

YOUR VOICE

In Sheffield Mental Health

A magazine for users, carers and professionals

www.yourvoicesheffield.org

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No 73

SAGE Greenfingers celebrates 10th anniversary



Dale Maher and Alison Frost display the 'tree fairies' they have made

Report by service user Steve

SAGE Greenfingers has been using allotments at Grimesthorpe to enhance the emotional wellbeing of adults with mental health issues for the last ten years. To mark this passage of time a celebratory event was held at the allotments on Tuesday 19th August.

The acronym SAGE stands for Support Arts Gardening Education.

In honour of the event the weather was bright and warm without being oppressively humid. This meteorological treat added to the positive ambience of the day.

There were a number of informal activities on offer to help those in attendance get a flavour of what the project has to offer. One activity involved making faces out of fruit and vegetables grown in the allotments, and another was an art workshop where the theme,

unsurprisingly, was botanical in nature.

It was uplifting to see people of all ages participating, and enjoying the relaxing vibe. In between chatting and participating, my taste buds were treated to the fine taste of a stone oven baked pizza as my eyes absorbed the excellent view over the Don Valley.

By circulating I was able to chat to

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This issue of *Your Voice* features a number of articles that touch upon the role physical activity can play in promoting mental health and wellbeing, which is one of the themes highlighted in the recently published Healthwatch Sheffield report about people's views and experiences of mental health in the city.

Outlining the numerous benefits of being outside, engaged in meaningful activity in the company of other people, our front cover features the work of SAGE Greenfingers who celebrated their 10-year anniversary this summer. We've also got an invitation to play football from Football's Awareness of Depression Football Community (FAD FC) who want to introduce the benefits of physical activity to everyone regardless of their level of fitness or ability.

SAGE Greenfingers and FAD FC represent the kind of community based services that people contributing to the Healthwatch Sheffield report indicate they regard very highly.

The Healthwatch Sheffield report also highlights the importance of empathic staff and networking as keys to wellbeing, themes that are echoed in our profile feature in which Time to Change Champion Andrew Hudson describes the importance of his relationship with an understanding and knowledgeable GP and the value he places on being able to talk with other people about his experiences.

As usual, I'd like to say a very big thank you to everyone who contributed to this issue. Please get in touch if you'd like to share with us some of your experiences and ideas on what you do to look after your own mental health and wellbeing.

Justine Morrison

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A snapshot of mental health in Sheffield

Healthwatch Sheffield's new report puts forward service users' views and experiences

Continued from front page

Healthwatch Sheffield has produced a snapshot of mental health in Sheffield, based on an engagement event they ran on behalf of Sheffield's Health and Wellbeing Board in July. They hope that the findings of the event will help to influence the Sheffield Mental Health Strategy and the special inquiry into discharge from mental health services being undertaken by Healthwatch England.

Eighty people attended the event at Sheffield Town Hall, the majority of whom were service users. The main focus of the event was a series of discussions on a range of topics, including discharge from hospital, acute care, bringing health and social care together, barriers to accessing services, early support and intervention and emergency care and support. Participants were also asked about the measures they take to stay well, how they access information about mental health, what works well about services and what could be improved.

Key points about maximising and maintaining personal wellbeing included a recognition that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution to keeping well and that individuals find different things that work for them. Having a network of people to speak to, through family and friends or online, is the single most important thing that helps people and it was recognised that children need strong support both at home and at school.

People at the event praised a number of specific services they used, particularly Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services, and stressed how they valued well-trained and empathic staff with positive and supportive attitudes. They also appreciated being able to access community based services.

Whilst some people appreciated opportunities to become involved in

the services they use, many people felt that they would like to be more involved in their care and thought that services needed to consult with people more. Participants were also concerned that the threshold for accessing services was set too high, that waiting times can lead to a worsening in conditions, and that services were not flexible enough in terms of opening times or place of delivery.

Participants identified the following key issues for improving mental health in Sheffield:

- Joining up services and information sharing between agencies
- Support for paid and unpaid carers
- Improved information and communications
- Training for staff and volunteers
- The provision of person centred care

They felt that the main barriers to preventing these things from happening were:

- Not getting access to services, or getting the right service
- Waiting too long for a service, or not getting help early enough
- Limited resources
- Having physical and mental health needs treated separately
- Lack of integration and communication between services

Healthwatch Sheffield is now calling on the Sheffield Health and Wellbeing Board to work proactively to translate people's views into action by using their report as the basis for future work around the topic areas discussed at the event.

'Mental Health in Sheffield: A Snapshot' can be downloaded from: www.healthwatchsheffield.co.uk/mental-health-sheffield-snapshot-report

several people who currently or previously had accessed SAGE Greenfingers. From these conversations I was able to distil the essence of what positives people had derived from the allotments.

It became obvious that SAGE Greenfingers conferred a number of beneficial aspects on members which included having something concrete and meaningful to attend when life felt bleak.

Added to this was the social aspect of meeting others and therefore breaking social isolation with the added bonus of fresh air. There also appeared to be something special about growing and eating produce which created a sense of connectivity with nature and helped form a strength of purpose.

Before lunch was made available in the greenhouse David Blunkett MP made a speech to mark the occasion.

Following the speech Madame Zucchini performed a unique and comical take on Star Wars, where various fruit and vegetables were used to represent characters from the film. Even with my vivid imagination I really never expected when I saw the film at the Gaumont in 1977 I would be confronted with Leek Skywalker decades down the line! This diversion was enjoyable and preceded a brief speech that thanked all those involved over the years, followed by a buffet.

The event was very well attended and had a real feel good summer vibe. It was apparent that SAGE Greenfingers is a fine resource embedded in the local community, providing meaningful and mindful activity to those who are involved. Hopefully 10 years from now they will be celebrating their twentieth anniversary!

First ever NHS waiting time standards for mental health announced

In October, the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, announced that treatment for mental health conditions will be brought into line with other NHS services with the introduction of the first ever waiting time standards.

Bringing treatment for mental health problems on a par with physical health will end years of discrimination. There will also be £120 million to improve mental health services.

The Deputy Prime Minister said: "It's wrong that relatives and friends needing a hip operation can expect treatment within a clear time frame but someone with a debilitating mental health condition has no clarity about when they will get help."

The announcement is part of a radical 5-year plan to end years of imbalance between mental and physical healthcare services.

For the first time, from April 2015, most patients needing talking therapies - for conditions like depression - will be guaranteed the treatment they need in as little as 6 weeks, with a maximum wait of 18 weeks.

From 1st April 2015 (to be fully implemented by April 2016), the new waiting time standards will be as follows:

- 75% of people referred for talking therapies for treatment of common mental health problems like depression and anxiety will start their treatment within 6 weeks and 95% will start within 18 weeks.
- At least 50% of people going through their first episode of psychosis will get help within 2 weeks of being referred. The aim is to increase this percentage in future years.

The Sheffield Mental Health Guide

Sheffield Mind's Mental Health Information Service is long-established within the city and continues to be a well-used and high-profile service. It provides a 'one stop shop' of online information about conditions, treatments and services, links to self-help resources and a comprehensive Directory of Services via the Sheffield Mental Health Guide (SMHG) website.

Sheffield Mind are currently working on the re-design of the SMHG website, along with a new leaflet to promote the service. They held two focus groups about the website design in June; one with professionals and one with service users. Both groups were very positive about the guide and provided valuable feedback about improvements that could be made, to make the guide even more user-friendly.

In the last three months there have been over 10,000 visits to the SMHG website. The most common search is for counselling or therapy services, with a lot of people also looking for 'help' or 'support' with a particular situation, or for a support group. In terms of mental health issues, the most common where a specific condition is mentioned is depression, followed by anger and anxiety/panic attacks.

Information can also be obtained via email and telephone, where Sheffield Mind provide personalised, supported information about services available in the city. The Information Service works to a model of 'supported information' - supporting people to find the service or information they need or to navigate the mental health system with a warm, personalised approach. It does not offer emotional support, and callers requiring this are signposted to other services as appropriate. The service can be accessed at:

www.sheffieldmentalhealth.org.uk

Changes at MESH

At their September AGM, Mental Sheffield (MESH) decided that from now on the group will function predominately as a social media mental health support group.

Although the group will organise the occasional social meeting they will no longer provide regular workshops or socials.

MESH founders Christina and Jean-Michel would like to thank everyone who has supported the group over the last 2 years and helped make the group what it is today.

You can support MESH on Facebook and Twitter. The group will inform those on their mailing list when they arrange a social.

Email:
mentalsheffield@gmail.com

Alongside support group closes

Unfortunately, Alongside, the support group for partners of survivors of sexual abuse, has closed.

If you are affected, the following organisations may be of help:

The Survivors Trust
www.thesurvivorstrust.org/

And, if you are a carer:

Sheffield Carers Centre
Tel: 0114 272 8362
www.sheffieldcarers.org.uk/

CAST on Facebook

Keep up to date with all the events and activities of the Creative Arts Support Team via their new Facebook page at:

www.facebook.com/creativeartsst

'Let's Get Talking' to reduce stigma

A *Your Voice* editorial group member reports on a new DVD to raise mental health awareness in BME communities



Group discussion at the 'Let's Get Talking' event

On 17th September Sheffield Mind held an event to celebrate and publicise the launch of 'Let's Get Talking', a DVD made in conjunction with Sheffield based Somali mental health charity MAAN and Pakistani Community Advice Centre (PACA). The DVD had been commissioned by the Time To Change campaign, with the aim of increasing mental health awareness in these specific communities, allowing increased access to services and hopefully reducing stigma.

The event, which took place at St. Mary's, Bramall Lane, proved to be both positive and uplifting. This was achieved by varying the day with a mixture of presentations, performances and discussions. Kicking the event off in style was a mix of verse recitals, dancing and singing, provided by young people who had involvement with the Sheffield Children's Centre. These performances highlighted the joys and potential barriers that the young face in negotiating their way in life. This was joyously received, evidenced by the beaming smiles in the audience.

The remainder of the day was primarily related to the DVD. The audience was shown short vignettes from the film and then facilitated discussions ensued in small groups about the issues raised. The

majority of people relating mental health concerns in the DVD were actors speaking real words from interviews of service users to protect anonymity.

After a fine buffet lunch Nisha Lall provided an energetic demonstration of Bollywood dancing and taught us a combination of movements that fought off the pleasant fatigue caused by the fine food. More clips and discussions followed, and Nam, who appears in the DVD, talked eloquently about her issues regarding anxiety and how it was dealt with.

Overall the event was informative and engaging. It stimulated many exchanges of ideas, reflecting the intended function of the DVD itself. At the end we received a 24-page companion booklet to go with the DVD which provides a blueprint on how to use the film as a resource to develop discussions among groups to comprehend and challenge the multifaceted discrimination BME communities experience, particularly in the realm of mental health.

Copies of 'Let's Get Talking' DVD and booklet can be obtained by contacting Sheffield Mind:

Email: lindsay.doyle-price@sheffieldmind.co.uk

Do you want to play football?

FAD FC offers range of activities



Football's Awareness of Depression Football Community (FAD FC) was set up in 2012 to provide professional footballers and others in the profession with information about mental health.

In June this year, we celebrated the launch of our own Equality and Inclusion Football Academy, specifically for adults experiencing mental health issues, by hosting a 6-a-side World Cup Football tournament.

We are currently setting up sessions of walking football, which is a version of the beautiful game where any player caught running concedes a free kick to the opposition. We're setting up these sessions to help senior people get back into the game. We will be playing on 3G 5-a-side pitches. New players are welcome, regardless of fitness and ability level. All of our football sessions take place at our 'home ground' of Lucozade Powerleague in Sheffield.

If you are interested in our activities, whether it's walking football sessions, playing for our 5- or 7-a-side teams, or want to enter your team into the Good Mood Equality League set up by FAD FC, please contact:

Caroline Stokes
Tel: 0114 348 1562
Mob: 07880 965 609
Email: academy@fadfc.org.uk
www.fadfc.org.uk

Your Profiles

Time to Change Champion Andrew Hudson on the value of a good GP, coming to terms with a diagnosis of depression and developing personal self-management strategies



Andrew on his stall at a craft fair

What brought you into contact with mental health services?

It was January 2013 and I felt very, very low. I'd been feeling low for a long, long time. I'd been feeling worthless and useless. I'd been struggling to get out of bed in the morning. At weekends I'd stay in bed until lunch time – just hiding really from the outside world. Going to work in the week was a struggle. I struggled to get out of bed. I'd be in the bathroom, very anxious, coughing and spluttering, getting myself ready. As I left the house I used to look round at the door and think that might be the last time I ever see the door because I'm going out into the world. Then I'd get to work and put on a brave face. I just got on with my work and didn't put my head above the parapet.

I'd often think I'm going to pull up my socks and tomorrow it's going to be a new life, a new world and I'd get to the next day and nothing had changed. I found life very, very hard. I never thought of the words 'poor mental health' or 'depression'. I was having to work hard at just maintaining an existence. I thought that's how I am and that's how life is. When I look back now I must

have been living like that week in, week out, month in, month out for 10 or 15 years.

That January there was a Time to Change TV advert and I watched it and I listened and I connected with what they were talking about – mental health. I went on to their website and there was a button for Mind. I'd never heard of Mind but I clicked and found listed all these symptoms for depression - that was the first time I'd seen the word depression. I went through the list - low esteem, low mood, feelings of worthlessness - and I thought that's me. A few days later I plucked up some courage and I rang Mind who said I needed to speak to Sheffield Mind. I rang Sheffield Mind and I was on for an hour. The person I spoke to said you need to go and see your GP. I left it a few days, then made an appointment to see my GP.

There was a week before my appointment and some days I thought my GP will sort me out and other days I thought what am I going to see my GP about? I'm not ill, I haven't got a broken arm or a cold. How's she going to diagnose this?

But when the day came, I went. I sat in the waiting room, ready for work, suit on, sandwiches, thinking about the meetings I'd got that morning. The doctor was running late and I was thinking shall I just go to work? But I decided to stick with the process and see where it leads. I went in thinking how do I start this conversation. So I just said that I've come about feeling a bit low and that I feel fed up and worthless. As I'm saying it I'm thinking I'm wasting her time. But she said she understood and she came out with some very sympathetic words. I connected with what she said and I broke down.

What was your experience of mental health services?

My GP Dr Philippa Moorhead has been absolutely fantastic. I've been really lucky. I could have met a GP on that Wednesday morning in January who didn't understand but she did understand. She told me that I had stress and depression and signed me off work for 3 weeks (I was off for 7 months). When she asked have you ever thought about medication, I said no but I'll do whatever you say. Over the months we've had some real good discussions and debates and I have full confidence in her. If she hadn't recognised depression and picked me up that day, we wouldn't be here doing this interview now. Every time I go I say thank you.

My GP referred me to IAPT but to be honest that was a bit of a let down. My GP said that we'll not put you into therapy for a couple of months, let's wait for the medication to get you on an even keel. So I went on the waiting list and it was towards the end of June when I went to see a therapist and said she couldn't do a lot for me, as I was already having private CBT therapy. Fortunately, I've got a private healthcare scheme with my company and I'd already started CBT a couple of months before. I

went every week for about 6 months and I still continue to go about every 4 months. I thought my experience of IAPT was poor because if I hadn't had my private CBT therapist and I'd had to wait 4 or 5 months I could have been another statistic. There are plenty of people out there who need catching and to wait that long is not right. I've been told that IAPT services have improved since last summer and waiting times aren't so long now.

What aspects of your life were affected by contact with mental health services?

After that first visit to my GP, I got in my car and cried all the way home. I cried for two reasons: one was oh, god, I've got depression. How's that going to go down? The words 'mental health' were all new to me. I was also crying because someone had caught me. My GP may have saved my life and it was the first time ever that anyone had been sympathetic and recognised that I'd got an illness.

While I was off work I started making bread. I found myself concentrating on kneading the bread and I felt quite good but it didn't last for long because I was only kneading for half an hour. I put the bread in the oven and when it came out it was beautiful. My wife said: "That's really nice bread." Well, that had a right effect on me – it lifted my esteem and gave me some confidence. So everyday I'm baking bread; I did baguettes, pizzas, pitta bread, bread cakes, all kinds of different breads. It had quite a positive effect on my attitude.

One day my wife said she'd like an old-fashioned timber crate for the garden. So I made one and she said she really liked it. Then her sister said: "Can I have one? I really like that?" Again it made me feel good so I made her one. I got all this old timber from a pallet place and I was making crate after crate. Making the crate took my mind off all those negative thoughts. The cutting, sawing, hammering, measuring took all day, so all day my mind couldn't

think about anything else but the job I was doing. When I finished a crate it gave me satisfaction and put some confidence in me. It made me think I'm not useless and worthless after all. A friend would say "I love your crates" and then people would say why don't you sell them. It became an upward spiral gaining self-belief and self-esteem. Now I've got a hobby making crates and timber boxes – I call it 'my medicine'.

What projects are you involved in today?

After a couple of months off work, I wanted to give something back and decided to volunteer to work with Sheffield Mind. I started going to their Social Cafés at St. Mary's Church and the Learning Zone. I attended as a service user and as a volunteer. I found that through talking to people about my experience and them talking about their experience we've helped each other. I've felt good that I've been able to offer some of my experiences and things that might be helpful for others. They've been able to talk to me about their issues which has made them feel good because being able to talk just helps. It's opened my eyes about mental health and about people. There are some super intelligent creative people out there.

At a Social Café I met the Development Manager of Recovery Enterprises, which supports people with mental health issues to develop enterprises around the creative things they do to benefit their own mental health. Recovery Enterprises support me and my enterprise, Hudson & General, and I support their work. I also do craft fairs. I call my craft stall a disguised mental health stall because when people come and say: "Why do you make your crates?" I've started being open about mental health and said I do it because I suffer from depression and this is my medicine. I've had people say: "Well to be honest, I suffer from depression" and we've had a really good chat about it.

I'm a Time to Change Champion. I organised my own mental health event in Sheffield Winter Garden in May this year with Time to Change and Recovery Enterprises. Chrissie Hinde and CAST were there too with their artwork. It was amazing, having open conversations and reaching out to the public, in one case making a difference to a person's life. I thought we've cracked it! Just by helping or changing a person's life, we've done what we set out to do.

What is your proudest achievement?

Through Time To Change I met NSUN (National Survivor User Network) who invited me to talk about my story at their AGM in Leicester. I'd never done anything like this before but what I'd been taught by my therapist was to have a go at these things. What's the worst that can ever happen to you? I got on the lectern and there was a guy with a stopwatch to keep us within the 3-minute time limit. He'd been stopping everybody at 3 minutes. I didn't know until afterwards but the audience signalled to him to let me keep going and so I went for 6 minutes. At the end, I got an ovation and they were all clapping and people were coming over saying that's a fabulous inspiring story. Coming away with all the positive feedback just lifted me. I think about that day often.

Is there anything else that you'd like to say?

What's been very powerful through my recovery journey has been having interests and hobbies because they lift you and provide benefits to improve one's own mental health. My crate making has opened my life up to meeting new people and having new experiences, which have pushed my comfort zone out and built up my confidence and self-esteem. The positives that have come out of the other side of my depression are amazing and continue.

www.hudsonandgeneral.com
www.recoveryenterprises.co.uk

Mental illness and wellbeing

A service user reflects on her experience of hospitalisation and the therapeutic effect of nature



Aquilegia and bee

I was approached earlier this summer to write about my art work. Whilst I will make reference to this, I mostly want to write about my journey through mental illness, how I struggled with hospitalisation and the awareness that nature is a far greater antidote than conventional treatments.

During my mental illness in May 2008, I was diagnosed with a stress breakdown, vomiting and psychosis. In the following months I was in and out of various hospitals in Sheffield, Haverfordwest and Derby.

The trauma of illness and being manhandled by police and hospital staff further contributed to the deterioration in my wellbeing, the resulting weight loss and obvious alienation I felt. The so-called care I received was, at best, fragmented and at worst hostile. Struggling to cope with incoherent thoughts and the regime of institutionalisation amounted to despair, though I did not want to admit this to those around me. The agenda seemed to be about control and containment. In one hospital, being deprived of basics like food, water and sanitation was medieval.

Although the illness and hospitalisation felt like a sentence, I sought refuge in small things. There is in every situation something beyond us trying to reach out. This is very difficult to discern in a society that is self-obsessed and infatuated with popular culture. For me such things are vain pursuits. I have found more strength in the hidden and overlooked aspects of a blade of grass than in the shadows of a thirty-floor tower block.

Yet discernment is a quality that is difficult to find when coping with anxiety. There were however moments during my hospitalisation that surprised me. One hospital had a large open green space with small woodland on its perimeter. On a sunny morning I joined a tai chi session on the grassy lawn. We were barefooted and to feel directly connected to the earth was quite lovely. Later in the summer in the same garden, I was sat quietly by myself and a blackbird suddenly appeared just inches from me, tugging at a ripe berry. For a few moments, it instilled me with an energy and joy which had been missing for many months.

Whilst I consider creativity a cathartic and immediate expression of our inner life, I believe that emotional healing is not necessarily an outcome. Sitting in darkness is long and stressful. About 30 years ago I had a profound dream about the stages of life and the spiritual dimensions of development. Something that had triggered this was a series of yoga lessons. The first thing I did afterwards was to go and hug a large oak tree in the park. It was amazing to feel the energy of that life oozing from the ground.

Nature surprises are everywhere. Sometimes on my allotment I am visited by a cheeky field mouse scurrying across my path. Other times I observe the resident frog sitting out the heat of the day under the shrubs. All this is a reminder that nature is no small wonder; knowing that these creatures are eking out an existence without grumble or complaint. Quite a humbling encounter and in a small way teaching patience of a different kind to that of the hospitals. It is also a great tonic on a journey of recovery.

When you become a 'mental case', it's like you lose your identity. You are treated like a lesser person, an object. Those who stigmatise and judge us are ignorant. They cannot comprehend the complexity of symptoms let alone the obstacles that are put in the way of those trying to recover. In recent months I was visiting a friend on the same ward where I'd been held as an inpatient. Amongst the things that dismayed me was that the hospital had erected a 5-metre high fence, separating inmates from that large garden where I'd found solace. I was saddened to see the stress etched on the faces of those confined to the small smoke-filled yard, pacing up and down. If the NHS is to regain any public confidence in the wake of some of its disastrous mismanagement and stories of negligence, then it needs to look long and hard at its structures that cover up its failings. To do so will be the only way forward in its own recovery.

Reflections on boundaries

Art psychotherapist Anna Armentano shares her thoughts

It is important to understand the meaning of boundaries because only in this way can we use them efficiently and effectively. The concept of boundaries is of great importance in a society that focuses more on materialistic issues and less on people's needs.

A boundary is a line or a point that indicates or fixes a limit or extent. There are four types of boundaries:

Physical boundaries: Everyone requires a physical space in which to feel safe and comfortable. This is similar to most animals' 'territoriality' in demonstrating their ownership of a certain space. Almost all humans care about this.

Emotional boundaries: People need their own time and space to process their emotions and feelings. This is because we need to feel safe, respected and supported in our relationships. Sometimes, we need to be alone to process our feelings. However, having emotional boundaries means having the ability to separate our feelings from everyone else's.

Intellectual boundaries: Give us the ability to think 'what we want to think' and to be with our 'own thoughts'. This, of course, is within the limits of the law and ethics. However, as responsible individuals we are also able to understand right from wrong and accept the consequences.

Spiritual boundaries: Every person has the right to their own spiritual or religious beliefs and no one has the right to try to change this. When spiritual boundaries are in place, there is room for differences in each person's perspective.

Keeping all these boundaries in balance while completing everyday tasks can be challenging and, often, impossible. This is because life can



be unpredictable and can throw at us a variety of challenges. 'Crossing boundaries' is the most common outcome. Crossing boundaries is the theme I have been reflecting on the past few months and which has inspired me to make some reflective art works. The idea is to use mediums other than words to express what is going on in our lives as professionals and human beings.

One of the statements on this subject I love most is: "crossing certain boundaries may at times be salutary, at times neutral, and at times harmful."*

The image (above) represents the challenges that I have in keeping boundaries in place. Sometimes it is possible and sometimes it is not. This is part of our 'limits' in being human. Containment, negotiation, flexibility and an open mind are vital to the process of restoring balance between parties. Good boundaries also let others understand what is acceptable and what is not, and allow us to rejoice in our uniqueness and appreciate our own self-worth.

www.armentanoanna.com

* Gutheil, T.G. & Gabbard, G.O. 'The Concept of Boundaries in Clinical Practice: Theoretical and Risk-Management Dimensions' (1993)

How doing art and poetry helps me with my illnesses

By Matthew Sweeney

My name is Matthew. I have schizophrenia and sometimes I feel depressed.

I started doing art in 2007 at the Limbrick Centre Mental Health Clinic Art Group. I enjoyed visiting on a weekly basis as it gave structure to my life and kept me occupied.

I no longer do art at the Limbrick clinic, but thanks to receiving Self Directed Support funding from Sheffield City Council I am able to do art at Bank Street Arts on Bank Street in Sheffield. A professional artist works alongside me and inspires, motivates and supports me. Currently about seven pieces of my art are on display in the gallery and café area there.



Art work by Matthew Sweeney

I will also have some pieces of my art on display soon at St. Marys Church, Bramall Lane in the CAST annual art exhibition.

I also write poetry about everyday events I witness and thoughts about my life and the reality that I experience.

Doing art and poetry occupies my time productively and is an outlet for my creativity and helps me to use my imagination.

Your Reviews

Terry Simpson on David Webb's 'Thinking About Suicide: Contemplating and comprehending the urge to die'

(PCCS Books 2010 ISBN 978 1 906254 28 5)

The first line of this book's preface says: "If you've picked this book up because you are currently thinking about suicide for yourself then you are the first and most precious audience that I seek." You won't be surprised to know then that David is himself a survivor of suicide attempts, motivated like so many by wanting to pass on what he's learned through his own experiences.

But "this is not a self-help book". It grew out of a PhD, which in turn came about because, after surviving suicide attempts and drug addiction, David Webb became interested in the subject of 'suicidology' – the study of suicide. The more he read, the more he realised that although a lot had been written on the subject, very little of it was from the point of view of people who have experienced the urge to take their own lives.

Webb writes: "There is a fundamental flaw at the core of

contemporary thinking about suicide; which is the failure to understand suicidality as it is lived by those who experience it."

He set out to remedy that, and this book is a record of his own story, alongside what is known through research and medical literature.

Webb writes: "My 'problem' was in fact my life. My problem was that I could not bear being me." The best well-intentioned advice from friends and professionals was useless against such an experience.

The essential premise of the book is to "honour this agonising struggle, and then, with the respect for yourself that this struggle deserves, talk about it." He emphatically is against the idea of acting on feelings of suicide. He wants us to "neither suppress nor indulge any suicidal intentions". In this way he suggests a safe space can be created where feelings can be "felt, spoken of and heard" – we

can begin a conversation about them. He calls this 'a creative space'.

Webb believes that suicidal feelings arise from a 'crisis of the self'. (When I heard him speak he used the term 'psychache', a term coined by Professor Edwin Scneidman, one of the early pioneers in this work.) This is not to be confused with mental illness. Rather than pathologising the experience, Webb suggests: "It is possible to see thinking about suicide as a healthy crisis of the self, full of opportunity, despite its risks".

Webb's conclusion is that the crisis can lead to growth, a deeper experience of the self, and so a pathway out of suicidal feelings. He examines contemporary ideas about 'the self', and concludes that where current academic thinking can't go, spiritual wisdom has much to say that's useful, although he adds: "I am not proposing spirituality as some universal panacea or 'treatment' for suicide."

Webb acknowledges that there are good reasons for keeping quiet about suicidal feelings - you could end up hospitalised and drugged. He says: "Breaking this cycle requires bringing suicide out of the closet as a major public health issue, which in turn requires the involvement of everyone touched by suicide in our communities – which is all of us."

If like me you've ever felt so bad about yourself that you thought the only solution was to take your life, then this book is ultimately a very liberating read, if at times a hard one. If you work with people who have suicidal feelings, then I think it's essential reading.

David Webb's mission to get people talking about suicide led him to set up a website where you can find out more about this book and about the subject:

<http://thinkingaboutsuicide.org/>



why crying is good for you

emotional tears remove toxins associated with stress.

it can trigger endorphins - a helpful mood buffer should you glimpse your red puffy face in a mirror!

it acknowledges an emotional event/ experience (& not always a sad one!)

it's a rebellion against anyone who's ever mocked or derided you for crying!

it helps communicate your emotions - often giving an opening for shared experience & support.

Your Artwork



Artwork from an anonymous contributor

Your Verse

A tribute to our late friend Darren Hawke, who was a well-loved member of our knitting group

My little love has gone above for a great big love.

Darren the man was a pioneer of a knitter.

He came to our group all naïve and willing to believe all things are possible with needles and yarns.

My little love has gone above for a great big love.

Putting tulips on a green knitted field was a work in progress of his, that tapestry really appealed to me.

My little love has gone above for a great big love.

Illness was always a friend to my dear devoted Darren, intensely a private man, always enquiring into the wellness of his friends.

My little love has gone above for a great big hug.

With you dear lord in that eternal wool shop that is your heaven.

**Carol Kallend
Ashram Knit and Natter Group**

Your Letters

Challenging the system

The psychiatric system still abuses patients and I believe the law needs to change to offer people more protection. It is very dangerous when people in authority carry too much power and we are subject to undue influences. I feel

that although I dislike the system there are also some good examples of care we can learn from. In particular, groups in the community that eliminate stigma by social inclusion of everyone regardless of race or health status.

J. Thompson

Win a £10 book gift card

Write us a letter or send us some of your artwork or poetry and you could receive a £10 book gift card. The Your Voice editorial group will send the prize to the person who contributes our favourite poem, artwork or letter in each issue - not including items from current members of the Your Voice management committee and editorial group. (Becky Vigor receives a gift card for artwork in issue 72).

YOUR NOTICEBOARD

Mental Health Needs of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

This training course provides introductory knowledge and awareness of the mental health needs of asylum seekers and refugees and is suitable for anyone who has an interest in working with the asylum seeker/refugee communities.

Date: 2nd February 2015

Time: 9:15 am to 4 pm

Cost: £190 (discounted price for voluntary/community organisations is £95).

For more details see the training section of the VAS website at:

www.vas.org.uk

Tel: 0114 253 6623

Email: training@vas.org.uk

Would you like to volunteer for No Panic Sheffield?

No Panic Sheffield provide a weekly self-help group for people suffering from anxiety, panic attacks, OCD, phobias and other anxiety related conditions.

No Panic Sheffield are looking for people to help facilitate meetings. If you like working with groups, and have a passion for CBT please get in touch (email address below). Full training will be provided.

Email:

nopanicssheffield@gmail.com

For more information about No Panic Sheffield, please visit the website at:

www.nopanicssheffield.org.uk.

CAST Artist Gathering

Open mic night meets on the first Thursday of the month. Next date is Thursday 6th November at 5 pm to 8 pm at Eten café (entrance on East Parade next to Sheffield Cathedral). Visit the website for the latest updates:

www.castsheffield.org

SUN:RISE Service User Network

SUN:RISE continues to meet on the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 1 pm – 4 pm in Conference Room 2, The Circle, 33 Rockingham Lane, Sheffield S1 4FW. Dates for next meetings are:

- 12th November 2014
- 10th December 2014
- 14th January 2015
- 11th February 2015

For further information please contact:

Noelle Riggott

Tel: 0114 271 8789

Email: sunrise@shsc.nhs.uk

Local and inpatient SUN:RISE groups also meet at other venues. For information about local groups please contact either:

Nicky Watson

Tel: 0114 271 8289

Helen Stocks

Tel: 0114 271 8397

For information about inpatient groups please contact either:

Andy Barnett

Tel: 0114 271 8040

Richard Davies

Tel: 0114 226 1630

Women's self-injury helpline

Self Injury Support (formerly Bristol Crisis Service for Women) is a national organisation that supports girls and women affected by self-injury or self-harm. They now offer a UK-wide helpline offering women non-judgemental emotional support around self-injury.

Helpline: 0808 800 8088

Wednesday 7 pm - 9 pm

Thursdays 3 pm - 5 pm

All calls are completely confidential and answered by specially trained female volunteers. Calls are free from landlines and most mobile networks and won't show up on bills.

For more information about Self Injury Support, including a directory of other helpful national services, please visit the website at:

<http://selfinjurysupport.org.uk>

Mental Health Carers Group

For carers of people with mental health problems. The groups are on the third Thursday of each month, 10:30 am till 12 noon. Dates for forthcoming groups are:

- Thursday 20th November
- Thursday 18th December
- Thursday 15th January 2015

Venue: Sheffield Carers Centre, 7 Bells Square, S1 2FY.

Booking is not necessary, but if you want to talk to someone in advance, please ring Jan or James:

Tel: 0114 278 8942

To request, amend or cancel a Your Voice subscription, please contact us at:

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Website: www.yourvoicesheffield.org

Please send contributions for the Winter issue by 29th December 2014