

# YOUR VOICE

## In Sheffield Mental Health

A magazine for users, carers and professionals

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

Winter 2016/17

No 82

Ignite Imaginations launches new projects for men



An Ignite Imaginations photography class

Ignite Imaginations is a community arts charity that provides free creative workshops and events. Previously called Art in the Park, we've been running for over 10 years.

We work all across the city, with people of all ages and backgrounds, facilitating high quality artistic activities for individuals and groups, particularly

those who might not normally get the chance to be creative.

Our sessions use visual arts, creative writing and photography to help increase confidence, skills and a sense of community.

This year we are launching two new projects with a particular focus on bringing men together to share stories and interests.

Starting in March 2017, with funding from The Royal British Legion, we will be running an intergenerational project using creativity to share the unheard stories of Sheffield's ex-service men.

The project will aim to help men articulate their feelings and increase the understanding of how

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## Introduction

We include contributions from Mark Thompson and Jessica Mell which both highlight the long-term effort that can be involved in coming to terms with mental health problems and developing self-management strategies. We also feature a range of established and new groups and initiatives, including the Sheffield Hearing Voices Group, which, like *Your Voice*, recently celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and Ignite Imaginations, which is launching two new wellbeing projects for men. Also, Spirit of the Rainbow Heron share news about the opening of their late night art café in April.

**Justine Morrison**

### From the *Your Voice* trustees

The contract with our core funder Sheffield City Council ended on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016 and will not be renewed. This means we currently do not have the funds to print and distribute paper copies of the magazine.

To get new funding and resume printing and distribution we need to provide evidence to potential funders that *Your Voice* magazine is a valued and needed resource within the Sheffield mental health and wellbeing community.

If *Your Voice* is important to you, it is crucial that you write or email us to let us know the reasons why (our contact details are on the back cover).

In the meantime, you can subscribe via our website to receive a PDF of the magazine by email at <http://www.yourvoicesheffield.org/about/>

We'd like to thank Katy Carlisle from The Wheel Exists for her help in enabling us to improve our online presence. Many thanks also to Stephanie de la Haye and SODIT for allowing us to have rent free office space in these challenging times. This is greatly appreciated by all at *Your Voice*.

**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*. Our greatest debt of gratitude is reserved for all of our contributors and readers – we wouldn't exist without you.

## Sheffield Hearing Voices Group

The longest running hearing voices group in the world is still going strong after celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary



**Peter Bullimore**

The Sheffield Hearing Voices Group was founded in 1996 by Peter Bullimore, a voice hearer and Sally Bramley, an occupational therapist. The number of people attending the group has increased rapidly over the years, as professionals and workers have begun to take an interest. Today, as it enters its twenty-first year, the group has 85 members and, having developed into a network delivering teaching involving group members around the world, is seen as an important part of the international mental health community.

The main reason for the group's success is the continuity and commitment of the facilitators, who have personal experience of voice hearing. The facilitators would not exclude anyone. The group is made interesting and varied by bringing in outside speakers.

Hearing Voices self-help groups are meetings where voice hearers can get together without having to 'put on a mask' and speak with others who have 'been there'. Self-help groups should not be viewed as therapy but as a place where you can receive encouragement, reassurance, support and a 'listening ear'.

The benefits of Hearing Voices Groups include:

- Receiving support from peers who are voice hearers.
- Discussions about what your voices may mean.
- Developing social opportunities and self esteem.
- Becoming part of a worldwide movement which teaches about a new way of understanding and living with voices.

What people say about Hearing Voices Groups:

- "No one tells you what to think."
- "There is a wonderful spirit here and I learn as everyone shares. It is unlike anything else."
- "I know I'm not alone; that I'm not the only one that hears voices."
- "It is cool to hear about other people's experiences. I might even get the courage to tell everyone about what has happened to me".

The group is open to anyone who experiences hearing voices and is self-referral so you do not have to be in mental health services to attend. If you are interested but find the prospect of attending quite daunting, you can meet with one of the facilitators prior to attending.

Sheffield Hearing Voices Group meets on Mondays from 10.30 am - 11.30 am at the Limbrick Centre, Sheffield S6 2PE.

For further information about the group, please contact Peter Bullimore:

**Tel: 0114 271 8210**  
**Email:**  
[peterbullimore@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:peterbullimore@yahoo.co.uk)  
[www.nationalparanoianetwork.org](http://www.nationalparanoianetwork.org)

## Ignite Imaginations launches new projects for men

Continued from the front cover.

events impact us. With support from our artists the men will explore their stories through creativity in a group setting, and then share them with local schools. The project will end with a public exhibition, to raise awareness of the experience, camaraderie and sense of 'once in the Armed Forces, always in the Armed Forces' that civilians may not always relate to.

If you are a current or ex-serviceman and are interested in getting involved, or just want to find out more, please get in touch.

The second project we are launching is in partnership with Sheffield Libraries. We are going to recruit and develop three Sporting Memories groups in Firth Park, Parson Cross and Stocksbridge libraries. The groups are aimed at local men over 50 years old and will meet regularly in the libraries, supported by one of our artists. They will use storytelling, photography and scrap book techniques to encourage socialising and reminiscing. As the groups grow the focus may move from sport to other topics, depending on what the members are interested in.

This project is funded by South Yorkshire Housing and Age Better in Sheffield,

If you are interested in getting involved in either of these projects, or know someone who is, please contact Ignite Imaginations on:

**Tel: 0114 268 6813**

**Email:**

[admin@igniteimagination.org.uk](mailto:admin@igniteimagination.org.uk)

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IMAGINATIONS**



## Prime Minister announces mental health reforms

Theresa May has outlined plans to transform attitudes to mental health, focusing on children and young people and improved support in the workplace. She said: "I want to employ the power of government as a force for good to transform the way we deal with mental health problems right across society. What I am announcing are the first steps in our plan to transform the way we deal with mental illness in this country at every stage of a person's life: not in our hospitals, but in our classrooms, at work and in our communities."

Measures announced included:

- Every secondary school to be offered Mental Health First Aid training.
- Trials on strengthening links between schools and NHS specialist staff.
- No child to be sent out of area for treatment by 2021.
- A review on improving support in the workplace.
- Additional training for employers and organisations in supporting staff who need to take time off.
- Development of crisis cafes and local clinics, with less emphasis on patients visiting GPs and A&E departments.
- Reallocation of NHS funds to develop online services.

The Prime Minister's mental health pledge was welcomed by Mind, who said that the proof of the government's commitment will be in the difference it makes to the day-to-day experience of people with mental health problems.

Criticisms of the speech centre around the fact that it announces no new extra cash to improve underfunded services beyond the £15 million allocated to support crisis cafes and local clinics.

## Care or Crisis?

Healthwatch Sheffield's study of people's experiences of care before and after a mental health crisis

Mental health has always been an important topic for Healthwatch Sheffield, emerging as the second most commonly raised issue by members of the public behind access to primary care. People have told Healthwatch that they have struggled to access appropriate services and that the services that are available are not holistic enough, tending to focus on a person's condition rather than the individual as a whole.

Healthwatch is represented on the Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat Strategic Implementation Group, which was set up in 2015 to support the implementation of the national agreement that aims to improve the way people are cared for during a mental health crisis. The organisation decided to undertake research about mental health crisis services in Sheffield to see if the Concordat was making any difference and to establish what people felt still needed to change in order for them to get the services they need.

316 health professionals (including 14 GPs) responded to the Healthwatch survey, compared with 118 service users, so the final report is heavily weighted in favour of professional rather than service user views.

Overall, 67% of service users reported that they didn't get access to the most appropriate person or service as quickly as they needed, compared to just 19% who said that they did.

One respondent outlined their difficulties as follows:

"Often they would make promises to take action that never materialised. For example, not calling me back, not communicating with other professionals, and not referring me to other things...It is

very difficult to recover when there is no professional support in place, but this is what is expected of you."

Other key findings from the report include:

- More than half of the survey participants who had experienced a mental health crisis had not been identified as being 'at risk' before it happened.
- Those who had experienced a mental health crisis reported varying quality of care. Half of those who had experienced a crisis felt that the service or professionals they dealt with did not know how to give them the best care they needed.
- Young people and those who identified themselves as being from a Black or Ethnic Minority community reported poorer experiences of care than the general responses.
- Almost three-quarters of staff who completed the survey said they thought current services were worse than those provided two years ago.

The Healthwatch report contains a series of recommendations based upon their findings, which focus on commissioning, training, information provision, promoting wellbeing and staying well, developing better contacts with young people and people from BME communities, and reviewing how service user and carer voices are embedded across the implementation of the Local Action Plan.

For further details, please contact Healthwatch Sheffield:

**Tel: 0114 253 6688**

**Email:**

**[info@healthwatchsheffield.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchsheffield.co.uk)**

**[www.healthwatchsheffield.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchsheffield.co.uk)**

## Spirit of the Rainbow Heron

Late night café promoting young peoples' wellbeing through creativity to open in April



Hannah Chutzpah performing Confidence Tricks at Sheffield Hallam University

Spirit of the Rainbow Heron is a small Sheffield-based organisation that promotes mental wellbeing for young people through creativity, in memory of our friend Dora. We also use creative activities to help change perceptions of mental health.

Our main project is the Rainbow Heron Late Night Art Café, which will open on 23<sup>rd</sup> April at Regather, 57-59 Club Garden Road, and will take place on Sunday evenings from 7.30 pm to 11 pm.

In partnership with Chilypep, we aim to provide a safe space to sit, read, play games, listen to music, talk, relax and take part in informal art activities with volunteers and artists from different groups across Sheffield. This is a new approach to support and crisis prevention which started in other parts of the country and is of interest to other Sheffield organisations. More information will shortly be available on Facebook at 'Rainbow Heron Café'.

We have a fund to support young artists develop their own innovative projects. We helped Hannah Chutzpah take her ground-breaking poetry show Confidence Tricks on tour around the country, highlighting things in life which affect young people's confidence and mental wellbeing, and providing some helpful ways of dealing with them.

Hannah performs at clubs and art venues as well as sixth form colleges and youth groups. Comments about the show last November at Sheffield Hallam University as part of Catalyst Festival include:

- "Entertaining and inspiring!"
- "Feel like I've learnt some valuable life skills to get me through dark days, thank you"

Hannah's poetry collection 'Sign My Citalopram' is available for sale.

We aim to award three small grants a year. We have filled our quota for this year but if you have a new idea, or any questions about our work, you are welcome to email us through the contact form on our website.

The next project we're supporting is the Time to Talk Festival run by Wordlife, Mester Events and Free Hand Creative from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> February at different venues in Sheffield as part of the national Time to Talk activities. Everyone is welcome to come along. For details see <https://www.facebook.com/events/1267165913340843/>

To find out more, or to contact Spirit of the Rainbow Heron, please visit:

<http://spirit-of-the-rainbow-heron.com>

## Sheffield Mental Health Guide welcomes feedback on changes

Sheffield Mental Health Guide has been making a few changes and would welcome feedback. They hope that the site is easier to use and that the information is accessible and informative. If you have anything that you would like to say about the changes or have any suggestions on how to improve the Guide, there is a feedback button on the website that will allow you to do just that.

The Guide contains a large service directory of organisations and services, all providing support for particular issues or working in specific areas of the city. The purpose of the directory is to enable individuals to find out what is available in Sheffield and make informed choices that suit them best.

The Guide also contains general information about different conditions or disorders that are mental health related, including information about symptoms and treatments. It is organised alphabetically in an A-Z of Mental Health, so it is easy to find what you're looking for.

There is also information about different events that are on in Sheffield that you can attend to help support your mental health, learn more about it or meet other people to better your general wellbeing.

The wellbeing pages provide lots of tips on how anyone can support their mental health, regardless of whether or not you have a mental health condition. There is also a section for you to provide Your Stories to help raise awareness about your condition, and provide hope and encouragement for others going through a similar journey.

To access the Guide, or to provide feedback, visit:

<http://www.sheffieldmentalhealth.org.uk/>

## Your Profiles

Mark Thompson on the long-term effort to get to grips with mental health problems, the benefits of volunteering as a recovery worker and the importance of social networks



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

When I was very young, around the age of sixteen or seventeen, I suffered with severe depression and anxiety. I'd left home at sixteen because I wanted my own space. I was doing a bakery job, averaging about 72 hours a week. I had plans to build my flat up, to go to college and to get a better job for myself.

Unfortunately, the flat faced a field and was not overlooked by anyone, making it a prime location for robbery. I was also out a lot because I worked the night shift. I actually got robbed six times in six months and in the end there was absolutely nothing left in the flat. That was a real striking blow to me and I went downhill after that. I ended up leaving my job at the bakery. I did try doing a joinery course at college but, with only £36 a week to run a flat and pay college expenses, I couldn't keep on doing it and I dropped out after six months.

I hated the world and how messed up it was. I just couldn't be around people. I couldn't get on buses and

comfortably travel about. I was really withdrawn from society. I didn't like society. I held a grudge against virtually everybody. The depression and anxiety also contributed to severe sleeping problems, which led to self-medicating with cannabis. This was on top of heavy drinking and doing other recreational drugs. My world was falling apart and I was getting more and more angered. I needed help so I went to mental health services to help me.

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

Initially they sent me to the Southern Acute Day Centre, which is closed now. I went there for a few weeks but it didn't help me that much. Because of the state I was in it wasn't ever going to be an easy fix, it wasn't going to happen over a month or two. It was a long-term effort that was needed.

At first I found going to the day centre difficult because I was very bad at communicating with new people. Also, once I'd started going there I began hearing voices and having hallucinations, which made

me paranoid about the day centre itself. I was thinking are they messing me about? I thought they were against me. It was really tricky because it was like trying to get help from people who were out to get you. After a while I cut back on the drink and stopped taking drugs completely. Ironically, that's when my voices started up even more and the mental health issues increased.

At first my head was all over the place. The voices were really scary and it was horrible. At one point I was that delusional I thought I had an alien in my stomach. Wherever I looked, at a table say, it would start changing shape and forming images. I was really in a dark place. Thankfully, ninety-nine per cent of that stuff's gone now.

They put me with the SORT team (Sheffield outreach team) who sent me to the groups they run. The groups were social and it was a different activity every week. It took a while to become accustomed to the workers and to form relationships but now the relationships I have with them are all really good and they really do help me.

I'm happy with how it's all turned out for me. I think people working in mental health services have a hard job to do because it's difficult for them to diagnose and understand or even come up with solutions to help people cope with or alleviate their emotional problems.

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

Before I went to mental health services I was a very negative person, mostly focusing on the negative aspects of life. After a few years I started to realise the world was not as bad as I initially thought it was and I began to socialise



## Your Profiles

more. My life is now interwoven with the mental health services; I have a group of friends now who I met through services and I also have a social life outside of the groups. I am a lot happier now than before and more open-minded and forgiving towards people in general. It took several years for me to get a grip on my anger and delusions. I still get the voices but I take it with a pinch of salt now. I can't explain it but it's happened that long now I've become accustomed or immune to it and it doesn't depress me anymore. Also, Christianity has given me great comfort and understanding about what was happening with my thoughts.

Before I went to mental health services, I suffered with severe insomnia and it was taking me four or five hours to fall asleep at night. Now, with medication, it still takes an hour or two but I'm patient within that hour or two; I don't get stressed out when I'm trying to fall asleep anymore. The medication sedates me and make me feel a lot drowsier whilst I am trying to fall asleep. So my sleeping is not perfect but it is better than it was.

Another thing which I think has helped me considerably is going to the gym, which I've always enjoyed and is something I have done for several years now. Self-Directed Support (SDS) has paid for part of my gym membership. The gym helps give me routine, which I like, and the exercise creates endorphins, the happy chemicals in the brain.

Life got better thanks to mental health services and I was able to make my family life better. There wasn't as much turbulence as before. Luckily, in the few years before my mother died my life had come together, which I'm really glad of. That's what I really wanted, my mother to be proud of me and to be

comfortable knowing I'm alright instead of just worrying her. I'm thankful I was able to put my mother's mind at ease and that we parted on good terms.

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

For the last two-and-a-half years I've been a volunteer support/recovery worker and mentor on a SHSC ward. For the first six months or so it was really nerve-racking; like I said, with depression and anxiety it takes me a bit to start forming relationships with people but I thought sod it, I'll stick at it. Then the occupational therapist I used to work with left for a year. I didn't take his job over or anything like that, I'm not qualified, but I carried on doing some of the things he'd been doing and going to the groups with the patients.

It's gone really well. I help the patients socialise; taking part in groups like bowling, miniature golf, going to the cinema, meals out, walks in the park, trips to Bakewell, all sorts. Sometimes it's just me and a patient going out, sometimes we join up with other departments and do joint groups with them. It's beneficial for the patients because they aren't always on good terms with the staff but they know I'm an ex-patient. I wouldn't say I've been there, done that, or that I've got one-hundred per cent empathy with them because everybody reacts to things differently, but I have got a bit of background knowledge on mental health so they can relate to me a bit easier and talk to me a bit easier. It gives them that extra bit of confidence to come out and do a group or two and not feel like they're being analysed all the time.

Working as a volunteer has had the extra benefit of helping my psychological health as well. I've enjoyed the work. It's the satisfaction from helping other

people. It's nice to do, and it's nice to see the gratitude people have; it's putting a smile on their face that puts a smile on my face. Before there were no prospects for my future but my now volunteering has the potential to develop into future job prospects.

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

My proudest achievement is getting rid of most of my anger and becoming a happy, friendly, active person with a good moral compass which I can now put to work helping other people who are in a similar situation to the one that I used to be in. Knowing I'm a lot more sociable now as opposed to before has also had the knock-on effect of putting my family's minds at ease. I'm also really happy with my flat which is really nice now, it's my little castle. I come home, get the TV on, sit back and just relax.

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

No one person has helped me recover and develop. It's been a massive team effort; a combination of different aspects of treatment ranging from medication to exercise to socialising and even budgeting. From what I've seen over the last decade, longer even, the Sheffield mental health teams are second to none, with an exceptional standard of care. Ninety-nine per cent of the workers I've met have been really professional, friendly and understanding.

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

My life was leading me down a really precarious, dark path until I met the SHSC team. Without them, I expect my life could have been very different, very bad. But with their help, patience and expertise they have literally saved my life, and more. Thank you.

## The Gulu Sheffield Mental Health Partnership

SHSC's links with services and communities in Uganda

On 15<sup>th</sup> January a gig was held at Maida Vale on West Street in Sheffield to raise funds for the Gulu Sheffield Mental Health Partnership which is part of an umbrella charity called Sheffield Health International Partnership. Local acts Charlie Barker, We Are Statues, Black Thunder Revue and Jungle Lions all gave their time free of charge in support of the partnership.

Deputy Ward Manger Kate Sales will be working in Gulu on a volunteer basis throughout January to April. The proceeds from the night will be used to enable Kate to support the work of the partnership during this time. This event is the first in a programme of activity, the next one being a Fashion Show and Shopping Event on 4<sup>th</sup> February. Full details are available on the SHIP Facebook Page.

The Sheffield Health and Social Care (SHSC) NHS Foundation Trust has been working with a service user and carer group, Mental Health Uganda (Gulu Branch) and Gulu Regional Referral Hospital (GRRH) since 2012.

SHSC has welcomed 18 Commonwealth Fellows since 2012, who are primarily staff at GRRH working in the Mental Health Unit. Commonwealth Fellows are sponsored by the British Council. Two-way learning is really important and people meeting the Commonwealth Fellows in Sheffield learn a great deal that is useful in work in mental health services.

The Sukoon and Sunrise Groups have both been involved in the Gulu Sheffield Partnership. The Sukoon Group created a wonderful tapestry, The Tree of Hope, that is on display in the Mental Health Unit in GRRH. The Sunrise Group donated goods for fundraising and also generously donated half of the proceeds from their own sale.

### Why Uganda and why Gulu?

Uganda is a low income country with an estimated population of 37 million. Northern Uganda is a region recovering from the devastating impact of 25 years of civil war at the hands of the Lord's Resistance Army. The Trust is concentrating its work in Gulu, which is the main city in Northern Uganda, as it was at the centre of the LRA war.

### What has the Partnership been doing?

SHSC is the main UK partner of the Partnership, although it is working with other NHS Trusts and the University of Sheffield. Working with MHU (GB) the Partnership has funded:

- Pass a Goat Scheme: three herds were originally bought and donated to three villages. When she-goats are born they are passed onto other group members to become a self-sustaining cycle.
- Brain Gain 2 is a Peer Support Training of Trainers project which will enable members of MHU(GB) to provide support to one another.
- Bicycles have been donated by the SHSC Board to support work in the villiages.
- Epilepsy awareness work in the hospital and in villages near to Gulu. Epilepsy is a major health issue in Uganda and is situated within mental health services.

Within GRRH work has included:

- A RESPECT Training of Trainers programme for staff in the hospital. RESPECT is the ethical management of violence and aggression and is the approach taken in SHSC. This programme is funded by the Tropical Health Education

Trust, which receives their funding from the Department for International Development.

- The refurbishment of one of the hospital boreholes has enabled running water to be received in the mental health unit and other wards in the hospital.
- A hospital library has been created with financial support from the British Medical Association, Sheffield Hallam University, Book Aid International and World Health Organisation.
- The purchasing of medical equipment including vital signs monitoring units, an oxygen concentrator and oxygen splitters, which are 'life saving'.
- The creation of a children's ward in the mental health unit which enables children to receive care separately from adults.
- Training in the monitoring of vital signs of patients who are receiving medication, particularly after tranquilisation.
- Support for epilepsy training, infection control, handovers between shifts and safe tranquilisation practice, including recording.
- Introduction of audit and protocols to improve patient safety

For further information, please contact either:

**Greg Harrison**

**Email:**

**greg.harrison@shsc.nhs.uk**

**Kim Parker**

**Email:**

**kim.parker@shsc.nhs.uk**

Donations can be made at:

**<http://www.shipsheffield.org.uk/donate.html>**



## Every Step, Another Story

Jessica Mell on raising awareness of eating disorders via her blog which details every stage in her journey towards recovery

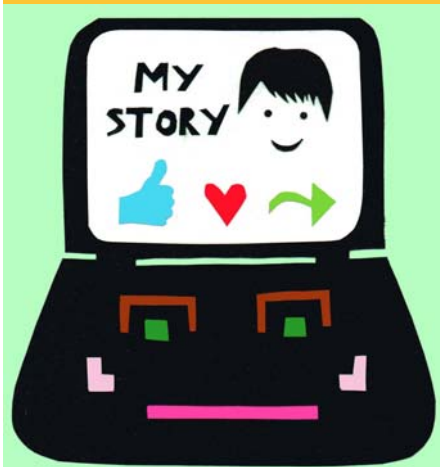


Image by 'it snipped my heart'

In January 2015, I was diagnosed with anorexia nervosa - an eating disorder that had managed to consume my thoughts, my actions and my life. At a life-threatening weight, I sat in front of my GP and listened to the critical medical assessment results that he relayed to my mother and I, but I was unable to process the information or acknowledge what he was saying. I was lost. I was a shell of a person that had no resemblance to the woman I used to be before this illness controlled my life.

Not long after my diagnosis I began the painfully long journey towards finding treatment for my mental health condition. After multiple assessments with no hope of securing the help I needed, I began to realise that there was no way I could live my life like this anymore; I had too much I wanted to do and too much I wanted to see. As doors were repeatedly slammed in my face, I decided to look at the self-help route. I took to the internet and began scrolling through copious amounts of information on charity organisation websites and healthcare websites. But how did any of these relate to me? How did the person writing this information know what I was going through? Does that person realise that eating three meals a day and three snacks really is not that simple?

Fortunately, after months of waiting, I was offered the help I needed in the unfortunate way of voluntary hospitalisation at Rharian Fields Specialist Eating Disorders Unit in Grimsby. Here I had the opportunity to rebuild my life with the help of professional staff and 24/7 care. However, throughout that time I knew that this was not going to be a snippet of my life that I wanted to forget. I have lived through this illness, experienced the majority of difficulties that most sufferers face, and more importantly, I was achieving the seemingly impossible - recovery.

When I was discharged from all eating disorder services and was strong enough both mentally and physically, I began to write. Documenting every stage that I had been through in finding help, every emotion that I felt and recognising everyone that has helped me along the way. I wanted to raise awareness of eating disorders, educate the public about the severity of the condition, but most importantly, let sufferers and carers know that they are not alone

I spent weeks designing a blog and when I felt ready, I uploaded my first post 'One Trigger at a Time...', which to date has had 1570 views. Unsure of the reaction I would receive from family, friends and the public, I prepared myself for potentially negative comments. However, I was overwhelmed with the support, appreciation and thanks that I received! Since then my blog has had over 24,000 views from people all around the world, but that has not stopped me from wanting to spread the message further.

I would like to invite you to take a look at my blog at:

**[everystepanotherstory.blogspot.co.uk](http://everystepanotherstory.blogspot.co.uk)**

## On the experience of electro-convulsive therapy

By Roy Vincent

I have been hearing voices for nearly thirty years without becoming ill. In my book 'Listening to the Silences' I describe my insights and experiences, including the 'story' of how I came to be subjected to 23 completely unnecessary sessions of ECT. The following is an edited extract:

"For some reason the notes and correspondence in my file are a bit sketchy over this period, don't ask me why. What I next see recorded, is that I had thirteen ECTs as an outpatient between 14<sup>th</sup> April and 24<sup>th</sup> May 1964. I look at the copy of the form that I signed indemnifying the hospital against any injury that I might suffer in treatment, and at the form listing each session - the voltages and duration etc. - and memories come back of the breakfast-less journey to the hospital, crammed in a Social Services car, and the return journey, zombified. And I weep inside now, as I must have done openly then.

"Thus fortified, I finally got back to work....But where had I put my mind, my technical knowledge and expertise? Who were these people? I couldn't put names to faces or faces to names. I was isolated - physically in an office high in a new, tall building, and mentally because I had no base from which to think. At work I paced the office, bemused and feeling trapped. I couldn't express what I was feeling to anyone at work, for apart from the fact that you feel ashamed of your own lack of purpose, lack of achievement, people get embarrassed when you talk about personal, particularly nervous, suffering."

If you'd like to read more, please download a free copy of 'Listening to the Silences' or visit my blog at:

**<http://www.royvincent.org>**  
**<http://roycvincent.blogspot.co.uk>**

## Your Reviews

Service user Steve on 'Recovery and Mental Health: A Critical Sociological Account' by David Pilgrim and Ann McCranie

(ISBN 978-0-230-29138-6)

Over the last few years, recovery has become a rallying cry within the mental health sphere, and the subject of intense discussion. Indeed, the volume of literature on the subject seems to be expanding at a rapid rate, and this book, first printed in 2013, is a worthy addition to the field. This work tackles the subject from a sociological perspective, and opens proceedings in the introduction by quoting Mike Slade's assertion that "There is no right way to recover". Over the following 200 pages, the authors cover much ground.

The first chapter maps out how madness and misery have been understood and dealt with, highlighting the large degree of ambiguity and lack of consensus that this topic generates. In succinct fashion, the authors peruse trends and themes spanning the ages, before narrowing them down into three areas of concern, which are with regard to misery and unhappiness, severe mental illness, and personality disorders. These three broad categories are said to come with their own distinct "socio-ethical challenges".

Having created a contextual background, four relatively distinct

but related types of recovery models emerge. The authors accept that they are somewhat guilty in scaling down a vast range of potential approaches to just four, but state this is necessary to compare and contrast a potentially limitless field.

The four recovery approaches evoked are recovery as a personal journey; recovery as a critique of services; recovery as therapeutic optimism; and recovery and the social disability model. Pilgrim and McCranie believe this critical approach allows a discussion of "discrepant agendas" to emerge.

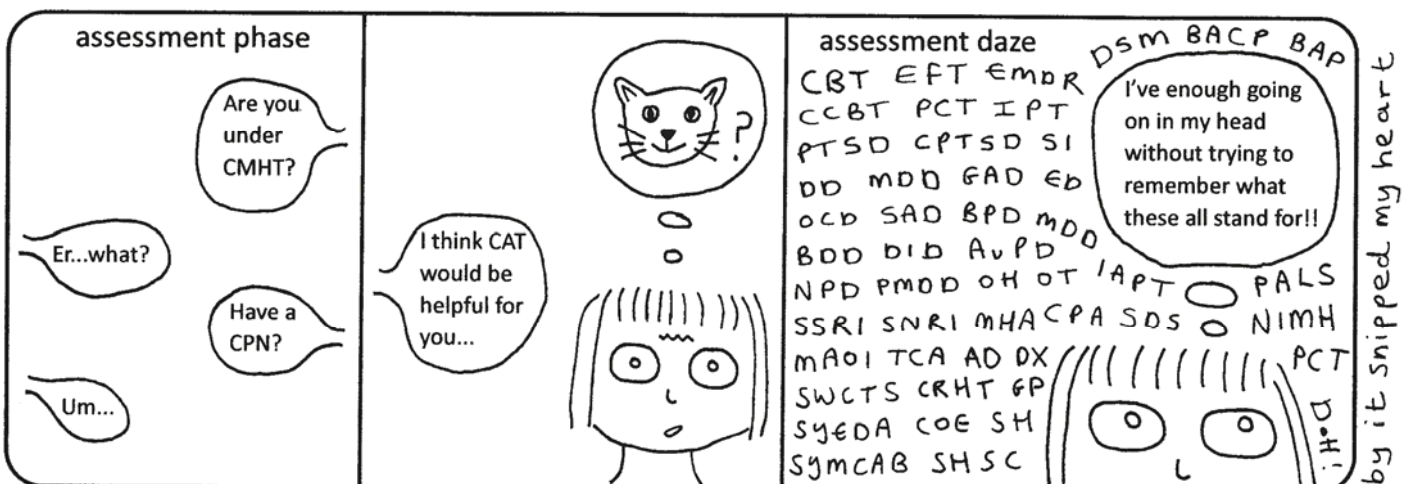
The idea of recovery as a personal journey arose from the burgeoning literature that emerges over the last couple of decades that favours the uniqueness of each individual, and locates recovery within them. The critique of services tends to offer more choice, empowerment, reform and a more balanced relationship between clinicians and clients. The idea of therapeutic optimism tends to concentrate on the reduction of symptoms in psychosis, and overturns the Kraepelinian view that those diagnosed with dementia praecox

(later termed schizophrenia) were only going to decline, missing the fact that many people did actually recover. The social disability model stresses that it is often societal barriers such as hostility to those seen as different that is most toxic, and that societal reform is favoured as the way forward.

Following on from this, recovery policies are evaluated, and factors such as risk management and cost are explored, weaving a very complicated narrative. The book examines both British and American contexts, but does not suffer from this as links and differences, if anything, help highlight how societal backdrops interplay with realities on the ground.

The final chapter concludes the book with a fascinating discussion on the implications of the competing actors and their stances. Rogers and McCranie discuss how recovery might play out in Britain and the United States, and the positives and pitfalls they have identified that emanate from the various recovery models. Correctly, in my view, the concluding section poses many questions, and shows how all the tensions make it hard to predict how recovery will pan out. Overall an excellent read for those interested in recovery and the issues around defining and implementing it.

### adventures in counselling : acronym sensitivity syndrome





Your Artwork

By Joanna Shevlin

Your Verse**Early Closing Thursday**

It will make you much better, he said,  
 No, it won't make a hole in your head.  
 The current's quite small,  
 Hardly any at all,  
 And of course you won't wake up quite dead.

The nurses, all gentle and kind,  
 Never told me that bits of my mind,  
 Would soon disappear,  
 That I'd feel very queer,  
 And not know before from behind.

Memories once precious to me,  
 Have vanished, no trace, all agree.  
 The voice of my child,  
 That amused and beguiled,  
 Was erased by the "cure", E.C.T.

At Work was I then in disgrace  
 From this hole in my mind - this great space?  
 For I found, to my shame,  
 This face - What's his name?  
 Or this name - Who's got the right face?

Who began this outrageous farce?  
 Who decides to switch on and to pass  
 A current designed  
 To "repair" this bent mind?  
 Do they really know elbow from arse?

**Roy Vincent**

*Why 'Early Closing Thursday'? Because it makes just as much sense as 'Electro Convulsive Therapy'.*

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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. (Beryl Lindley receives a gift card for poetry in issue 81).



# YOUR NOTICEBOARD

## **Making sense of voices: Utilising a biographical and social orientated approach to empower and enable mental health recovery**

This 3-day workshop is facilitated and presented by Peter Bullimore and is a great opportunity for a shared learning experience between voice hearers and practitioners. The price includes the cost of the full 3-day event and a Continuing Professional Development Certificate.

The traditional approach to working with voice hearers focuses upon inabilities and deficits, rather than individuals' inherent ability to understand and cope with their voices and other experiences. This course is grounded on acceptance of lived experiences of voice hearing. Participants will be taught to employ the Maastricht Interview for voices, an assessment tool developed by Dr Sandra Escher and Professor Marius Romme, which provides a structured method for understanding and working with a voice hearer's experience.

**Dates:** 24<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> April

**Time:** 9.30 am - 4 pm

**Venue:** Science Complex, Dale Building, Room 007, University of Sunderland, SR1 3SD

**Price:** £195 for waged staff.

Discounted rates are available for service users.

For further information contact:

**Clare Brizzolara**

**Tel:** 0191 515 2172

**Email:**

**clare.brizzolara@sunderland.ac.uk**

## **Mental health carers hub**

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

- Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> February
- Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> March
- Thursday 20<sup>th</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

## **Bipolar Support Group**

The Bipolar Support Group is a free monthly structured, focused meeting for people living with or affected by bipolar disorder including family, friends and carers.

**Date:** Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> February (3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month except August)

**Time:** 7.30 pm - 9.15 pm

**Venue:** Quaker Meeting House, 10 St James Street, S1 2EW.

The group provides an opportunity to join in and gain more confidence; get to know yourself better; make new friends; learn to manage mood swings; and get practical advice. You do not need to be referred to the group you can just turn up. For further details, contact:

**Email:**

**groupdevelopment@bipolaruk.org**

**Tel:** 0333 323 3885

**<https://www.bipolaruk.org/>**

## **Sheffield Mind and Body Project**

### **Heritage & History Walks**

Runs for 6 weeks.

**Dates:** Thursdays from 16<sup>th</sup>

February

**Time:** 2 pm - 4 pm

**Venue:** Sheffield General Cemetery

### **Emotional Wellbeing**

A 6-week course for deaf people delivered by Community Health Workers and BSL interpreters.

**Dates:** Thursdays from 2<sup>nd</sup> March

**Time:** 10 am - 12 noon

**Venue:** The Circle, 33 Rockingham Lane, Sheffield, S1 4FW.

Both courses are free to attend.

Booking is required as places are limited. Please contact Joe:

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

**Email:**

**mindandbody@sheffieldmind.co.uk**

## **CAST Artist Gatherings**

Open mic live music and poetry evenings in collaboration with Sheffield Music Project. All welcome.

*"The most chilled out gig in town."*

*"A really, friendly, supportive atmosphere."*

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

**Time:** 5 pm - 8 pm

**Venue:** Edisons Café (previously Eten Café), Cathedral Walk, East Parade. S1 2ER

To find out more about CAST activities visit:

**<http://www.castsheffield.org/>**

**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**

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**Please send contributions for the Spring issue by 30<sup>th</sup> March 2017**