my black cat called Star which enables me not to think about the unfriendly village community. Come the next winter this was not enough. We all need people that we can open up to. Then of course there is the spring, summer and autumn where I had to go and be seen in the garden by people who did little more than say hello. When finally I decided to leave Bankfoot I was experiencing awful pangs of loneliness isolation. Every time I’d come back to Bankfoot on the bus I’d have these feelings welling up inside my stomach, I’d see people sitting in their houses laughing at me and disturbed monstrous images on the road.

I had joined social organisations in Perth but when I came back to Bankfoot there was nothing. Sometimes I felt I was banging my head against a brick wall trying to make people understand this.

I am now staying in a sheltered housing flat for the over sixties in Perth. There are activities in the communal lounge such as bingo, coffee mornings, carpet curling, darts, dominoes etc. I can meet with other tenants in the communal lounge. However, they don’t seem to go into other peoples flats. I consider I have solved part of the problem of loneliness isolation.

Pauline
LOCAL NEWS

THIRD STAFF WRAP TAKES PLACE IN FEBRUARY
PLUS delivered Wellness Recovery Action Plan training to 17 staff from NHS, LA and Vol sector in Bowerswell House in February. A new training is being planned for May or June. Contact PLUS if interested.

NEW MINDSPACE RECOVERY COLLEGE PROSPECTUS
The latest Mindspace Recovery College prospectus from April - July is now available. Offering a range of free learning opportunities the prospectus aims to promote good mental health/wellbeing. For a copy visit www.mindspacepk.com or pop by the PLUS office where we have some copies. Tel 01738 639657.

CRISIS BOOKLET LAUNCHED
CAB Perth recently launched a new booklet 'Got No Money Got No Food'. It includes info on what to do if you are in a money crisis and describe that as 'not having enough money to buy food, electricity, gas and essentials for yourself and your dependent’s. PLUS has copies of the booklet in the office or phone CAB for more info on where to pick one up. Tel 450580.

PATIENTS IN MRH EXPERIENCE
PUPPY LOVE
What a lovely surprise to be met by this cuddly fellow on one of our regular visits to MRH. His name is Russell and he visits patients in the elderly wards as part of the work of Therapet. We think this is brilliant and hope that more folks can meet him - he brightened our morning!

GREENSPACES AS A VEHICLE TO RECOVERY
PLUS has gained funding from the government health and social care integration pot to create more greenspaces in the city centre. The project will offer volunteering opportunities to people seeking something to do to assist their recovery. Time and time again people have said that boredom and having no purpose is a real threat to moving forward in their lives. Everyone needs a purpose and we think having something right on your doorstep is a good place to start.

FIELD OF DREAMS IN CITY CENTRE
The P&K Community Payback Team led by John Spark have transformed Horner’s plot with 7 growing boxes, all in plenty time for this year’s growing season. The lads have worked like Trojans, quietly building the infrastructure needed for our small oasis in the city and aren’t we chuffed!

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

LOCAL ACTIVITIES

PLUS LUNCH CLUB
The next PLUS members lunch club will take place in Caledonia Housing, Canal Street on Thursday 30th April from 12.30 to 2.00pm. Cost £2. New members welcome.

SIMPLY INSPIRED
Simply Inspired is a new art group starting on the 27th April at Fairfield Neighbourhood Centre from 1.00 to 3.00pm. Contact Pam on 01738 413075. Spaces are limited.

LIGHTHOUSE – CITY CENTRE RESIDENTS DROP IN
Join us at the Young Persons City Base, Scott Street from 6.00 to 8.30pm every Wednesday. Nice club-like atmosphere where the activities are decided by the folks there. Board games are popular just now – Bridge, Scrabble, Trivial Pursuit, as are lively debates and discussions on local and global issues. Tel PLUS 01738 626242 for more info.

MONDAY LUNCH CLUB
Every Monday at Threshold Centre, St John the Episcopal Church, Princes Street, Perth 11.00am to 2.00pm. Cost £3. Everybody welcome!
Contact James Alexander Tel. 01738 449227

POETRY READING AND APPRECIATION
PLUS poetry group takes place each Wednesday in Caledonia Housing next to the PLUS office from 2.00-3.30pm. All welcome. Just give us a phone to let us know you are coming. 01738 626242.

NATIONAL NEWS

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AT BREAKING POINT
A leading coalition of children’s service providers has called on the Scottish Government to plough in £25 million to improve mental health services for vulnerable children and young people in Scotland.

The Scottish Children’s Services Coalition (SCSC) says current services are at “crisis point” with many not being fit for purpose, leading to hundreds of vulnerable young people missing out or waiting too long for the treatment and support they require.
Read more at: thirdforcenews.org.uk

MORE POWER TO THE PEOPLE NEEDED
Reporting back on the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill a Scottish Parliament committee said that a change in the mindset of public authorities is necessary in order for communities to be truly empowered.

“Strengthening communities is however a fundamental area, unless measures are in place and adequately resourced the aims of the bill in relation to empowering communities are bound to fail. We expect the Government to state the current amount spent on community capacity building and the extent to which that will fail. Unless measures are in place and adequately resourced the aims of the bill in relation to empowering communities are bound to fail. We expect the Government to state the current amount spent on community capacity building and the extent to which that will fail. We expect the Government to state the current amount spent on community capacity building and the extent to which that will fail. We expect the Government to state the current amount spent on community capacity building and the extent to which that will fail.”

HOLYROOD LAUNCHES LONELINESS INQUIRY
The experiences of lonely and isolated people are set to be heard at Holyrood, as the Scottish Parliament’s Equal Opportunities Committee launches its inquiry into social isolation. Recent studies have shown that loneliness can double the impact of obesity, and extreme loneliness can increase an older person’s chances of premature death by 14%. PLUS has submitted a paper to the inquiry including personal perspectives of some of our members and hope to attend the parliamentary debate on loneliness.

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SMOKING BAN IN HOSPITAL GROUNDS ON THE HORIZON?

At present, it is possible to smoke in the grounds of mental health facilities and this exemption (from the otherwise universal smoking ban) was clearly articulated in ‘Creating A Tobacco Free Generation’ (Scottish Government, 2013).

Unfortunately, some agencies now seek to overturn this exemption and introduce a smoking ban throughout all NHS facilities – rather bizarrely – are using ‘Creating A Tobacco Free Generation’ to support this move. In other words, they are using the policy which clearly and explicitly supports a smoking ban exemption for mental health facilities to try to remove this exemption and introduce a 100% smoking ban. (In Murray Royal Hospital we believe this is to take place by November 2015).

With the backing of PLUS, HUG and other Scottish MH organisations VOX has sent a letter to Jamie Hepburn – the Minister responsible for Mental Health – asking him to clearly reiterated the exemption guaranteed for mental health facilities in ‘Creating A Tobacco Free Generation’.

The general consensus of PLUS members is that it is the wrong course of action to prohibit patients from smoking when many are going through extreme mental states and in some cases their freedom is taken away. There are plenty other reasons too and suffice to say it will be one of the main topics of discussion at out PLUS May Gathering. We will hopefully have had a response from the minister by then and be able to decide on any further course of action.

The letter sent to the Scottish minister is available to view on PLUS website.

MENTAL WELLBEING FOOTBALL — UPDATE —

The latest block of football coaching sessions for the SAINTS Mental Wellbeing squad has been particularly well-attended at McDiarmid Park as players gear up for their involvement in the Scottish FA National Mental Health and Wellbeing League fixtures in 2015. The league kicked off with fixtures at Lesser Hampden on 24 February and 2 SAINTS teams took part. The next round of fixtures took place in Aberdeen (for the first time) on 31 March and the next coaching block will start again after an Easter break.

Contact Dave Black (dave@perthsaints.co.uk) on 01738 459095 for more information.

BOOK REVIEW

‘THE SHOCK OF THE FALL’

The Shock of the Fall by Nathan Filer is about the experiences of someone with schizophrenia, in and out of hospital. Although it is a work of fiction it gives a very accurate portrayal of someone with a mental illness. It is also a good, quite easy read, I found. It won best first novel at the 2014 Costa Book Awards.

Christina

DYING FOR SOME CHOCOLATE

I am dying for some chocolate
Milk, white or dark
It really doesn’t matter
As long as I get fat
I’ve bought myself a box or two
Well four to be exact
And I can’t wait to eat them
As I’m drooling at the mouth
It’s only taken an hour or two
To finish off a box
I think I’ll open another one
Even though I feel quite sick
Oh what a great selection – I wonder what I’ll choose
A champagne truffle or a citrus mousse
Or maybe a raspberry liqueur
It really doesn’t matter as long as I get ill
Yes death by chocolate is the only way to go
Once I’ve had my fill

Breathing Space 0800 83 85 87
Samaritans 0845 790 9090
Cruse Bereavement Care 0845 600 2227
Saneline 0845 767 8000
Eating Disorders Association 0845 634 1414
Mental Health Out of Hours 0845 424 2424
Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide 0844 561 6855
Pet Bereavement Support Service 0800 096 6606
Support Line (8.30am – 8.30pm)
SaneLine 0845 767 8000
Cruse Bereavement Care 0845 600 2227
Saneline 0845 767 8000
SaneLine 0845 634 1414
Mental Health Out of Hours 0845 424 2424
Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide 0844 561 6855
Pet Bereavement Support Service 0800 096 6606

If you are a veteran looking for information, advice and guidance, or you are seeking to support someone visit www.veterans-assist.org

SUICIDE SELF HARM

If you have been affected by a family member or friend who self-harms or has died from self-harm or suicide and would like to join a mutual support group of others with the same experience. Phone 07834193257 or email Kirstie.howell@gmail.com

People need trees. They need to see leaves from their windows, to sit in green spaces, and to play in the shade. Trees draw people out from behind walls of brick and glass, and in coming together, neighbours forge relationships, nurture children, and build a sense of community.

– Tina Prow