

# YOUR VOICE

## In Sheffield Mental Health

A magazine for users, carers and professionals

[www.yourvoicesheffield.org](http://www.yourvoicesheffield.org)

Winter 2015 /16

No 78

### Recovery course team receives SHSC awards



REP team members: (left to right) John Culver, Sarah Burke, Will Mayor, Chrissy Bonham

#### By Chrissy Bonham Community Recovery Services

Towards the end of 2015 at the SHSC Annual General Meeting Sarah Burke, John Culver and I each won a Recognition and Achievement Award for our valuable contribution to the work of Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust.

The award was for the work that the three of us, along with our team leader, Will Mayor, had put in over the last year developing the Recovery Education Programme

(REP), a service available through Community Recovery Services (formerly SPACES).

The Recovery Education Programme is available to people accessing CRS's Short Term Service and is an eight week educational course designed to help people who are grappling with a wide range of mental health challenges.

Each week presents a different themed and diverse three hour workshop, however the same message is carried throughout the whole programme; that by making

small but significant lifestyle changes we can help ourselves achieve better mental health and build a life where we have more control over our own mental health.

Every workshop apart from one is planned and delivered by somebody with lived experience of mental health difficulties. John, Sarah and I each share our own recovery journeys with course attendees. Hearing other people's stories has proved to be a very powerful and inspirational way to give people hope in recovery.

Continued on page 3.

# Editorial

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N

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T

N

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◆ Recovery course team receives SHSC awards **Page 1**

◆ Editorial  
◆ Do you have experience of making funding bids? **Page 2**

◆ Sheffield Safe Places wants feedback from people with mental health issues  
◆ Recovery course team receives SHSC awards (continued) **Page 3**

◆ Prime Minister pledges a revolution in mental health treatment  
◆ Sheffield Health & Social Care NHS Foundation Trust is going Smoke Free  
◆ Self injury Support needs your views on self harm  
◆ Samaritans launches free helpline number **Page 4**

◆ Free Hand Creative Evenings for people living with depression and anxiety  
◆ Creative and Inspired Potters at The Art House **Page 5**

### Your Profiles

◆ Kathryn Littlewood, author of 'Cultivating MadCow,' on the factors that led to a suicide attempt and the need for mental health services to employ people with lived experience **Pages 6 & 7**

◆ An introduction to homeopathy  
◆ Fishing and me **Page 8**

◆ It's Not All Bad!  
◆ Free ebook on the experience of hearing voices **Page 9**

### Your Reviews

◆ Service user Steve writes about 'Cultivating MadCow' by local author K. A. Littlewood  
◆ adventures in counselling: the couch **Page 10**

### Your Verse

### Your Artwork

Your Letters **Page 11**

### Your Noticeboard

◆ Mental Health Carers Group  
◆ SUN:RISE Service User Network  
◆ CAST (Creative Arts Support Team) Artist Gathering and Workshops  
◆ Sheffield Mind and Body Project **Page 12**

This edition features a number of articles about the different ways people with lived experience of mental health problems choose to promote recovery and enhance wellbeing. Charly Calpin introduces readers to Free Hand Creative Evenings for people living with depression and anxiety where the ethos is escapism through arts and crafts; members of the Creative and Inspired Potters groups highlight some of the benefits of getting together with like-minded people to be creative; and Big Dave describes how getting away from it all by going fishing is like a holiday. A service user writes about the restorative and life-enhancing effect of being a befriender and using their experience of depression and anxiety to inform, develop and deliver mental health training. Similarly, our front cover features the award winning team members who developed and facilitated the Recovery Education Programme.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this edition. If there's something you'd like to write about for *Your Voice*, please do get in touch.

**Justine Morrison**

### **Do you have experience of making funding bids?**

The *Your Voice* management committee is looking for a suitably skilled and experienced volunteer to help the organisation generate income from grant making trusts and foundations. If you have experience of making successful funding applications and would like to help us secure the magazine's future, please get in touch. If you leave your name and contact details on **0114 242 3675** or email us at **info@yourvoicesheffield.org** we will get back to you for an informal chat about what's involved.

We'd also like to express our gratitude to everyone who sent donations to *Your Voice* in recent months. Your support is very much appreciated.

**Disclaimer:** The views expressed in *Your Voice* are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily represent those of the Editorial Team. While every effort is made to ensure accuracy, we cannot be held responsible for alterations which occur during the publication process.

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**Acknowledgements:** We would like to acknowledge the input that the Sheffield mental health community makes to the ongoing success of *Your Voice*. Sheffield City Council provides our core funding. Our greatest debt of gratitude is reserved for all of our contributors and readers – we wouldn't exist without you.

## Sheffield Safe Places wants feedback from people with mental health issues

The Sheffield Safe Places initiative is interested in hearing from people with experience of mental health issues in order to ensure that the support it offers is relevant and helpful. The scheme, which is designed to support people who find themselves in challenging situations when out and about in Sheffield, allows people to seek help and support in a shop or company building registered to the scheme when needed.

Individuals who are members of the scheme are given a card to carry, showing their name and the name and phone number of their trusted person to call if they are in distress. If a person seeks help, members of staff at the safe place would be expected to make a phone call where necessary to the trusted person on the card, or to the emergency services if needed. They would also reassure and keep the person safe until the situation was resolved.

The Safe Places programme is co-ordinated by Heeley City Farm in partnership with Sheffield City Council and with support from the police and transport police. The scheme seeks to offer people reassurance that help is at hand by building a network of safe places across the city, giving more people the confidence to get out and about regularly.

Some of the scheme members joined because they experienced verbal abuse or hate incidences in the past which left them fearful of going out on their own, others have conditions which mean they might become suddenly overwhelmed or easily lost or confused. Businesses are not expected to see a large number of people requesting help, simply knowing that help is at hand if it is needed is enough to make a difference to people's ability to remain independent.



Businesses taking part are given a sticker to put in their window to show they are prepared to help out. There are currently 92 safe places across the city. The transport interchange, Sheffield Hallam University, Crystal Peaks shopping centre, John Lewis and the Moor market are all signed up to the scheme, along with all libraries.

We want to hear your opinions on how useful this support is for people experiencing poor mental health. Is there anything that could improve the service? What information would you like the staff at the safe places to know to help them to better understand about the difficulties people might be experiencing?

The scheme is also interested in hearing about your experiences of different businesses and services. Is there a shop that has shown you understanding in a difficult situation? Or one that could have done more to help? Is there somewhere near you that would benefit from having a safe place in it?

We would also like to hear from you if you own a business or you are interested in joining or volunteering for the scheme. To get in touch, please contact Saskia at:

**Email:**  
**safeplaces@heeleyfarm.org**  
**Tel/text: 07464 828 976**  
**Safe Places**  
**Heeley City Farm**  
**Richards Road**  
**Sheffield**  
**S2 3DT**

### Recovery course team receives SHSC awards

Continued from the front cover.

All three of us had attended REP a few years ago as part of our own recovery journeys and although the course was good at the time, we each had ideas about how it could be improved so that it would reach more people. The main point all three of us put forward was that it would be much more powerful if sessions were facilitated by people with lived experience.

Working closely with Will Mayor, who was then the Assistant Team Leader at SPACES, we each began to develop and deliver our own workshops based upon our own particular areas of expertise and put together a syllabus that ran progressively and distinctively focussed upon the idea of recovery throughout.

REP is ever-evolving. As well as collecting evaluations at the end of the course, we hold evaluation sessions where participants who have finished the course are given the opportunity to feedback and offer their own ideas and give us the opportunity to learn what people require in order to make REP as useful and successful as it can be.

The current syllabus is: Believing in Recovery; Wellness Recovery Action Planning; Managing Everyday Stress/Distress Tolerance Skills; Creative Expression; Physical Wellbeing and Mental Health; Storying; Food for Mood; and Volunteering and Employment.

Throughout the whole programme participants are given handouts in each workshop so that they can build their own 'toolbox' of information which will always be on hand to help during difficult times.

This is a big thank you to all the people who have made REP the successful programme that it is. We look forward to where this year takes us!

## Prime Minister pledges a revolution in mental health treatment

On 11<sup>th</sup> January, the Prime Minister announced almost a billion pounds of investment to enhance mental health services across the country. The plans include:

- £290 million to provide specialist care to mothers before and after having their babies.
- Introducing the first ever waiting time targets for teenagers with eating disorders and people experiencing psychosis.
- Nearly £250 million for mental health services in hospital emergency departments.
- Over £400 million to enable 24/7 treatment in communities as a safe and effective alternative to hospital.

The announcements were made in a speech on the government's plans to transform people's life chances and begin a new approach to put a stop to poverty.

The announcements were recommended by NHS England's independent Mental Health Taskforce, which was set up as part of the NHS plan for the next 5 years. Paul Farmer, Chief Executive of Mind, and Chair of the taskforce, said:

"This is a significant moment for mental health and we are pleased to see the Prime Minister giving it the attention it deserves. Mental health is hugely important in any discussion about improving life chances and mental health problems can affect anyone, from mums-to-be preparing for their first child to older people at risk of isolation."

The Mental Health Taskforce's report, to be published in the next few weeks, will also suggest a 5 year mental health strategy for the NHS.

## Sheffield Health & Social Care NHS Foundation Trust is going Smoke Free



To meet our duty of care as an NHS organisation, put NICE Guidance into practice and provide a safe, smoke free place for everyone, the Trust will become 100% smoke free on Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2016.

Support will be available for service users, visitors and staff to enable them to not smoke while on Trust premises, including car parks and grounds.

The Trust recognises that this is a major change. A lot of discussion and preparation is already happening, including staff training, to help to do this in the best way possible.

What support will be provided?

- Nicotine Replacement Therapy will be available to help people manage not smoking while on Trust premises (nicotine patches, inhalers, gum and lozenges that help take away the urge to smoke).
- Activities will be offered to replace the activity of smoking.
- Support will be available for those who would like to stop smoking permanently.
- Staff time previously used to assist smoking breaks will support recovery.

If you have any questions about the Trust going smoke free, please email us or visit our website:

**Email:** [smokefree@shsc.nhs.uk](mailto:smokefree@shsc.nhs.uk)  
**Website:** <http://shsc.nhs.uk/about-us/smoke-free/>

## Self injury Support needs your views on self harm

Do you want to contribute to new, experience-led information about self harm? We are looking for contributors of all ages and genders and from all parts of the UK.

Self injury Support is a UK-wide self harm support organisation. We are finding more and more that people who contact us are looking for information in relation to self harm that just isn't out there. This can be about a range of topics including autism, hearing voices, trauma and many more.

The survey, open until the end of March, can be found at:

**[www.surveymonkey.com/r/SHExperiences](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SHExperiences)**

Or contact Naomi Salisbury:

**Tel: 0117 927 9600**

**Email:**

**[naomisalisbury@selfinjurysupport.org.uk](mailto:naomisalisbury@selfinjurysupport.org.uk)**

## Samaritans launches free helpline number

People who signed the petition a few months ago will be delighted to hear that it is now possible to make calls to Samaritans free of charge. Freecall was launched in September 2015. It is free to all callers, including people on mobiles, and the number will not show up on phone bills. Callers can still use their local branch number (the standard charge applies) and contact Samaritans by email and face to face:

**Freecall: 116 123**

**Tel: 0114 276 7277 (Sheffield local branch)**

**Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)**

**Face to face: 272 Queen's Road, Sheffield S2 4DL (as available from 10 am – 10 pm)**

## Free Hand Creative Evenings for people living with depression and anxiety

Charly Calpin on the ethos of escapism through arts and crafts



Free Hand Creative Evenings are a space to be creative for people living with depression and anxiety. We are not an alternative to therapy, but offer a safe space to express yourself. *Your Voice* asked me how I came to set up Free Hand and why I think creativity is so important.

I'm 27 and have lived with depression since my teens. I started the journey towards this I guess by studying A levels in subjects I didn't really like, just because I had no idea what I was going to do with my life at 16. After a year of doing something I didn't like a friend suggested fashion. I joined the course and fell in love, I went on to study photography and then did a degree in fashion.

After I finished my degree I started to have panic attacks, while doing my MA. The creative process really helped me to work through a lot of stuff and find my confidence again. I set up my own label but after nearly two years of running it I realised it wasn't making me happy anymore so I started to think about what I

really wanted to do and that was to create a supportive community for people living with depression and anxiety. Art had always been a help to me so I believed I could use what I had learned to help other people.

Since our first event in January, Free Hand has held several successful workshops at CADS in Shalesmoor. Workshops take place weekly with a break every six weeks. Attendees are free to work on personal projects as well as take part in programmed sessions. We welcome diversity and creativity and hope that a positive and supportive atmosphere will encourage personal and artistic growth amongst our members. We hope to provide news and resources that reflect our ethos of escapism through arts, crafts (and whatever else takes our fancy!) for our followers to enjoy and reflect on.

When asked about their experience at Free Hand, one attendee said: "I like the freedom to play around with a vast collection of craft materials, learn new techniques and having a themed project makes me focus rather than worry about what I'll make. I appreciate Charly's creativity in coming up with ideas and in being so welcoming. It's a space where I feel comfortable enough to have things flop or go wrong and to be moody or silly. Plus you get to take pretty things you've created home with you!"

Free Hand Creative Evenings are free to attend and we are always welcoming new members and collaborators. If you're looking to find a safe space from depression and/or anxiety or are interested in how you can help us, don't hesitate to contact us and get involved!

[www.facebook.com/freehandsheffield/](https://www.facebook.com/freehandsheffield/)

[www.freehandcreative.wordpress.com/](http://www.freehandcreative.wordpress.com/)

## Creative and Inspired Potters at The Art House

Have you ever fancied trying pottery? Maybe you've done some before and would like to have another go? Come along to a friendly and kind place to enjoy creativity with other like-minded people!

Creative and Inspired Potters are wellbeing groups for people experiencing mental health needs who want to enjoy pottery in a safe, supportive, informal environment. .

Louise, who has recently joined Creative Potters, describes it as a "warm, supportive, inspiring environment". Other group members say it is:

- "a class where you can work at your own pace and not under pressure."
- "an opportunity to work on your own individual projects" with "an understanding tutor and volunteers."
- "accepting and non-judgemental, a place to connect with others and enjoy a purposeful activity."



Both groups are based at The Art House on Backfields (off Division Street) in the city centre. Creative Potters runs on Mondays from 10 am – 12 noon. Inspired Potters runs on Wednesdays from 1 pm – 3 pm.

For more details, including pricing, please contact Sarah Vanic:

**Mobile: 07837 187 930**

**Email:**

[sarah.vanic@arthousesheffield.co.uk](mailto:sarah.vanic@arthousesheffield.co.uk)

## Your Profiles

Kathryn Littlewood, author of 'Cultivating MadCow,' on the factors that led to a suicide attempt and the need for mental health services to employ people with lived experience



### **What brought you into contact with mental health services?**

During the early 2000s I was working in child protection as a social worker in Rotherham. I knew there was something really wrong with me. I'd been crippled with anxiety and insomnia for over a quarter of a century. I'd had many trips to the doctor to find a solution as to why I couldn't sleep and was given the same answer time after time: "You're depressed." Most of us take sleep for granted; we moan and groan about not having a good night's sleep here and there but my inability to switch off, power down and drift away into slumber was so serious that it has wreaked havoc throughout my life. It is what led me to a place that no one should ever be, which was standing on top of a building then jumping off.

For over twenty years I'd been prescribed a cocktail of anti-depressants and occasionally sleeping pills in the hope they'd cure the underlying reasons for my insomnia and severe anxiety. I was never warned that the anti-depressants could be a contributing

factor to me ending up lying face down on the concrete. I had such severe injuries to every part of my body that I am lucky not only to be here to tell this story but also to be able to walk and be fairly independent.

In 2004 I became really ill. I had no idea what was happening to me. My behaviour was very outlandish, mischievous and eccentric. I'd used alcohol for years to try and sleep. It was the only way I could cope with going to work the next day but, unlike a lot of people who drink, it made me more awake than ever. I was also smoking, sometimes cannabis, and it was having the same effect as the drink. There are many people working in highly charged stressful environments drinking and smoking to cope with getting through the weeks. If you read my book you will understand some of the things social workers have to deal with. The more I self-medicated, the worse I became and that mixed with the anti-depressants was a lethal combination.

I felt sorry for my work because

they didn't know what to do with me. They'd been trying to get the mental health team on board but it all came very late. They did give me the phone number of a counsellor employed through their Employee Assistance Programme. The person who answered the phone is a really important part of this story because from the moment he picked up my call both our lives changed forever. His name was Barry White and he is the central feature of the story in 'Cultivating MadCow'. He was the one person in the whole world I had a connection with. Not long into our contact, I began to form a romantic attachment to Barry which is symptomatic of bipolar disorder. Whilst he was writing about me, I was writing about him but his writing was case notes and mine was a book of love.

### **What was your experience of mental health services?**

I don't want to write about how ineffectual the mental health team was in providing me with support because it's unproductive for everyone. I'm past looking to blame someone for what has happened to me. I think it's fairly obvious to anyone who reads my books that there were issues relating to my care.

The process didn't work for me. It took too long to get referred and there were delays in managing me when I was eventually seen. There were confusions, for me, about the process and who was who. I was passed around a lot and the telling and retelling my story, including basic information about myself, was exhausting. It left massive gaps for vital pieces of information that could have led to different decisions being taken about my care. I felt there was too much reliance on me being a professional and supposedly knowing and understanding how the system worked rather than me being a very sick person.

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

I don't have any contact with the mental health teams now and haven't done for years. I came off all medication six years ago. I think people have been conned into thinking they need to be on medication for the rest of their lives. I wanted to prove I can function perfectly well just using it when needed. I manage myself now with the help and support of my GP. It's taken us a long time to build up this trusting relationship but he knows when I need help and he really listens to me, putting me in the driving seat of my own self-management. I don't drink alcohol at all. I knew the only way I could be medication free was to take complete control over my entire wellbeing and you can't be in control when you're pouring alcohol down your neck. It is the same with nicotine and any other stimulants including caffeine.

### **What projects, or work, are you involved in today?**

I have the best job in the world. I work for a really progressive charity whose ethos is strongly based in the social model of disability. I first came to work at Disability Sheffield six years ago as an advocate but I was rubbish at that. I'm too hot-headed to be an advocate. I took a lot of people to task over some very serious issues for people with disabilities and mental health problems. There's a lot of need out there and cuts have made it harder for people to live the lives they rightly deserve to live. I could feel myself becoming ill again, getting angry with people and shouting too much, so I applied for another job within the same organisation as an Employment Development Worker. It was the best move I could have made.

At first I was charged with designing and delivering training to health and social care staff around disability and employment. I loved doing this and I brought a lot of personal experience to the role. We were

then fortunate enough to secure funding from the Office of Disability Issues to facilitate a peer job collective which involved working with up to 30 disabled people using the peer model of support to increase the appetite for work and skill them up. The outcomes were mainly soft and even though we did help a few people into paid work, it was never really about that. It was about building confidence and providing a platform for people to really think about the things they would like to achieve

I now facilitate several projects and I don't know how I manage to fit it all in sometimes. I've designed and developed an Autism Insight group who have learned to become trainers. I manage the young disabled person's Talent Match project for 18-24 year olds to increase their appetite for enterprise. I'm currently facilitating and delivering Restraint training for individual employers (disabled people who manage their own staff) and their PAs around the issue of restraint practice. I've just finished work on the new Personal Health Budget project which is being rolled out by NHS England. I also facilitate the Sheffield Voices learning disability self-advocacy group which has just completed a hate crime DVD.

On top of all that I have my own business which at the moment only sells my own book but I'm wanting to work towards supporting other disabled people to tell their own stories by offering a space on my website to market their books. I also give talks, lectures and motivational speaking at universities.

### **What is your proudest achievement?**

Standing up and telling this story to the world and not allowing the negative people in my life to dictate what I should write or say. You are here only once and you have an absolute right to tell your story the way you want to tell it no matter what others feel about that. That

and making a silk purse out of a pig's ear, which is what I have managed to make of this dreadful situation.

### **Is there anyone in mental health you particularly admire?**

I have a lot of time for people like Guy Richardson, who has sadly now retired, and Will Mayor because these guys are progressive. The Trust really has a golden opportunity here to learn from some of the great work they do and support people towards recovery. Pills might have their place but people need basic things in their life. When you have a breakdown and lose everything, you need help to rebuild your life starting with your confidence. People need positive role models; they need to learn about their own experiences from other people who have been there; they need a safe place to build their confidence and to learn new skills. The Recovery Education Programme is the place that offers this. I have seen people move from really bad places into great jobs within a year and that's what people need - hope and reality. I also really like the work Professor Brendan Stone does with Storying Sheffield, which certainly changed my life for the better, and also the work of Chrissie Hinde with the CAST group.

### **Is there anything else you'd like to say?**

There is much that the mental health teams can learn from my story and the stories of others like me. I just hope they take on board some of what has been said here. There needs to be a dramatic shift in culture if things are going to improve. Having people with lived experience working within the Trust is the only way this will be achieved. I hope they are listening properly. Shifting cultures is no easy task, especially in psychiatry where there are powerful people holding onto the reins.

[www.flippinmentalbooks.com](http://www.flippinmentalbooks.com)

For a review of 'Cultivating MadCow', see page 10.

## An introduction to homeopathy

Homeopath Gill Upham on the system's two main principles and how it may benefit people with depression

Homeopathy is a natural system of holistic medicine which has been successfully used for over 200 years. It has two main principles: firstly, the idea that 'like cures like', that is, a substance that can cause symptoms in large doses can be used to cure it when given in smaller doses. For example, chopping an onion causes our eyes to sting and water, and the homeopathic remedy *Allium Cepa*, which is made from onion, can be used to cure this in hay fever. The second principle is that homeopathic remedies use only tiny doses of the active ingredient in a specially prepared form, meaning that there are no side-effects, it is safe for everyone, it doesn't interfere with other medication, and there is no risk of addiction.

Homeopathy can be used to successfully treat patients of all ages with a wide variety of health problems, including: stress and depression, headaches and migraines, menopausal or menstrual problems, insomnia or tiredness, asthma, hay fever and other allergies, digestive complaints such as constipation, anxiety or panic attacks, eczema, and much, much more. The first consultation with a homeopath can last up to two hours, providing an opportunity to discuss your full physical and emotional health in detail. This length of time focused on you can often have a beneficial effect in itself and it allows the homeopath to fully understand your personal case.

In 2014 eight homeopaths in South Yorkshire were involved in a University of Sheffield research project into homeopathy and depression, and participants were able to have nine months of treatment free of charge. The results of this trial have not yet been published, but it appears that people who continued for the full

nine months all benefited from the treatment. An example is Paul, who had to retire early from his engineering job due to a degenerative physical condition, and who became depressed because he still wanted to work and because the future looked bleak. After several months of treatment, although his physical symptoms continued to worsen, he was feeling much more positive; he no longer went to bed dreading waking up the next day, and he started to consider doing some voluntary work that he could do from his computer at home.

Another person who benefited from the trial was Julie, whose son had died five years earlier at the age of 20. She had worked hard to recover from this, but despite anti-depressants she would lie awake for several hours every night just thinking. With homeopathy, her sleep improved significantly, so she was refreshed in the morning and able to continue to work full-time and enjoy time with her grandchildren.

A third person to benefit was Sue, who was off work with stress from her busy job as a social worker. With treatment she was soon able to go back to work, and in addition she separated from her abusive partner, which she had considered for several years but which until now she had not had the strength to do. She kept in touch for over a year, and had some further treatment to help with hot sweats during the menopause, which resolved very quickly.

For further information on homeopathy, including video clips, evidence and research, or how it might help you, please visit:

[www.findahomeopath.org/](http://www.findahomeopath.org/)

Or you can get in touch with me via:

[www.gillupham.co.uk](http://www.gillupham.co.uk)

## Fishing and me

Big Dave on how hobbies can help with mental health

I have been fishing since I was 10 years old and from this time it has been a big part of my life. My first fishing trip was at Roundhay Park Lake in Leeds where I fished roach using maggots and bread as bait. I loved fishing so much I spent all my pocket money on it! Much of my fishing knowledge has been self-taught. I spent much time reading about it as a child and gained experience from others.



Fishing has been beneficial for my mental wellbeing and helped me to develop friendships and new interests. It helps me concentrate, relax and reduces my anxiety levels. I particularly enjoy catching pike, carp and roach. I love learning and developing different fishing techniques depending on which fish I am catching and keeping up to date with the latest fishing techniques.

Fishing allows me to get away from day to day life. Going fishing is like going on holiday for me. I really feel like I'm getting away from it all. Being outdoors amongst the wildlife is something I find to be very therapeutic.

I am a keen artist and have used my experiences of fishing as inspiration for many art pieces I have done. Both art and fishing keep me occupied and are beneficial for my mental wellbeing.

## It's Not All Bad!

A service user reflects on the ways that peer support and being a mental health trainer make their life better

Since the age of seventeen I've experienced the emotional turmoil that chronic depression and various anxiety disorders have inflicted upon my psyche. Whilst I can't deny this has impacted negatively on my life in myriad ways, there are things I've undertaken which have provided a counterbalance to the adverse aspects of having an enduring mental health condition. A couple of examples of life-enhancing and meaningful activities I've done that have proved to have a restorative effect are mental health training I've delivered, and my role as a befriender.

Without getting overly detained with what recovery is or is not within the realm of mental illness, I subscribe to the idea that it is learning to live more productively with the symptoms, rather than them being cured. Obviously many other actions I've done have added to my sense of wellbeing, but the befriending and mental health training have been strong agents in my own journey upwards.

Over the years I've volunteered as a befriender in the Sheffield area for three different organisations, and perceive this as peer work as I was working in partnership with people who had a current mental health issue just as I did. Not only did this prove of benefit to my own sense of self, I passionately believe it helped those I befriended. Having something meaningful to get out of bed for was of great value and allowed me to reconnect with my socially inclusive side, and use my interpersonal skills to explore what the person I was befriending

wanted to pursue with our weekly slot. Rediscovering I was a capable and caring person was a tonic.

More importantly observing a person taking those initial tiny steps toward their own personal recovery is something that can't be quantified easily with mere words. Having said that there is a beauty about sharing in that experience. The building of mutual trust, understanding and respect is a process that has a deep and spiritual aspect. Similarly, to be involved with another person's passions and interests reminds one not only of the uniqueness of others but also one's self in a positive way - we all have something to offer and share in this journey called life. It was a pleasant and touching experience when once on a ward a former befriender shouted out my name and ran up and gave me an impromptu hug!

Having been a befriender was a humbling and joyful experience and one I shall never forget, with that sense of shared time. Delivering paid mental health training contrasted in many ways but also provided real currency in terms of 'living better' with a chronic condition. Training, for me, is a more fleeting task, and a more lonely pursuit. Whilst there is the interaction with those attending the training, and asking beforehand for advice of others, lone training requires solitude in terms of designing and researching the session and its themes.

Whilst always having an ability to communicate ideas and enjoying

reflecting on the difference between concepts and their relevance to real life, the idea of formally delivering training seemed something I would never manage to do. With all my issues around whether I have anything valid to say, would I just disintegrate in the room on the day, or even not turn up? How could a person with so little self-esteem actually achieve something positive? Despite all these issues constantly swirling through my mind, I managed to deliver some solid training regarding OCD and also recovery.

Feedback was positive overall, and to be told by service users in attendance I managed to articulate authentically the existential struggle of living with complex mental health issues was a great boon. Likewise, to have professionals in the field say they left a session with a more nuanced understanding of the issues and could add one or two techniques in their work practice helped me realise I do have something useful and important to say that can help others.

It has to be said that in both these roles I received excellent support behind the scenes and I thank those who gave me invaluable encouragement, and showed confidence in me when I had little in my abilities. Again most good things in life have a mutuality about them. Like many people I consider whether I really have any role in the scheme of things, but both the befriending and the training benefitted me, and just as importantly, others.

*This article is one of the entries in the SUST Recovery Awards 2016. To see other entries visit:*

***<https://patrickwoodtc.wordpress.com/>***

### Free ebook on the experience of hearing voices

I am 90 and have been hearing voices for nearly thirty years - without becoming ill. I have written a book, 'Listening to the Silences', which describes my experiences and offers many insights. The book is meant for voice hearers, carers and professionals. I shall be extremely grateful for anything that is done to promote the book and the fundamental knowledge that it contains. It is available free to download at: **[www.royvincent.org](http://www.royvincent.org)**

## Your Reviews

Service user Steve writes about 'Cultivating MadCow' by local author K. A. Littlewood

(Matador ISBN 978-1-78462-284-8 )

'Cultivating MadCow' is an unadulterated account of the author's emotional breakdown, resultant suicide attempt, and ultimate triumph. Kathryn candidly shares insights about her life, mainly during 2004, in an account that reflects the gamut of her emotions during this transformative period, ranging from bleak, tragic, sad to funny, warm and uplifting.

The opening chapter sets the scene in April 2004, mentioning incidents that are referred to in more detail later, and introducing Barry White, a telephone counsellor, a figure towards whom much of Kathryn's thoughts are addressed in this narrative. Timewise the second chapter shifts to October 2004, where Kathryn is in the Northern General after a suicide attempt, trying to piece together all that has happened. After her jump from a multi-storey carpark much of her skeleton is smashed, and it seems a miracle that Kathryn is still alive.

In the third chapter events go back to March 2004 and the reader is offered a wider contextual background to where Kathryn was at emotionally, and the conflicted

mind she was experiencing at the time. We are informed of Kathryn's role as a social worker in Rotherham, working within Families and Child Protection services. It is from here that we discover the author's feelings of isolation and futility, working in an under-resourced area, being little more than "shit shovellers", and feeling impotent to help those in need.

Kathryn launches SORT-ed (Sort It Out with Education), contacting local and national press and formulating a plan to enhance disaffected youths' life chances through a scheme aimed at providing social capital to increase wellbeing and positive choices. Kathryn captures superbly the increasing sense of emotional turmoil at this juncture; feeling both euphoric and yet seemingly paranoid and anxious simultaneously.

Kathryn's next project is a book that she expects will win international recognition, whilst firing off emails to all and sundry. Kathryn, by this stage is employed by Sheffield City Council who recognise all is not well, and refer her for telephone counselling from a company in

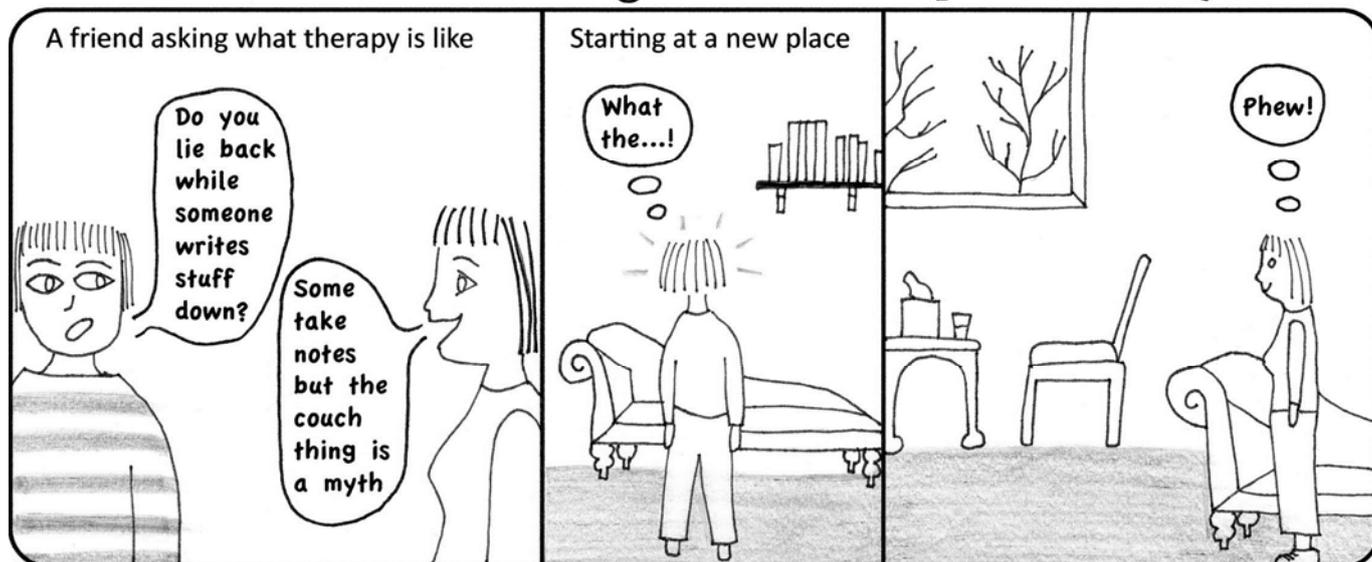
Oxford, whereupon her counsellor, Barry White, gets his introduction to Kathryn. It's hard to do justice to the power of the work in so little space, and it seems best not to give away the rest of the book. What is presented in the remaining chapters is the growing bond between Kathryn and Barry, her subsequent trip down to Oxford to locate him, which - spoiler alert - includes a touching but hilarious experience at an Evangelical church. Also addressed are the failings of the mental health system in Kathryn's particular case, her suicide bid, and the aftermath that proves, ultimately, to be positive and redemptive.

This excellent work can be interpreted in a number of ways. It can be seen as a long-distance love story, a creative breakdown due to the stressors of living in a mad world, or a meditation on a person passionate for positive social change evolving through a maelstrom of emotions. By writing so openly, using varying narrative devices, including Barry's case notes, a richly rewarding work emerges that manages to recreate both the turmoil and triumph of the author's experience.

'Cultivating MadCow' is available to buy at:

[www.flippimentalbooks.com/shop/](http://www.flippimentalbooks.com/shop/)

### adventures in counselling : the couch by it snipped my heart



## Your Verse

### Grandad George

It's sad, very sad, looking at my grandad.  
 Why is he so frail and thin?  
 He snuggles up under his quilt to keep warm.  
 What happened to his rosy cheeks?  
 His face is grey and cold now.  
 Why doesn't he sing to me anymore?  
 We were sitting in the airport waiting for our plane and grandad started singing.  
 But he always sang the same song: Be Bop A Lula.  
 He made me laugh all the time.  
 My grandad always took me on holiday, all the family, but not anymore.  
 I remember him playing in the sea with me, jumping over the waves.  
 All the sand castles we built with flags and shells.  
 We walked for miles along the beach.  
 When grandad came to see us in Spain we always went swimming in the river.  
 We went fruit picking together and had lots of barbecues.  
 Things are different now, people get old.  
 And people get ill.  
 That is my grandad George.

Elisha Mia McSkelly

## Your Artwork



'White winter flowers' by Helgi P

### Win a £10 book gift card

Write us a letter or send us 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. (Matthew Sweeney receives a gift card for artwork in issue 77).

## Your Letters

### Relatives Group concerned about future of Forest Close

Following the closure of Middlewood hospital in the 1990s, the local health authority commissioned a small purpose built unit for vulnerable former patients on the old hospital site. The service was named Forest Close and dedicated to providing continuing care. The service continues to offer a safe environment run by qualified staff. There is no comparable service anywhere else in Sheffield.

Last year relatives noticed changes taking place at Forest Close. There were rumours about service closure. Relatives pressed for a meeting with Trust representatives and were told that the unit would not be closed, and that it would be more intensively staffed in order to cope with more demanding patients. We were given assurances that none of the existing patients would be required to leave until alternative accommodation, equivalent in every way to Forest Close, could be provided.

What was not mentioned at the meeting was that the Trust's proposals would require more than half of the existing patients to be moved on and that locked areas and additional fencing around the accommodation units would be put in place. We recognise that there is a need for this kind of accommodation but we do not think that it should be provided at the expense of the present residents of Forest Close.

We feel the Trust has played down what amount to very radical changes in service provision and we believe some patients have been put through an accelerated discharge procedure. We wait to see if the assurances we received regarding the future of the remaining patients will be honoured.

**Margaret Angier**  
**Forest Close Relatives Group**

# YOUR NOTICEBOARD

## Mental Health Carers Group

For carers of people with mental health problems. The group meets on the third Thursday of each month, 10.30 am till 12 noon. Dates for forthcoming groups are:

- Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> February
- Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> March
- Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> April

**Venue:** Sheffield Carers Centre, Concept House, 5 Young Street, Sheffield, S1 4UP.

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

**Tel: 0114 278 8942**

## SUN:RISE Service User Network

SUN:RISE aims to improve the range of ways that service users can become informed and actively involved with the Trust. Meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month. Forthcoming dates are:

- Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> February
- Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March (**first Wednesday** of the month on this occasion only)
- Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> April

**Time:** 1 pm - 4 pm

**Venue:** Conference Room 2, The Circle, 33 Rockingham Lane, Sheffield S1 4FW

For further information please contact:

**Noelle Riggott**

**Tel: 0114 271 8789**

**Email: sun.rise@shsc.nhs.uk**

## CAST (Creative Arts Support Team) Artist Gathering and Workshops

Are you a budding or fledgling poet or musician? Would you like to be part of our friendly, inclusive diverse community of poets, musicians and arts lovers? Come and join our monthly open mic evenings (entry is free):

**Venue:** Eten café, East Parade, Cathedral Square

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month

**Time:** 5 pm - 8 pm

You are also very welcome to join our weekly CAST Art and Creative Writing workshops. It's fine to just call in at these times to see us if you're interested.

## Weekly Art workshop

**Venue:** St. Mary's, Bramall Lane

**Date:** Tuesdays

**Time:** 12 noon - 2 pm

## Weekly Creative Writing workshop

**Venue:** St. Mary's, Bramall Lane

**Date:** Wednesdays

**Time:** 1.30 pm - 3.30 pm

These sessions are run by our volunteers who will welcome you and provide encouragement with your creative endeavours. They particularly suit people wanting to develop their talents alongside fellow artists and writers. Beginners very welcome. There is a small charge of £1/£2. For further information email or visit:

**Email: admin@castsheffield.org**

**www.castsheffield.org**

**www.facebook.com/creativeartsst/**

## Sheffield Mind and Body Project

### Carer's Toolbox group

As a carer, you may, at various times, experience feelings of exhaustion, low mood, frustration and anxiety. Would you like a little time and focus for yourself? Would sharing feelings and exchanging support with others in a similar situation help?

This group, facilitated by a Mind health worker, will give a space for information and peer support. We'll explore emotional wellbeing and the ways to increase this, encouraging support of each other through telling our stories, listening to others and offering ideas. The group will run for 5 weeks.

**Venue:** Sheffield Carers Centre

**Date:** Mondays from 29<sup>th</sup> February - 11<sup>th</sup> April

**Time:** 1 pm - 3 pm

### Creative Movement group

This group, which runs for 8 weeks, is for anyone interested in gentle movement, trying out different dance styles, Mindful walking through the park, reducing aches and pains and improving physical and mental wellbeing.

**Venue:** Meersbrook Park United Reform Church

**Date:** Thursdays from 4<sup>th</sup> February (for 8 weeks)

**Time:** 1 pm - 3 pm

For more information or to book a place, please contact:

**Tel: 0114 258 4489 ext.108 or 119**

**Email:**

**mindandbody@sheffieldmind.co.uk**

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

**Your Voice, Office 27, Woodbourn Business Centre, Jessell Street, Sheffield, S9 3HY**

**T: 0114 242 3675 ♦ E: info@yourvoicesheffield.org ♦ E: editor@yourvoicesheffield.org**

**Website: www.yourvoicesheffield.org**

**Please send contributions for the Spring issue by 30<sup>th</sup> March 2016**