



Herefordshire Disability United

Network News

Mental health Seminar

May 2016



Is mental health provision part of a cat and mouse game?

We welcome articles from individuals and organisations to promote their stories or interests. Please contact the Editor..... details on the back page.

Editorial: Mental health thoughts

The complex subject of mental health is not one to be taken lightly. Hopefully the seminar which this magazine accompanies will do it justice. Each person has their own story, things which work for them though not necessarily all the time. Mental health issues, can be very difficult to understand, another hidden disability. The mind playing tricks without any logical conclusion, disrupting families and relationships as anger, fear, frustration and helplessness cause breakdowns across all ages.

Are you aware too that one in three disabled people are also likely to develop mental health issues than those without a disability? One might consider that when a disabled person goes for counselling, does the counsellor actually get the double issue? Are they trained to understand disabilities and the mental health issues within that same person? In fact do GP's either?

BBC Ouch has an episode featuring mental health which I listened to recently where disabled people discuss their mental health issues too. There is a warning right at the beginning advising that if you are feeling low, to record the programme and listen to it at a better time. It's the 12th February 2016 edition. Check out details online.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs/ouch>

One person featured in this programme Michael Morrison, speaks of his sight issues where the nerves for sight are not connected properly in his brain. He describes it as looking down the wrong end of a pair of binoculars. Whilst he went through school achieving well with support, it was going to university when it was difficult to cope in a regular class. In his third year he had a breakdown and was diagnosed with Bi-Polar. He was also the drummer in a band Shrug, which was just making waves in 1994, but Michael's first manic episode in 1996 saw the end of any chance in reaching the charts. The group went on to become Snow Patrol who had and still continue to have musical success.

Michael knew that he had to opt out of the band so that they could succeed. He had long periods in hospital to get over the episodes, and taking Lithium has managed to turn his life around. Michael feels his mental illness has a bigger impact on his life than his difficulty seeing.

He found employment with an understanding boss, working in an office environment, but had to seek support to overcome problems at work. The open office was noisy especially with several different radios on whilst people toiled. With sight issues, Michael needed to use all his concentration to achieve. His hearing is attuned with such intensity to assist his sight impairment, that music at work meant failure with the tasks in hand. However Michael explained the difficulties and along with his boss and understanding work colleagues, he has settled again.

Check out the website Michael set up regarding his life with mental health problems and Shrug:
<http://www.michael-morrison.co.uk/shrug/a-brief-history/>

The Editor



About

Herefordshire Disability United

Herefordshire Disability United is an organisation that has developed to voice the concerns of disabled people and to provide a platform where disability issues can be raised and policies developed.

Herefordshire Disability United (HDU) is an organisation run by people with disabilities for people with disabilities. It was started in January 2011 and its objectives are:

To promote the interests, welfare and social inclusion of disabled people living in Herefordshire by facilitating the following:

- Fostering understanding among policy-makers and practitioners of the needs and aspirations of disabled people.
- Taking part in consultations to make aware issues that affect persons with disabilities
- Raising awareness and debate on disability issues, stimulating the engagement of disabled people within that debate.
- Providing a platform where matters of concern to disabled people can be raised and policies developed.
- Making representations to public sector organisations, voluntary sector organisations, local and central government and local and national business to improve their policies and practices.
- Exchanging information with organisations providing services for disabled people, co-operating with but independent of such organisations.
- Providing information and sources of advice to disabled people.
- Combating discrimination on the grounds of disability by promoting equality of opportunity and a positive image of disabled people.
- Being a democratic, non sectarian, non party political organisation.

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Date for your diary!
Wednesday
29th June 2016
Disability Roadshow
Three Counties Hotel
Hereford
11.00 am—2.30 pm

Editorial or advertising queries: Contact the editor on 07817 473813 or email info@hdu.org.uk

Contact: Herefordshire Disability United welcomes any feedback on Network News, or any of the services it provides.

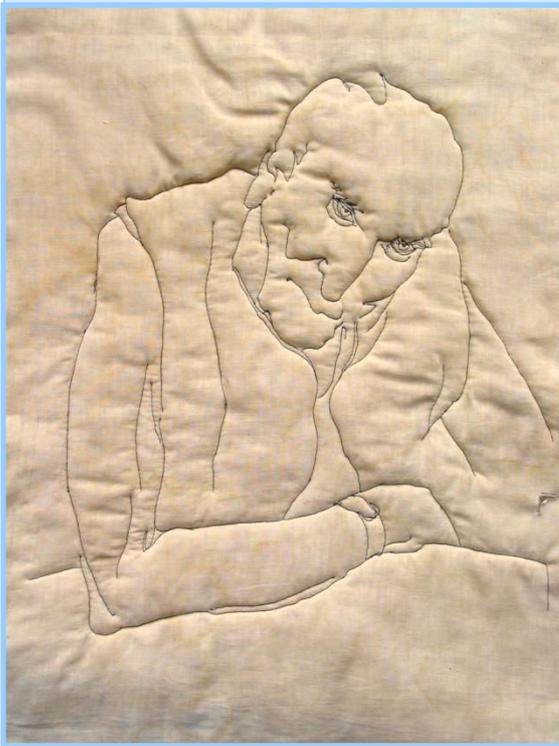
Disclaimer: The views expressed in Network News are not necessarily those of Herefordshire Disability United.

George Meadows Stitched Drawings

George Meadows qualified as an occupational therapist in 1973, and has specialised in mental health, and for the last 14 years of her career, the mental health of elderly people.

Meadows was always making and drawing in her spare time but in 2003 took ten months off work to do an Art Foundation course at Hereford College of Art and Design, where she experimented with the translation of her period drawings of the people she worked with into machine stitch on fabric.

An exhibition of her work is currently on display at The Courtyard Theatre Gallery until 5th June. It's well worth a visit. Each stitched picture has a written explanation of the person before you.



This man had many adventures travelling the world as a sailor. He had been big and strong. Now he has difficulty even breathing and has to lean on a table to support himself



This is just a small sample of the pictures on display at The Courtyard Theatre.



This woman got a name for being a difficult resident because she wouldn't join in with social activities. She had been always been a private person. No one had asked her if she wanted to come to the party or wear that ridiculous hat.

Why not take a look at the exhibition, on loan from The Wellcome Collection, based in London. You can check out more information at: wellcomecollection.org.uk/touring

All information and pictures on pages 6 and 7 are taken directly from the Wellcome Collection website. The museum located close to Euston Station In London is a wonderful place to visit, is perfectly accessible, and has a good café and bookshop too. Its ever changing exhibitions lure you to revisit.

Change can be good!



There is a short film about a community on the Welsh border that, since 2006, has used a weekly tea dance to bring together a mixture of people. The participants are mostly old but include children, teenagers, carers and people living with a disability, dementia or boredom, as well as people who just want to keep fit and healthy through dancing.

This event has enabled people to use their strengths to help each other, to break down fears and misguided assumptions, and to be socially involved and active. Its aim is to enable people's identities to flourish and to help them enrich each other's lives for one afternoon each week.

The tea dance was started by Georgie Meadows while she was an occupational therapist with the NHS and working with the elderly mentally ill. It is held in the ball-room of Bridges Community Centre in Monmouth, where a qualified dance instructor leads an hour of dancing that is followed by tea, cake and a chat.

When Georgie left her job in the NHS to concentrate on her art practice, she continued to run the project as a volunteer.

The tea dance fulfils many therapeutic and social needs: it helps increase strength, mobility and confidence, lifts moods, offers a chance for physical contact and creates a social routine - as well as being good fun.

Check out the video online: <https://wellcomecollection.org/thursday-afternoons>

MY SON'S JOURNEY

My son's first real brush with Mental Illness came at the age of 22. He was studying ecological science at Sheffield University. Unbeknown to myself he began to suffer from psychosis to such a degree that he found himself on the streets. I will always be grateful to the homeless person or people who helped him, as he was eventually sectioned but was so ill and out of touch with reality that he couldn't remember where he came from.



He was heavily sedated; one of the medications caused him to go into a catatonic state. Eventually he was able to recall an ex Scouting Leader's number. I was on camp with Brownies so was not able immediately to go to him. However when I did, I found him to be coming back to reality.

The hospital staff I met were awful, no compassion, this was my beloved son who was talking like a stranger although I had travelled a distance to get there no welcome was found. He had been waiting to see a Psychiatrist since admittance. The hospital was archaic. I just wanted to get him home. I was ignored until I found the number for MIND on the notice board.

They were able to give me the number of the hospital's manager and the meeting he was attending. Once I had spoken to him, miraculously the attitude of staff changed, a Consultant Psychiatrist arrived assessed him and eventually gave permission for him to be discharged on the premise that he went to services at home. At first the relief of being in familiar territory was palpable. Unfortunately I was beginning to see how people with mental health issues and their carer's are treated as second class.

The brain is an organ of the body, a physical thing but mental illness is treated as something apart. No real help or advice was given on how to deal with what was happening to my son. Instead I was made to feel that somehow this illness was my fault, his upbringing was brought into question. A very traumatic time the only support I found was from mental health charities. There were more hospital admissions to follow. No professional really communicated with us, a very lonely time. Where I began the process of grieving the son I had. The new son I had to learn anew.

Eventually we were called into a meeting with a group of professionals. No preparation was given to us, that today my son would be given a diagnosis of schizophrenia. No care of his feelings whatsoever. The news was devastating. I question, would a person with cancer for example be told in such a manner?

The journey has continued with lots of black periods. People with such illnesses can suffer from positive and negative symptoms. The up times can be punctuated with psychotic episodes where sense of reality can be lost through altered thought patterns. My son began suffering with negative periods where he became depressed, withdrawn, isolated.

LIVING WITH A LONG TERM MENTAL HEALTH ILLNESS.

He lost his former lively personality, lost the ability to dress appropriately, keep himself and his environment clean. I fought with services for input; all they would say was he doesn't want to engage with services.

Eventually I found out about supported living flats, managed by MIND. I managed to get him a tenancy, having input from a support worker on a regular basis was a turning point. The tenancies were limited in their duration, so again a period of stress ensued while new housing was sought. Stress is detrimental to schizophrenia, so downhill he went. I fought again and managed to get support on a regular basis or so I thought. After 3 months he was re-assessed deemed to be managing. Back on the carousel he went.

My son has me in his camp; many in such circumstances have no one. People with the diagnosis of schizophrenia can be vilified in the media etc. as being a danger to others, the biggest risk is to their selves. Fortunately he has not had a further psychotic episode for many years. I feel for people in such situations.

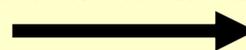


The in beds on Stonebow have been reduced so often the person is sent out of county which as you can imagine in a rural area throws up many problems for families. The other option is the Crisis Team. I do not have personal experience of this service but I can imagine how difficult it must be dealing with a seriously mentally ill person at home with the only support from visiting psychiatric professionals

I could go on writing negative scenarios of which there have been many but I would like to talk about some positive input that came into my son's life via a course I attended in 2009. It was called Sharing the Knowledge. Run by Partners in Policy-making, I believe.

I learned about challenging service makers, personal budgets, direct payments, commissioned services. I saw how participant's lives had been enhanced by regaining some control in their lives.

A revelation to carer's on the course if the person they cared for had enduring mental health problems. A revelation to the mental health services too who still struggle with the concept. Another battle ensued but eventually thanks to an enlightened social worker my son was given access to a support worker for two hours a week which lasted all of two years.



PTO

The story continues

Continued.....



At the same time he got a placement on a local care farm, the Houghton Project. His confidence, self-esteem, self-belief blossomed.

Although the schizophrenia has severely damaged his intellectual ability some of his old spirit has returned, he laughs, he is concerned about people close to him, might sound little steps but to his family it is huge.

With support he was introduced to Oxfam and has been volunteering for them for 2years.

18months ago the powers that be decided to remove the commissioned service for the Houghton Project, with no consultation, review, nothing.

I tried to go through the usual channels but got nowhere. I knew a service should not be stopped without at least a review so went to the director of social services. At the same time I threatened to put in a complaint about the officer who had sanctioned the cut, within an hour I received a phone call to say service not cancelled just suspended and will restart herewith.

What would have been the outcome for my son if I had not had the knowledge to challenge?

I would like to finish on a positive note, but I must just mention changes that occurred a few years ago.

Suddenly people with long term mental health diagnosis, e.g. schizophrenia were taken out of the mental health system. The new mantra was it keeps people in a system they no longer need, so it's harming their recovery. People who relied on support from the service were cut adrift, simply to returned to regular GP services.

Although in most cases the people concerned were taking very powerful anti-psychotic medications. Most GP surgeries do not have GPs with mental health expertise. There has been no thought to having a system whereby if there are concerns that the person is becoming mentally unstable again, they can be returned to mental health services, without having to jump through all the hoops potentially risking the person's wellbeing.

I would like to thank Sheila Cole for writing this article about her son.

National Dementia Awareness Week



REMEMBER ME

A Creative Ageing Event for Dementia Awareness Week

Thursday 19 May 2016 | 11am - 3pm

Come along for a great day out!

Singing, dancing, drumming and drawing, we've got something creative for everyone to try. All events are suitable for people living with dementia to enjoy with their carers, family and friends as part of this creative day out.

Leading the fight against dementia
Alzheimer's Society



LOTTERY FUNDED

Free to attend, but some events require booking.

To book contact the Box Office on **01432 340555** or visit **courtyard.org.uk/remember-me**



BOX OFFICE 01432 340555

courtyard.org.uk

In partnership with

Why not book a session at the Courtyard? They do so much to help disabled people, especially anyone with Dementia. If you can't attend on 19th May, look at what else they do throughout the year.

Ring 01432 340555 or check out their website: www.courtyard.org.uk

Marches Counselling Service (MCS)



At Marches Counselling Service we have a new project focusing upon people who are offering their time as volunteers. Whatever your reason for volunteering, there will be times when the work and everyday life presents challenges.

We believe that in order to help others we must also look after ourselves. Our project is designed to help volunteers increase their resources to manage difficult times for themselves and others.

We have a series of six three hour workshops designed to develop an individual's coping skills in creative ways.

Fri May 20th 10.00 am: Music, music, music

Mon June 20th 1.00 pm: Walking away the blues

Weds July 20th 1.00 pm: Poetry please

Tues September 20th 10.00 am: Painting for pleasure

Thurs October 20th 2.00 pm: Let nature be your guide

November 21st 10.00 am: All you have

For those who are responsible for the welfare of volunteers in their workplace, in the autumn we are offering a course in Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction.



This is alongside our normal one to one counselling service, open to all. As a registered charity, we raise funds to subsidise our work so we can match our fees to your pocket. This project is supported by Hereford Council's Wellbeing Innovation Fund.

For details of what we can offer and to book a place, contact email:

marches.counselling@gmail.com

www.marchescounselling.org

Tel: 01432 279906 Mob. 07527 579488

The Samaritans

The Samaritans are a national organisation which receive around 5 million calls for help per year, and every 52 seconds they hear from someone who is feeling suicidal. Volunteers are on hand to offer emotional support any time of the day or night to anyone who needs their help and they will never judge.



What do we do?

Our primary mission is still the reduction of the number of lives lost by suicide.

However, our objectives have been broadened to provide emotional support for those who are troubled, stressed, distressed or despairing, feelings which can for some people lead to

thoughts of ending their lives. Feelings of this nature affect many and can arise from a wide range of situations in day to day life.

How do we do it?

We regard ourselves primarily as listeners, and are completely non-judgemental. You can talk to us about absolutely anything without fear of criticism or prejudice. We do not give advice but hope that by talking to us people will find their own way through their difficulties, which we believe is the most lasting solution.

Our conversations are completely confidential. Nothing you say goes beyond the Samaritans. We do not record calls. Your phone number is not displayed to us and you do not have to give your name unless you wish to do so. We will call you back if you are running out of credit (although obviously we do need your number to do this). You are in charge of the call and can end it at any time.

How can we help you in particular?

We understand that living with disability brings its own range of problems both for the disabled and those who care for them. We can offer you an empathic and compassionate listening ear and our emotional support while you work through the difficulties and possible options in your life. Please talk to us. We are listening and we care.

Contact Samaritans

Hereford branch: 44a Berrington Street, Hereford HR4 OBJ

Local no: 01432 269000 (Local rates apply)

Free call number including mobiles: 116 123

This number is not shown on your phone bill either.

Emails: jo@samaritans.org

Text/SMS: 07725 90 90 90

Depression and mental health

In 2010 I had a major operation and in the following six months didn't realise at first that I had become depressed. It took a friend to make me promise I would ask my GP about it. So I did, and he rated me as moderately to severely depressed, and anxious. He put me on the standard first-line anti-depressant, and on the waiting list for IAPTS (Increased Access to Psychological Therapies).

The occupational therapy people at work also referred me to a counsellor for six sessions as they thought I was not ready to return to work, although I wanted to (despite having been asked how I would rate job satisfaction and my giving 2/10). My nose was so dutifully on the grindstone that I couldn't think of stopping work, despite having turned 60 in hospital, and I was too cowardly to explore other options.

I attended two IAPTS courses, but I didn't feel comfortable talking in front of other people. I have always felt public speaking was one of my worst fears. Also their cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) approach relies on rationality being the boss. Which surely it isn't when one is depressed? I was subsequently allotted some 1-2-1 sessions. As they were coming to an end, I was 'shown the door' at work. Suddenly I felt liberated. I only then realised how much work had been making me ill.

Our final IAPTS session was the first I had not cried throughout. There is a life out here, and it is far better than the toxic working environment I left in April 2012. So it was a happy ending for that encounter, but I don't know how much the IAPTS intervention helped. Life took an upturn, and made me feel better for a bit.

But it was not just work that had been dragging me down. I can't bear getting old and decrepit. And since being so ill (for the first time in adulthood) in 2010, it seems the old body has just decided to conk out quite quickly, bit by bit. Arthritis. And although I know rationally with my mind, that there is no point worrying about things you can't alter, I can't seem to stop myself being self-pitying, remembering what a healthy person I had been, in control of her life.

The GP is a sweetie and puts up with me traipsing back to him - 'ere we go again, the worried well' - although he is at pains to assure me that he does not think that way. I like him. And he likes me. So then I saw a sort of counsellor attached to the surgery, who was another CBT person, again very sweet, and very busy. She said I would have to wait six months for 1-2-1 sessions. She said I should stop beating myself up, and that I have self-esteem issues. I think I am wasting NHS resources, which are needed for more serious cases and am not sure I will benefit from CBT given my scepticism.

I have subsequently attended two 'Let's Talk' courses given by 2Gether, both of which were of no help, since the rational approach to therapy doesn't work when one's brain knows all these right answers but will not respond positively to this discipline.

What actually does work?

The courses were also very trite, manipulative and run by people who were well-meaning but who could not cope with proper debate and discussion. I have also tried mindfulness but never got deeply into it. I think I am already quite mindful in my approach to life.

I have recently thrown away the anti-depressants I had been taking for over three years (mirtazapine) and have not noticed any appreciable difference.



I am just as miserable off them as I was on them! I presume my will to live is just about neck and neck with the wish to die, as I keep feebly pecking away at the medical profession just in case they can help me. But to no great avail, except for another successful hip operation last year. Trying hard on the spine front, which is taking forever due to waiting lists, and am shortly to tussle with the knees. Thank you NHS!

What to do? All suggestions for a positive way forward that does not involve 2Gether, or CBT, or anti-depressants welcome!

By Sara Siloko – ‘coming out’ in the hope that we can all become more open about mental health issues, and that the stigma attached to poor mental health

Hereford Council Charging Policy and Mental Health

From 11th April 2016 the council introduced additional charges for people who live in their own home and have capital assets above the £23,250 council funding limit.

If a person is not entitled to financial support from the council but they have eligible care needs they can still ask the council to arrange care for them, but they will be charged fees for making the arrangements. A flat rate fee of £100 will be charged to cover the council's costs in finding a care provider and negotiating the rate your provider will charge you for the services provided.

If a person also asks the council to enter into a contract with a care provider on their behalf, the council will charge a fee to cover its administration costs. This will cover the council's costs for making payments to the care provider, and sending invoices for care charges. These charges apply in addition to care fees.

Where the council chooses to meet the needs of a person with capital assets above the funding limit, for example where a person lacks mental capacity to deal with their financial affairs and has no family members to support them, the council cannot charge an arrangement fee.

People who receive after-care services/support provided under section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983 must not be charged.

Time to Change

**Being open
about
Mental health
makes life
better**

Time to Change is a collaboration of Mental Health charities formed between the charities National Rethink Mental Health & National MIND.

Its aim is to reduce the stigma that surrounds mental health currently. An often quoted figure is that one in four people will suffer from mental health problems in their life time. I believe until you or yours has mental health issues it is incredibly difficult to understand or cope with.

Not only can the illness totally disable the person the stigma that surrounds the illness further disables the individual.

Time to change has a Facebook page whereby people are enabled to put blogs of their personal experiences of living with mental illness. What it feels like for them, how it has affected their lives, their family lives. Most people who post say how coming forward to talk about their illness in this way has been extremely liberating. After all why should people apologise for being ill. The site is monitored by staff from Time to Change so people feel it's a safe area to discuss what has happened to them.

For the past few years venues have been set up around the country by volunteers to give a day to talk to anyone who wants to talk about mental health. I have taken part in such days, they are always interesting, a real mixture of thoughts, from downright rudeness, total lack of empathy, to people who are curious, want to talk, want to know how to get help etc.

Two people stay in my mind.

The first I met at a Stand up for Schizophrenia day. A young lady who I knew professionally, she is a very competent person. She came up to me & whispered in my ear, I've got that she was unable to even say the word. She went on to say only my husband & now you know. I cannot tell my employer's they wouldn't understand. How sad someone with a life changing illness who because of stigma feels unable to talk.

The second person also a young lady came to talk to me this February at a stand, she explained she had seen the promotion of the day on morning television. She hesitantly opened up explaining that she was a nurse currently recovering from a mental health breakdown. She further explained how counselling was helping the recovery path but because of her profession didn't want to be seen using mental health services.

She told me of the whole body pain that she felt as she explained the nervous system runs throughout the body so the whole body is affected. An aspect of the illness so often overlooked. I have no doubt when she recovers & returns to practise she will have a much deeper understanding of mental illness & how it can disable a person.

Time to change

One day in the future hopefully stigma will be reduced to such a degree that no one will feel shame about needing to use mental health services.

Does it help to have separate venues, clinics which are for people with mental health issues, couldn't we have psychiatrists & mental health nurses based within general practise so that people who have not got experience or knowledge of mental health illness can begin to understand that it is an illness like any other.

Rethink & MIND national run other campaigns to try & help people with mental illness cope within a society that often doesn't understand how difficult day to day living can be when mentally ill.

One of MIND's recent events was a campaign to try & stop cuts to ESA. The Government voted against the campaign, meaning the cuts will go ahead after April 2017. However the battle isn't over. MIND will continue to push for big changes when they know the details of plans to change the benefit system.

There is also a lack of awareness among MPs about benefits in general in particular what the ESA WRAG is.

As part of the ongoing campaign MIND, aim to raise awareness.

Another campaign is MIND activist's emailing local councillors about Life Support

It's about the day to day challenges facing people with mental health problems in our communities & the support they need to overcome them.

To stay well & live a full life people with MH problems often need practical help, this help can be crucial in keeping people in the community & out of costly secondary care.

It aims to:

- ◆ help you think about the non- health support needs of local people with mental health problems
- ◆ inspire & support you to work together to develop creative solutions to meet these support needs

Want to know more

e-activist.com/ea-action

www.mind.org.uk/information

time-to-change.org.uk



Information supplied by Sheila Cole

Living the good and bad life

I have lived with depression since 2005 and In 2007 I had my first acute episode, requiring significant time off work.

At the time I was working in a fairly senior role within the NHS and prior to becoming ill I had been involved in some work looking at promoting positive messages around mental health as a way to tackle the stigma and bias faced by people with mental health issues. On my return I had decided that I had to walk the walk and that meant I had to be totally open and transparent about my illness.

The response I got from the vast majority of people I worked and socialised with was very positive and supportive. I think because I raised the issue with people it took away some of the awkwardness people often feel when talking about mental health. Of course there were some people who weren't supportive and some I would say actively tried to use my mental health issues to 'score points' against me in the work-place; however I am talking about one or two individuals and the support from the many made these insignificant.

Within 12 months I had been seconded into a more senior role, leading major health project in Herefordshire.

Things went well and my career was in the ascendancy again, I had remarried, had a daughter and had a lovely new home. To all intents and purposes it looked like I was thriving and had all the key indicators of being successful and happy. And then in 2012 it all went wrong....



I still can't pinpoint at what point I became ill again, but my deterioration was very rapid and resulted in me being sectioned and sent to Wooton Lawn Hospital in Gloucester. Within what seemed like hours, I had gone from being a highly functioning, successful individual, to someone who seemed to have no rights and was being 'observed' every 15 minutes, day and night. I was terrified.

The loss of control over my own life made a huge impact on me. It really felt, at that time, like no one was listening to me, I felt like a number rather than an individual and could not work out what I needed to do to get well. I eventually stated to take more notice of my surroundings and saw how other patients behaved, especially just before they were sent home. I worked out what I needed to do and how I needed to behave to get out of there and after about 3 months I was discharged.

Euan continues his story



Things outside the hospital had got worse, my second marriage had fallen apart and therefore I went back into a home environment that was not good.

I had support from the community mental health team on a weekly basis, but I was still very ill and it was not long before I made a very significant attempt on my life and ended up in the Intensive Care Unit in Hereford hospital for 4 days. However I managed to convince the staff in ITU and the mental health staff who came and assessed me that I was fit to be discharged home within 24 hours of regaining consciousness.

The following day I had an appointment with the community mental health team in Ross on Wye. I can't remember driving to the appointment and when I arrived they persuaded me to go back to Wooton Lawn voluntarily. I am glad that I had the appointment booked, as I am sure if I had not gone back to hospital at that time things would have not ended well.

All in all I spent the best part of 12 months in hospital and was sectioned on two occasions. I should say that my wife, throughout the whole period, made sure that she brought my baby daughter visited me regularly and that really helped me hang on to something positive.

Whilst in hospital I agreed voluntary redundancy with the NHS, so when I was finally discharged I had no job and nowhere to live. I had no self-confidence and thought that I would never work again. This was a really difficult time, as I felt I had lost my complete identity. Work had always been a big part of my life and I also felt very strongly that I had failed and that I would not be able to work in Herefordshire again.

However, life has a strange ability to surprise us and human beings are really quite a resilient bunch. I found somewhere to rent and this enabled me to start work as a labourer on a building site for a friend. He was very supportive and allowed me to start off slowly and gradually build up my hours as I gained strength and confidence – without this hand up, I am not sure that I would have got back into the workplace as quickly and certainly wouldn't have regained confidence as quickly.

When that work finished I had to make a conscious effort to find work and initially it seemed that every job I looked at I didn't have the right skills knowledge and/or experience to do. I looked at everything from delivery and unskilled work, up to management jobs and they all seemed to be unachievable.

continued

.....continued living the good and bad life

I decided to update my CV and send it out to local authorities and NHS organisations to see if I could get any interest. It took over two weeks to gain the confidence needed to rewrite my CV in a positive manner, and then a further two weeks before I sent it to anyone.

Within two weeks, I had started investigating a serious complaint for a local authority in the West Midlands. This forced me to don my suit and tie again and I remember driving in on that first day with my hands shaking so much I kept switching the wind-screen wipers on by mistake! It became clear quite quickly that people couldn't tell that it was my first day back and on the journey home I realised that I still had opportunities ahead.

I did a few short term contracts with local authority and NHS organisations on a part-time basis which helped me regain my confidence and to some extent my identity. In 2014 I moved into my first permanent role, post hospitalisation, with Services for Independent Living. I had met with the Chief Executive before applying for the role and was completely open about my experience and that I was still recovering. I am glad to say that she took a chance with me and when she moved on 6 months later, I took over as Chief Executive - almost exactly 3 years from the date when I was first hospitalised.

I think my illness has contributed to my success; it is a part of who I am and helps me understand what it is like to have limited control over your life, something that many of the people who use our services have faced at one time or another.

I have continued with my policy about being entirely open about my mental health experience and hope that others can take some comfort that things can improve and there is still a life after an acute episode. I also hope to make employers realise that people with mental health issues can be significant assets.

I would like to thank all the staff at Services for Independent Living for their ongoing support; it is a truly great organisation and a good example of supportive employer.

Euan McPherson
Chief Executive – Services for Independent Living

Services for Independent Living
1 Owen Way,
Leominster Enterprise Park,
Leominster, HR6 0LA

Telephone: 01568 616653  01568 616653

Email: contactus@s4il.co.uk



Kerry Farm Holidays



The following information has been sent to me by the NAS Herefordshire branch, to pass on to anyone that might be interested.

Although the NAS National Autistic Society is promoting this link, on checking the website I see they also mention mental health.

“When someone has a disability, illness or injury, or is living with a mental health condition finding the perfect holiday can be tricky. Kerry farm is a unique holiday in the beautiful Welsh countryside designed so that you can enjoy great family moments together.

Our qualified life and family coaches are on hand to support you to enjoy our activities, take time to reflect or talk with you about ways to achieve your goals.

Every holiday at the farm is planned around the individual families with a wide range of activities available. You may choose to spend time with our animals, enjoying the outdoor activities or taking part in arts and crafts, or cooking with produce from our garden. We can arrange the exclusive use of a local bowling alley or go swimming at a nearby hotel. The team also have a good local knowledge and contacts so you may want to explore rural Wales.” To find out more contact:

www.papworthtrust.org.uk Information Centre 0800 952 5000

Mental Health & Debt book

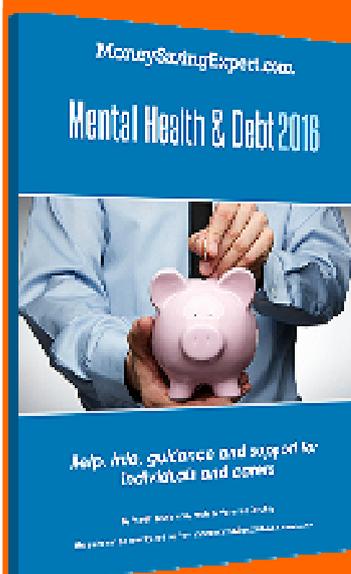
This is a free 44-page PDF booklet supported by Mind, Rethink, CAPUK and others, for people with mental health problems and those caring for them.

It covers how to handle debts when unwell, work with banks, free debt counselling, specific tips for bipolar disorder or depression sufferers, whether to declare a condition and more.

“Mental health problems can cause severe debt, and severe debt can cause mental health problems. Mental health problems can cause severe debt, and severe debt can cause mental health problems”.

You can download the book directly from this website:

<http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/credit-cards/mental-health-guide>



It's all in the mind

We all have times in our lives when we feel that we are not coping very well but sometimes we need help to get through these bad patches.

Some of us, like Sir Winston Churchill who called it his “black dog days”, have learned to cope with depression, and the Mental Health Services have helped me along the way, but there has been a certain amount of hindrance as well from doctors and specialists. My “black dog” is a black bird which I have come to think of as a Rook that sits on my shoulder. I am mostly unaware of him now but a sharp pain in the shoulder will alert me to his presence. I once feared him but now I see him as a beautiful sleek bird, a very wise friend it turns out, in fact one of the rooks who are my neighbours living in the trees behind my house.

I was an only child, given a lot of things that money could buy but only given love by my grandmother. A child was definitely to be seen but not heard. I crept around the house hoping not to alert my father to my presence as I was sure to have done something wrong and be in for a tongue lashing. I loved books and lived a lot in an imaginary world. I had one good friend at school but my best friends were my dogs, cats and horse.

I married at 21 and had my first child at 22. I had a difficult pregnancy and contracted Rubella, German measles, at an early stage. My parents in law offered to send me to Switzerland for an abortion as it was illegal then in England but I was totally determined to keep the baby. It was a shock to realise that babies got fed in the night, so much I didn't know, I was not at all worldly wise and there was nobody it seemed to help me so I fell into depression. A really kind old fashioned GP gave me his time to talk over my problems including having a shock diagnosis of Petit Mal, a mild form of epilepsy, as an explanation for my “slightly out of this world” feelings. (I later learned not to tell the medical profession too much about myself but by then I had a history of supposed mental health issues, psychosomatic problems etc.)

My eldest child turned out to have a severe hearing problem and I concentrated all my efforts on teaching her to speak and campaigning for a service for deaf children in Herefordshire as there was no provision for them in at that time.

I had always experienced difficulties walking, balancing and generally doing physical tasks. I suddenly got a lot worse and experienced pain and flu- like symptoms as well. “It's all in the mind” I was told when tests came back negative so I challenged my doctor and asked him to send me to a psychiatrist if that was what he thought after telling me that if I went away to health club I would come back fit and well.

I saw this eminent man who was quite certain that if I attended his therapy classes I would be restored to health. I went to therapy for quite a long time but just got worse, so much so that I got to envying people in wheelchairs as they could go outdoors and go shopping and I could no longer walk far enough to even go into the garden.

A lifetime of issues

When there was nobody about I would just slide down the wall and sob and sob, I felt so terrible and nobody would take me seriously or even give me any sympathy as the doctors told my family not to sympathise with me or it would make me worse!



Eventually the psychiatrist said he could do no more for me, he referred me back to the doctor and said he would order a wheelchair. The wheelchair came one day, dumped outside the door with no handy hints on how to use it etc.

My oh my! What a different perspective you get when sitting in a wheelchair. Suddenly you become part of an underclass that is ignored by the majority of the public. How difficult it is to adjust to this and the first time I said that I was a disabled person I felt truly terrible. What had I come to now, no use to anybody, just a burden on Society. However I decided to fight this and so started my campaigning and committee joining in an effort to change things a little.

My doctor said how pleased he was at my positive attitude but still didn't want to know about my health problems it seemed so I turned to alternative therapists. Eventually when I could barely stand or even sit up in bed I was forced to go back to a doctor. Once again the bright smile and "we'll soon have you better" was trotted out and once again all the tests came back negative so it had to be "all in the mind".

So I self-referred to the mental health team, which you could do at that time, for some counselling, well, what did I have to lose? I was lucky enough to see an exceptional woman who was kindness itself and did not start with the assumption that it was all in my mind.

I do believe that you can't separate the mind from the body, the one effects the other as it's all part of who we are but she helped me to see that there is nothing shameful in having mental health issues and that things need to be brought out into the open as there is usually a good reason for why we act or react as we do and often childhood experiences will manifest themselves in physical problems.

She took me through my childhood and I remember saying that at least I knew I had not been abused when she said that many people who could not sleep at night had been abused and had to stay awake to hear their abuser coming along the corridor. She gave me a very funny look then that I was later to recall when long buried memories came to the surface. My father's brother had abused me and so had a minister at my grandparent's church, no wonder I hated religion and thought of all ministers/priests as hypocrites. I felt a lot better when this had all been worked through, much happier but my physical problems were little changed.



It's all in the mind continued

From then on I was able to build a more secure foundation for my emotions and became a happier person. I still get very emotional when I am asked why I don't have a diagnosis for my physical problems and slip back into thinking, "what if I really am doing this to myself" but this does not last long. I have only had one serious setback in the last 15 or so years.

That occurred when my husband was diagnosed diabetic and I was borderline. I hated even the word "diabetic" and now it seemed I was to have to live with it every day. My husband could not understand this and felt quite hurt that I did not want to talk to him about something that was so important to him. I went to my doctor to ask if I could have some more counselling but it seems this is no longer possible. How terrible that something that helped me so much is no longer available to others.

I turned to a homeopath and she helped me a lot, as much by being able to talk to a non-judgemental person and being given the "just me" time as with the remedies. There was yet more that I had kept hidden away deep in the recesses of my mind. You see my father's brother who had abused me had died in a diabetic coma when I was about 10 years old. We had a village stores and sometimes my uncle would come to stay and look after me whilst my parents were out or away. He would make me steal sweets from the shop for him and threaten to tell my father how bad I was if I said anything. I hated him so much that I wished him dead, as children do. When he died in a diabetic coma I heard my parents saying that they had not realised how tempted he must have been by the sweets in the shop and how they wished they had been aware of his craving for sweets. They were blaming themselves for his death but I knew the truth, I had killed him by stealing the sweets for him and wishing him dead but I was too afraid of my father's anger to tell them.

When our youngest child died of cancer 18 months ago I was able to cope emotionally very well on the surface. I did stop seeing my homeopath as I could not, in fact still can't, talk in depth about my feelings. I can't open up about it yet but I know there are opportunities to talk to bereavement counsellors and I will do so one day.

People with ongoing severe mental health problems should of course get the resources they need but it is still important to remember that those of us who have less severe mental health issues still need access to services at times of crisis. I did once take an overdose of the prescription drugs that I was given for my newly diagnosed epilepsy and walk up the lane to the little bridge over the disused railway line thinking I could just fall over the top and all my troubles would be over with.

I like to think it was the thought of the little baby at home and my young husband that stopped me doing it but if I am really truthful it is because I just did not have the courage to go through with it and I did not want to be remembered (especially by my father) as a quitter, someone who was just not strong enough to cope with life.

Written from the heart, but wishing to remain anonymous

Primary Mental Health Team



The Primary Mental Health Team:

This is a new team set up in 2012 by 2Gether. Referrals are made by GPs to the Primary Mental Health nurse who holds regular, often weekly clinics in their practice.

Referrals to the Primary Mental Health service is appropriate for patients with mild to moderate mental health problems with low risk or patients with a serious but stable mental illness with signs of relapse.

The Primary Mental Health service provides 3 distinct functions to primary care services in Herefordshire. These functions are triage and signposting on to appropriate services, education and short term interventions (for new patients and those discharged back from secondary care, as appropriate).

Patients seen receive an in-depth assessment of their mental health needs, and depending on the circumstances, up to 4 follow up appointments, to monitor progress.

At all times, the patient remains under the clinical responsibility of their GP. Patients can be referred on to other mental health services provided by 2G, e.g. Recovery Teams, Crisis Team, Let's Talk, or to services not provided by 2G, Eating Disorders, Health Psychology, MIND, RASAC (for survivors of abuse) etc.

At any time patients can discuss their mental health needs with their GP who will decide upon the best route to access the relevant service. Primary Mental Health nurses are a source of expertise and knowledge that is available to the GPs.

TEL: 01432 842200 (ASK FOR PRIMARY CARE TEAM)

You can contact the Primary Mental Health Team at:

Benet Building, Ruckhall Lane,

Belmont Hereford,

HR2 9RP

If you are concerned about a friend or relative who is showing signs of mental health issues the above team is where to start, after discussion with the GP. As you see there are many services on offer once the in-depth assessment is made.

Useful Contacts

NHS Herefordshire

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

The County Hospital, Hereford

Mon-Fri 8.30-4.30

Office Tel No: 01432 372986

Mobile Tel No: 07825 681801

Email:

makingexperiencescount@wvt.nhs.uk

Equality & Human Rights Commission

Freepost RRLL-GHUX-CTRX, Arndale House,

Arndale Centre, Manchester, M4 3AQ

Tel: 0808 800 0082 Website:

www.equalityhumanrights.com

RADAR, now at Disability Rights UK

12 City Forum, 250 City Road, London, EC1V 8AF

Tel: 020 7250 3222 Minicom: 020 7250 4119

Email: enquiries@disabilityrightsuk.org

NHS Direct Tel: 111 (free service)

WISH

(Wellbeing Information Signposting for Herefordshire)

9, St Peter's Street, Hereford HR1 2LE

Tel: 01432 383880

Email@ info@WISHerefordshire.org

www.WISHerefordshire.org

Wye Valley NHS Trust

Community Health

Vaughan Building

Ruckhall Lane

Belmont

Hereford

HR2 9RP

Tel: 01432 344 344

Herefordshire Council and NHS Herefordshire

Social Services Adult Duty Desk

Office hours 9am - 5pm

Office Tel No: 01432 260101

Out of hours: 0330 1239309 adults

01905 768020 children

Our next FREE event

A Disability Roadshow

**to be held Wednesday 29th June at
The Three Counties Hotel, Hereford**

11.00 am—2.30 pm

Check out website for details

www.herefordshiredisabilityunited.org.uk

Network News is produced by Herefordshire Disability United,

c/o 39 Lea Villa Residential Park, Lea, nr Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 7GP.

Tel: 07817 473813 Email: info@hdu.org.uk

Website: www.herefordshiredisabilityunited.org.uk

HDU is registered with the Charity Commission. Charity number 1154349