



Welcome to our Spring/ Summer 2008 Newsletter



Welcome to our Spring/Summer HUG Newsletter.

I'm sitting outside in the sun typing articles for this latest newsletter and thinking summer has arrived! Long may it continue!



Happy Reading from all at HUG

HUG is the Highland Users Group, a network of users of mental health services across the Highlands

Membership of HUG is open to anyone who has experienced a mental health problem. *Just write to, phone, or email us and leave your name and address – it's as easy as that!*

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Note: The views expressed by our members in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of HUG.

CONTENTS

Feature on Our Members	2
Pause	3
Update from Graham	4
HUG Communication Workers Update	7
Congratulations	11
Free Cinema Tickets	11
The Haven	12
Creative Socialising Group	12
Do You Believe....?	13
What is Spirituality?	13
My Story - Living in Nepal with mental health problems.	16
Visit to the Ness Foundation	17
Mental Health in Kenya	18
Hate Incidents Monitoring Project	20
VOX - Update	20
The Doctor Who Hears Voices	21
Steph's Curry	22
Jokes!	23



Feature on our Members

What is your name and tell us something funny about yourself?

My name is Elizabeth Murray Brown. When I was younger I used to pretend it was H-tebazile Yarrum Nworb - my name backwards! I was very serious about it then, but can laugh about it now. (Well, kind of - when I'm not thinking serious about it!) Okay let's start again - my name's H-tebazile ...!

How long have you been involved in HUG, and what kind of things do you do?

I've been with HUG about 2 years I think - but about 1 year actively. I'm a voice hearer and through HUG's amazing support I am able to tell interested and interesting people what it's like.

Who has had the biggest influence on you?

My biggest influence was my maternal Grandmother. Once when I asked her why all the bad things were happening to me she said 'I don't know but remember one thing, 'These things are happening *to*, you - not coming *from* you.' I never forgot that and try hard to make whatever does come from me positive and creative. Doesn't always work, but even mistakes have a positive side. There's always room to learn. I learn a lot of positive stuff from other HUG Members.

What is your favourite food?

My favourite food is fish 'n chips in a newspaper with loads of vinegar and salt (sadly hard to find nowadays!). I eat lots of chopped tomatoes and oranges. I love cheese - oh and my Mum's lentil soup! And Tesco's 23p milk chocolate bar!

Who would you most like to meet?

I think I would like to meet God - (preferably while I'm still alive!) I'd ask Him why He made such an awesome creation as humans but didn't allow us to realise our full mind, body and spirit potential. I think the real sin in life is never knowing what we all are really capable of as human beings, being human in the natural, supernatural sense. Only a teeny part - through the glass darkly. Isn't fair - is it? And I think a lot of the frustration of that only adds to mental unwellness. We all know deep inside we can be better, do better, if only we could tap those hidden resources within each of us to fully 'Be'. Until then I'll stick with HUG! They support the mind, body and spirits natural creative instinct to dream do and be ... so I'm real glad I met them!

Pause

For 10 seconds to take a deep breath



For 1 minute to take in the view

For a couple of minutes to brew a cuppa

For 10 minutes to clear your head

For 20 minutes to call your mum

For half an hour to exercise your body

For a couple of hours to read a good book



For a day to find some fun

For a weekend under the stars

For a fortnight to recharge your batteries

For a month to learn something new

For a summer to be a kid again

For a year to see the world



For a lifetime to work out what it all means

Or just 5 minutes to do absolutely nothing

(Howies, Cardigan Bay, Wales)

Update from Graham

The last few months have been quite hectic in HUG. But very productive, both in our awareness raising and anti stigma work and in our speaking out work.

Most of you will know that our parent organisation and therefore HUG went through a huge crisis in February when it seemed possible that HCCF would lose all the funding that the Highland Council provides.

We lobbied hectically over the weeks notice we had of this decision, and really have to thank you all for the fantastic support that we gained from HUG members and people and organisations who agree with us about how important and effective our work has been over the years. In the words of many of the people in receipt of e-mails from users, workers and organisations here and in other countries the level of support was unprecedented.

At the Council meeting where the decision was to be taken, HUG members and allies held a silent protest in the lobby and ended up on the front page of two of our local papers.

At the Council meeting itself we were given an assurance about the future of HUG and a "stay of execution" for HCCF, which was great. Since then we have been repeatedly assured that HUG is safe although how this will be achieved if HCCF no longer exists, we don't know. Life is looking better for all of us at HCCF since then, though we are still very unsure about our ultimate security. However, a huge thank you to all of you who have offered and given such great support.

Despite all the upheaval all these events have caused us life has very much continued 'as usual'. We need to continue to carry on with our work whatever the obstacles in our way otherwise there is no point in it.

Highlights for me have been the production of our report on Young People and Mental Health for which we gained great feedback and which we will present at the next meeting of the Joint Children's Committee.

We have a number of other reports that we have been working hard on and which you should get with this newsletter. The draft versions have already received positive comments.

Review of the Mental Health Act— Graham has been asked to sit on a committee which is carrying out a partial review of the Mental Health Act.

This group will be looking at such things as named persons, advance statements tribunals and so on.

We have already spent our last round of meetings discussing the subject but if any of you have a keen interest in this and haven't had a chance to contribute feel free to contact Graham.

Talks— Graham gave a talk on behalf of VOX at a fringe meeting at the Labour Party Conference in Aviemore. This was in partnership with the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the Royal College of Nursing. The talk was based around the need for psychological treatments and was well received.

He will also be giving a talk on 'Men and Mental Health' in a few weeks time.

Both these talks will end up on our website but if you want copies sent to you do let us know.

If any of you have a particular interest in public speaking do let us know.

HCCF Board of Directors—HUG is a part of HCCF, they employ the HUG workers and deal with all the bits that need done to keep us going whilst we concentrate on getting the voice of our members across to whoever will listen.

HUG has a place for one of its members to be on the HCCF Board of Directors. This position is vacant at the moment.

If any of you are interested in this position, do give us a call and we will send out an application form and information about what would be expected of you.

SURF - SURF is the Service User Recovery Forum of the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Graham is a part of this Forum both on HUG's behalf and on behalf of VOX (our National voice). Another HUG member is also a member of the group in her own right.

The group looks at policy practice and training among other things and meets in London three times a year.

If you want to find out more about this group or wish to raise issues with Graham feel free to do so

Incapacity Benefit- As most of you will know Incapacity Benefit is changing. This means that some of you will be better off and some of you will be worse off.

We have been hearing stories from our members over the last few months expressing great anxiety over the changes and in some cases great misery over the consequences of the changes.

We have raised this issue in a variety of forums and are pleased that they are reacting to our concerns.

However we need your views and especially your experiences if you have been affected negatively (or positively) by the changes. If you have anything to say on the subject then do please contact us.

Evaluation Of HUG (SPEAKING OUT) - As you know HUG is in two parts, the speaking out bit that finds out and acts on the views of our members and then our awareness raising and anti stigma work.

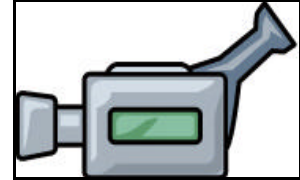
The speaking out part of HUG was recently subject to an independent evaluation by Antara Consulting. The process was a good one and the results are very positive about what we do.

If anyone wants a copy of the evaluation then do let us know and we will send you a hard copy or send it by e-mail.

HUG Communication Workers Update

Quick update on the work we have been doing since the last newsletter. So here goes...

Karen



Borderline Personality Disorder Information Pack

Probably the biggest piece of work that I've been involved in since the last newsletter is our Information Pack on Borderline Personality Disorder.

The Information Pack, and accompanying DVD, was produced at the request of HUG members in order to challenge the negative stereotypes associated with the condition, and ensure that users receive a fair and equal service from professionals.

Targeted at professionals, the Information Pack contains testimonies from people diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder, explores the attitude of professionals and highlights the importance of being able to access services.

Throughout there is a clear message that Borderline Personality Disorder is treatable and that recovery is achievable.

As always it was a great privilege to work with HUG members on the pack and a special thanks to those who shared their personal testimonies in order to make such a powerful and insight resource for professionals.

A big thanks also to Marianne who worked tirelessly to make the pack as good as it could be.

The response so far from professionals who have seen the pack has been extremely positive.

Some of the comments have included,

"This is the second DVD I've watched by HUG. I find them very informative and very valuable and promote discussion and understanding".

"Very good pack, full of valid information in a readable and digestible manner".

"I was impressed by the content of this information pack. It was detailed and made for interesting reading".

The pack is available to purchase for £15 per copy. If anyone would like a pack please contact us on 01463 723559 or at hug@hccf.org.uk

Scottish Personality Disorder Network Conference

Marianne and two other HUG members are running a workshop at the Scottish Personality Disorder Network Conference in Aberdeen on the 29th May. The aim of the workshop is to provide participants with a better understanding of what it is like to have Borderline Personality Disorder and to dispel some of the myths around the diagnosis.

Library of Personal Testimony

HUG would like to build up a DVD library of personal testimony that could be used in our training. If you would be interested in sharing your testimony on film for our training let us know.

Media Coverage

The media can be a powerful vehicle in conveying our messages and since the last newsletter we have had some fantastic coverage.

We had an article in the Press & Journal in January on HUG's input in the Mental Health Officers training

February was a very busy month with a lot of coverage around our funding crisis with pieces in the Press and Journal, Inverness Courier, MFR and Speyside Radio.

March was another busy month with Keir talking live on Good Morning Scotland about suicide and reducing suicide rates in the Highlands. There was a feature article in the Highland News on the BPD Information Pack.

The Gazeta Polish magazine had an article on our Polish colleague sharing a little about his experience shadowing HUG and his views on Highland mental health services

Future DVD's

Over the next few months we're going to be producing two films, one exploring the issue of social inclusion in remote and rural areas of the Highlands and the other looking at self harm.

As always, if you are interested in finding out more about how you could get involved please get in touch.

Finally.....

It's with great sadness that I write to let you know that I'm taking an extended leave of absence from HUG. As some of you will know I had a hip replacement last December and unfortunately it wasn't the resounding success that I thought it would be and I'm still in a lot of pain.

I've thought about it long and hard and with the way things are at the moment I'm just not able to continue working. So, I just wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you to all the HUG members who have been a real inspiration to me, and to Emma and Graham—the best colleagues in the world. I'm going to miss you. Karen x

Emma

Hello everyone –hope this newsletter finds you well and enjoying the wonderfully warm (and uncharacteristically Scottish!) weather.

Well the last six months or so have been exciting, hectic and also emotional due to the insecurity of the funding situation with our host organisation, Highland Community Care Forum (which Graham has written about in this report). But despite this we have all been busy zipping around doing lots of wonderful work with HUG members:

Work with young people

Peer Education

'Meeting HUG members made a huge difference; it made everything we were learning much more realistic'.

Young person

This year 12 fifth form pupils were involved in the Milburn Academy Peer Education Group, where the young people worked with members of HUG as they researched mental health issues over several months and devised teaching materials for use with fourth and fifth year classes.

The group of pupils has been amazing this year and it has been a pleasure to work with them and to see their enthusiasm and commitment of this project. The group decided to focus on two main issues; eating disorders and self-harm. For the first time we also delivered a two suicide awareness sessions, with the aim of getting young people to share their views and feelings of this hugely emotive issue and to learn how to communicate with/respond to someone who is in a suicidal state.

In the next couple of weeks the group will be presenting what they have learnt to their peers, using simple drama techniques, quizzes, games and discussion.

New interactive drama project

We are at the very first stages of developing a new schools -based interactive drama project which will use the model from the 'STIGMA' play to educate young people on mental health issues. We will spend the next 12-18 months consulting with professionals, schools and pupils about the main mental health issues young people need greater awareness of.

We envisage the tour of the school would happen in September 2009 to give us time to fully plan, produce and deliver a project of this scale.

If anyone would like to be involved in this project I would be thrilled to hear from you.

Awareness Training

We have delivered some great training sessions to different agencies across the Highlands, including foster carers, Advocacy Highland, TAG (Training and Guidance Unit), University of Stirling, and psychiatrists at New Craigs.

Mental Health Officers - HUG is becoming more and more involved in the training of Mental Health Officers as we deliver the service user contribution to the Mental Health Social Work Award Programme in the North of Scotland; the programme which trains Mental Health Officers for the 7 local authority social work services in the North.

This involvement includes us being a member of the Programme Management Group, leading training sessions during the first 2 modules of the programme, contributed to the preparation of case materials, and briefing actors for specialist role playing simulation exercises. In addition, HUG's materials including DVDs, reports and personal testimonies are used throughout the programme to ensure the user voice and experience is ingrained in the training of new Mental Health Officers.

Highland Councillors – another wonderful session was with a group of 12 Councillors, who took part in an afternoons training around HUG members experiences of living with, and recovering from, long-term mental health problems.

Below are some comments from the Councillors about the session:

'I found the natural way HUG presented themselves and their collective stories/ illnesses with such humour, honesty and lack of 'poor me' syndrome to be immensely moving and honest...'

'Testimonials by very brave people. Thank you for sharing so much with us.'

University of Stirling – we are currently in discussion with the University about how HUG's training can form a more coherent part of the University of Stirling's undergraduate nursing programme, GP undergraduate programmes and training for qualified GP's under their Protected Learning Time. I will let you know how we are getting on with this in the next newsletter.

New European Project – Grundtvig 1

We have just heard that Highland Community Care Forum has been accepted to be a partner in a new pan-European project, which will see HUG as an 'expert' trainer in helping groups across Europe to set up users' associations.

This sounds a really exciting project to be involved in, and Graham and myself are heading off to Romania at the end of June to deliver a three day training programme to 20 service users and professionals from Romania, Spain, Poland and Portugal. We will let you know how we got on in the next newsletter.

Well, that's all from me. If anyone would like more information on any aspect of the training or educational work please, please do get in touch as I would love to hear from you.

Best wishes,
Emma

Congratulations

Congratulations to Gloria Ginniver, one of our HUG members, on winning the Highland Diversity Award for individual achievement. Gloria picked up her award on the 15th May at a ceremony at the Drum Mossie Hotel, Inverness. Gloria was nominated for overcoming significant barriers to getting back to work. A big Well Done from all at HUG.



Free Cinema Tickets



If you, or someone you know, is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance then CEA (Cinema Exhibitors Association) card is for you!

At a cost of £5.50 per card which is valid for 3 years this is an opportunity not to be missed.

The CEA card is a national card that can be used to verify that the holder is entitled to one free ticket for a person accompanying them to the cinema. There is no restriction on the accompanying person, who can be a family member, friend, worker, etc. In addition, the same person does not need to accompany the cardholder for each visit to the cinema.

To be eligible for the card you need to meet one or more of the following criteria:

- A) Be in receipt of the Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance
- B) Be a registered blind person

Most of the national cinema chains participate and application forms—which are very straightforward and easy to complete— can be obtained from supporting cinemas. More information can be found by contacting CEA:



0845 123 1292

info@ceacard.co.uk

www.ceacard.co.uk

The Haven

The Haven is a social centre and a drop in and is open during the day 365 days a year. The Haven enables people, who as a result of a mental illness have lost confidence in themselves and others and therefore have an opportunity to re-build this confidence in a homely and informal setting. As it is a drop in centre there are no hurdles to overcome because of admission procedures, people can just arrive and see how it suits them. None of us can foretell when we may have a really bad day and at those times it matters that other, sensible people are around. The reassurance of knowing that the Haven is available every day is a great thing.

Garry



Creative Socialising Group



For some people it is great to have drop-in centres where they can go in their own time in order to meet other like-minded folks for a chat, a game or just being together. But for some of us the openness of such a venue feels too scary. Who will be there? What will I say or do? Where shall I stand or sit? What if it gets too noisy?

Some of us need more structure than a drop-in centre can provide. That's why we came up with the idea of a closed group which meets regularly once a week (in Inverness) to give people who have little or no social life the chance to experience togetherness.

To avoid the strain of having to make conversation, we are all engaged in creative projects of our choice, ranging from painting, drawing, designing and wood-carving to writing poetry and knitting. Sometimes deep conversations develop, sometimes we just get on with our various projects, but I always feel a sense of connectedness to the other members of the group which I rarely experience elsewhere.

So far we are still a small number (5 people, including an OT from New Craigs), as we only started at the end of February. If you are interested to know more about the group and perhaps to join us, please get in touch with Graham Morgan at gmorgan@hccf.org.uk or Sarah Muir (Braeside) on 01463 704673.

Elkie Kammer



Do You Believe...?

'Do You Believe ...?
'Do you believe in UFO's?
In Sky People and Aliens?
In Crystal, Stone and Pyramid Power
In 'Walk-In' Space Chameleons?
Do you believe our Solar System
Is more than what it seems?
That Intelligent Life from 'out there'
Can be contacted through Dreams?
Do you believe we are not alone?
That Space holds other Life Forms too?
(Well, to whomever you are
On the pretty Earth Star ...
I believe that you're real too!')

Elizabeth Murray Brown

What is Spirituality?

As many differing answers as questions arise from the depths of all human Souls to this one question. I ponder over it myself (Or should I say my 'self' ponders over it) many times, as often my Spirit is troubled by the fact that I am more acquainted with my mind and body than my Spirit. Like countless other humans I struggle to understand why a Creator God would design any creation in His Image, want that creation to have belief and faith in Him, but frustratingly not allow it ever to realize its' Self *in full*? It's a distressing reality, undoubtedly responsible for the mental, physical, spiritual impairment, despair and fragility of many troubled souls.

I am acutely aware of the wondrous awesomeness of the Universe, the seen and unseen, - all at once my Spirit soars ever higher in the magic of it all - but just as suddenly it sinks - plunges deep into abysmal depths of frustration and despair.

Like Icarus with his wings of wax attempting to reach the sun - but alas the wax wings melt - down he tumbles - reality and confusion hit him harder than the ground.

So it has been for many of us when we have sought to rise above our limits of vision and knowledge, but we try again and again in hope ... that's what makes us special, and all human beings are special, we just don't realise how much yet.

It will always be in the human psyche to rise up - whether it be to touch the sky, explore our consciousness, flee poverty, sickness, disease - or escape the sometimes suffocating darkness of mystery about our own selves.

From the womb to beyond - our instinct demands we turn to towards the Light - but it's not that easy, is it? Just ask anyone affected by mental illness. It can get very, very dark in the Spirit.

Continued on page 14

Continued from page 13

Spirituality isn't all about religion. Even Christ would tell you that. He should know - he tried to teach peace 'n good vibe alternatives and look where that got Him!

Raised a Catholic, I am well acquainted with pain and suffering - fated or self afflicted - how it's seen as penance for sin, for sins of all mankind, but I could never feel comfortable with that. I find it very difficult nigh impossible to believe millions must suffer because of a man we never knew 2,000 years or so ago. I struggle with it a lot and yet, I have an unshakeable faith in a Creator God. At times I get mad at Him (My voices re-assure me that's allowed!) because to find Him I have to look at wonder of Creation and accept it had to come from somewhere.

Something, had to create the seen and unseen, and something had to create that and it can go on like that forever - drives me nuts! Drives a lot of people nuts I would imagine!

Throughout my life I've searched for answers in various Church faiths. In my own personal experience this was a bad idea! Especially when I tried the Pentecostal Church. I happened to mention to this woman I heard voices and next thing I knew I was in a deliverance service being dragged around like a rag doll by an obsessed Pastor who kept shouting into my face 'Come out in the name of Jesus!' while his wife mopped his sweaty brow at the same time and a wild pack of parishioners gathering around me like starving wolves shrieked at me in tongues. Took me years to recover!

It's interesting that in the Catholic faith, one of the evidences of demonic possession is speaking in tongues - so I'll always have sympathy from the Catholic church with regards to my deliverance experience!

Voice hearing is accepted in the Catholic Church - as long as you pass the million tests they have regarding holy authenticity - so besides keeping 'shtoom' about my more negative voices who might tell them to '**** off!' it's obviously not a good idea to tell them I can also speak in tongues!

But in all fairness lots of nice people go to church and we all have to believe that there's someone 'out there' who really does care about us.

It's tough this limit to knowledge, knowledge preventing us from a fuller understanding of our full potential to be fully human. It's the base of a lot of doom, despair and excessive misery in the world. Nature, knows more about its 'self' than we do - why is that? animals/insects etc - Could it be because no one told them NOT to?

As a voice hearer I learned very early to keep what I heard quiet. I wrote it instead or just listened in - tried to learn from the Voices - often themselves seemingly frustrated at the limits placed on my freedom to be me. Throughout time they've sussed this meant certain doom to voice hearers. In the US it's known as channeling - I tried that for a while too - messages from Space poured out of me like a 24/7 fax machine from 'out there' while eager to hear Ufologists recorded them on tape - I also wrote a book from Voices - that was stolen - yeh I felt used and exploited and confused. Not by my Voices, but by how the Voices were perceived in society.

So ...after my collective negative experiences in the US from both Ufologists and the Church regarding my Voices from Space and the Spirit Realm - when I came back to Scotland - I was shocked to find that hearing voices was a sign of mental ill health. My nephew has it too and when in hospital he was so doped up on trial and error medication - extreme tremors - I could hardly believe it was the same beautiful soul I knew - a gentle gifted artist and musician.

Continued on page 15

Continued from page 14

It terrified the life out of me and I vowed I'd never ever allow that to happen to me, and that somehow there had to be a way to help prevent it happening to others - I had no idea how until I met HUG.

With regards to my voices, through HUG's enthusiastic and far reaching support for speaking out and educating the wider community regards mental challenges I've been able to really open up about what hearing voice is like and the positive feedback is encouraging to say the least. I now have hope where there was practically none left. I no longer feel so de-fragmented.

Humans are a complete set of mind/body/spirit, we are interconnected. We love to interact, so surely, creative freedom to do this is the better way ahead? Treating the body but not the mind or spirit, treating the mind but not the body and spirit, treating the spirit but ignoring the mind and body, that can never work.

Eminent Psychiatrists, Professors, Doctors, we have to move forward from all that.

Look around us. Whatever the great Creator is - He/She/It designed a multi universal set up with no walls/ceilings or floors. It's the same within us - in our consciousness. Nothing but space to grow - upward/outward/the only barrier is limited knowledge, limited further by stunted growth born of a few who like things just the way they are.

Well, stagnancy in anything is not good.

From a single ra indrop to the widest deepest ocean, Life was pre-designed with power to change. It's like if someone gave you a CD for a present and you only kept playing the one track - kept it on repeat, and that person came back to you, a long time later and asked how you liked the CD - what do you say?

'Oh I only listened to this one track - I liked that and so just kept it on repeat.'

'Cool but the other tracks, you listened to them too, right? Especially that one about happiness - did you like that one?'

'Er, well, I don't know, I never got around to it - I just liked this first track and kept it on ... but hey, if you're going to get all grumpy on me I suppose I could find some time to listen to that other track ...'

I believe that's what life is like today. Nothing's new anymore because there are too many barriers to freedom to explore. We have a right to explore. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries exploring was all the craze - some people must've went nuts just trying to think up new things to explore! But saying that, exploration ought be balanced with priority, and who would argue that exploration of the human being isn't a priority?

The human brain is only a fraction unders tood. It's a mass of depressed coils - these coils with their many nooks and crannies are as yet untapped. Within these untapped coils our consciousness expands, contracts struggles to grow, to develop and to BE.

All of us need to BE - it's only natural. So for me - here - now - what is Spirituality?

I think whatever it is - it should be as natural as it is supernatural. I believe it's the very fabric of Life, and that every human being, being human ought to be cut from this same cloth into a beautiful uniquely united weave.

Elizabeth Murray Brown

My Story –
Living in Nepal with mental health problems

Dear Friends,

I would like to share with you my experience of mental health problems. When I was 16 years old (and at that time I used to study in grade 9), I suddenly, started to get tired without doing any hard work. I gradually lost my appetite and used to have constipation.

I was a decent student up to class eight. However, after that time I became slow in every activity. I struggled a lot with studying. I always had stomach aches and pains in the rest of my body. My parents took me to the doctor but I didn't get a diagnosis. My parents then gave up on my treatments. The other shock came in only getting a highest second division Leaving Certificate.

After school, my dream to study medical science became impossible. I was wrinkled and seemed like an old skinny person. In spite of my illness, I started to study forestry science. It was very hard for me to study but I didn't give up. I started to feel guilty for not performing well in my study. I had no good friends. I felt abandoned.

My father changed towards me. He would not allow me to live with them. I have two brothers and they left me as well as my parents. My father was chronically unwell and my mother had heart problems. We lived with great starvation. My father used to complain all the time.

My inner sight was multiple physical complaints and I was very depressed. I tried to involve myself in different jobs but I could not continue.

After suffering from 16 - 25, a Doctor prescribed anti-depressants. Unfortunately, I had more side effects. Then the Doctor referred me to a psychiatrist in Kathmandu.

I had received a piece of land from parents' property that I sold to my brother and made some money and went to Kathmandu for further treatment. The psychiatrist recommended some medicine that helped significantly in the improvement of my health. I was given a diagnosis of manic-depression. It helped me to have a diagnosis but I started to get more stigma and discrimination than before.

My parents' health was getting much worse. They didn't have resources for treatments. As soon as I got better, my first concern was to provide treatments for my parents. After 6 months of treatment I felt better. Then it was compulsion to get a job and look after my parents. But, I had to disguise that I was taking medicine. If people in my office would know that I was taking medicine for mental illness, it would be harder to continue the job if someone would know that I had mental illness. I did not enjoy the forestry job. My heart and concern was for others who are suffering like me.

I tried my best to give the best service for my parents. My father passed away four years ago. I left the forestry job and started to study social work. I am still in the training and the course will be over this August.

After my diagnosis, I started to share my diagnosis. I had the most painful experiences of discrimination and stigma. For many years I did not share with anyone. Most of my heart and energy has gone towards relieving people with mental illness.

Continued on page 17

Continued from page 16

For four years, I lived in Kathmandu and studied the overall situation of the mental health problem. My energies have gone to relieve mentally ill people and their carers. Even though I'm taking medication for my mental illness, it doesn't disturb my study. Now, my study is going to be over very soon. I am professionally being prepared now. It is good to share my experience with you.

Sincerely,

Matrika Devkota

Matrika is very keen to have email contact with some HUG members. If you are interested in getting in touch with him please let Graham know and he can pass his contact details to you.

Visit to The Ness Foundation

I'd never been to their new location on the banks of Loch Ness but we were given a warm welcome at the ultra modern laboratories in a lovely old farm steading. A really nice sandwich lunch was laid on for us and we had the chance to meet the visitors from Tayside Carers Support Project before the presentations.

Dr Jun Wei, Head of Research, guided us through gene and environmental interaction with the help of a powerpoint presentation. Emma asked some smart questions around diet, gluten and its affects on our health whilst Elizabeth as well as backing up Emma with some intelligent questions, gave us all a great laugh with her suggestion that Manna from Heaven was gluten free and that Jesus knew all about fatty acids!

Dr Mathew Law then described his work with niacin patch testing and Chris kept the flag flying for HUG by asking some very knowledgeable questions about his work on the action of genes.

Doreen then gave us some insights into funding before we were given a guided tour of the laboratories and a chance to try a patch test for ourselves.

All in all Professor Iain Glen and his team gave us a fascinating insight into the sterling work they do researching diagnostic techniques in co-operation with teams in China and Europe. If HUG is invited to go again, I strongly recommend it to any member.

A big thank you to the staff of the Ness Foundation and especially to Graham and Emma for taking us along.

Susan - Inverness

Mental Health in Kenya

Kenya has little provision for mental health; the government only spends 0.01% of its health budget on mental health.

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.

"The state must provide equal medical care to everybody, including those with behavioural symptoms. Until it does, mental wards will continue to be prisons that punish people for poverty and undiagnosed medical conditions".

Community mental health care programmes lack adequate funding to reach a wider portion of the population affected. The general hospital in Kisii for instance runs a mental health programme with funding from the ministry of health.

Adequate mental health facilities offering services in mental health are needed in Kenya. Currently there is approximately one psychiatrist for every 500,000 people; a small portion of these psychiatrists work in the public sector which affects early mental health interventions in the rural areas or at the community level.

Mindfreedom Kenya aims to lobby the government to reform Laws and legal documents that relate to mentally ill persons in Kenya, such as the Mental Health Act, Vagrants Act, Persons with Disabilities Act. With reforms the government should be able to provide healthcare insurance to people unemployed to access mental health ser-

Community care facilities are urgently needed for people suffering from mental illness, Crisis centers and rehabilitative centers are also needed to increase accessibility for mentally ill people who in most cases fall under the bracket of poverty lines.

BasicNeeds UK Kenya was recently awarded funding to launch a community outreach programme in Kenya after a successful completion of a pilot programme in Kangemi, a slum in Nairobi with a section of the mentally ill, by providing access to treatment and enhancing the community to raise awareness about mental illness and the stigma involved.

BasicNeeds UK Kenya recently received funding from DFID in the amount of £496,303 for projects in Nyeri, Laikipia, Nyandarua and Meru South Districts of Kenya for mentally ill people. This project proposes to bring rights-based community mental health care and development services to the four districts in rural Kenya.

Mathari hospital in Nairobi, the most famous and one of the oldest in Kenya offers psychiatric services for most of the country using advanced medical technologies in treating mental illness. The most controversial treatment that has been decried by mental health rights groups is Electro Convulsive Therapy (ECT) is also offered at this facility. People in Kenya still hold to traditional beliefs that if one is mentally ill then he must have offended the community or that spirits and demons are after the affected person, this view hampers proper medical intervention during crisis situations.

Continued on page 19

Continued from page 18

Mindfreedom Kenya is a local affiliate of MindFreedom International working in the field of mental health. The organization was set up to improve the mental health and lives of sufferers and survivors in Kenya. The organization also seeks to develop and facilitate the provision of rehabilitative schemes that would ease the re-integration of the mentally ill into the society.

Mindfreedom Kenya's aim is to influence policy and planning, and to encourage improvements in the management and delivery of mental health services.

- ◆ Policy makers acknowledging the need and strongly pursuing mental health policies that positively impact their constituents and calling for revision of existing mental policies to match today's complex and changing mental health care.
- ◆ Leaders in the health profession, professional associations, mental health boards and health care companies to take a leading role in initiatives that increase access, quality and equity. On the same note, they must be able to establish a mental health advisory council independent from government that works collaboratively with policy makers. This mental health advisory council will create mental health reform blueprints with support and input from both public and private health care sectors. The mental health advisory council, along and/or with sponsoring policy makers will ensure that such mental health policies are passed, implemented and delivered.
- ◆ Human Right organizations must recognize equity, access and quality of mental health care as a basic human right and they must take initiatives that will harness just distribution, fair and favourable policies and

practically implementable mental health rights processes.

- ◆ Humanitarian Organizations involved in health care, WHO (World Health Org.) and UN (United Nations) to continue supporting mental health locally made policies and initiatives that are practical to the social realities of the people who need equal representation against abuses within the mental health system.

Jeff Makana, Director

MindFreedom Kenya

Hate Incidents Monitoring Project

The Highland Wellbeing Alliance Equalities Group (WBA) is in the process of establishing an online recording and monitoring system for all types of hate related incidents.

A hate incident is defined as: "Any incident, which may or may not constitute a criminal offence, which is perceived by the victim or any other person, as being motivated by prejudice or hate."

The perception can be that the prejudice or hatred motivation displayed during the incident was due to someone's gender, gender identity, age, disability, race, religion or sexual orientation.

In Highland, we know from equalities support groups that people experience harassment and discrimination on the grounds of all equalities strands.

When the scheme is ready, you will be able to fill in a report about a hate incident if:

- ◆ A hate incident has happened to you
- ◆ A hate incident has happened to someone you know
- ◆ You have seen something you think needs reporting

You will not have to provide any personal details if you do not wish.

Support organisations will be trained to help people fill out an online form if they are not confident enough to do this on their own. The scheme is intended to be launched in the autumn with wide public promotion. This will contribute to tackling discrimination and harassment, and to promoting equality and good relations between different groups.

In the meanwhile, the group will be developing the system and branding and will keep HUG informed of progress. We would appreciate your views on possible branding images, logo and marketing materials when we reach that stage.

Lorna Campbell, Project Manager
on behalf of Moira Paton, Chair, Highland Wellbeing Alliance Equalities Group

Voices Of eXperience—Update

Successful Comic Relief Funding!

VOX has had fantastic news about a successful funding application. VOX has been awarded £240,000 from Comic Relief over four years, which will mainly be used to fund a diversity facilitator who will be able to engage with groups that are currently seldom heard within mental health. In addition to this it will fund a part time admin worker, great news!

Continued on page 21

Continued from page 20

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

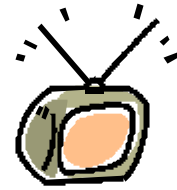
Around 50 people attended VOX's Annual General Meeting/Annual Conference. At the AGM the VOX board put forward a resolution to amend their constitution to allow us to open up our membership to mental health service user led groups (until now only individuals could join). This resolution was passed and we are now therefore able to invite groups to join us. VOX will shortly be contacting local groups to let them know of the membership criteria.

Have your view heard on Mental Health and Employment/Meaningful Activity, what do you think should be happening in terms of research/ policy/practice?

VOX Members have expressed an interest in setting up a working group to look at service users views on employment and meaningful activity. There is no set decision on how this will develop as we want you to decide how this should happen (could be podcasts, e-mail groups, focus group sessions, regional events), however we obviously want to form a representative group to ensure that a range of views on employment/meaningful activity are expressed so will be looking for a range of individuals with differing experiences.

Please contact me on 0141 572 1663 or e-mail wmcauslan@mhf.org.uk to register your interest in joining such a group. Travel expenses will be paid to anyone who participates.

The Doctor Who Hears Voices



'The Doctor Who Hears Voices' was a documentary that was broadcast at 10pm on Channel 4 on Monday 21st April 08.

The programme was created by Leo Regan and Nicolas Mosley. The programme centred on a junior Doctor called Ruth who worked in a general hospital in England, but has been medically suspended because it was found that she was hearing hallucinatory voices which were telling her to kill herself and or others.

She sought out the controversial psychologist Dr Rufus May to effect her recovery instead of visiting a psychiatrist whose treatment would probably have included prescribed drug therapy.

Dr Rufus May's 'Mantra' was that instead of prescribing the use of chemical therapy (with its sometimes nasty side effects) he felt that professionals should take on board a more holistic approach to people's welfare and treatment.

Pharmaceutical companies who manufacture and sell prescriptive drugs have been essential to the health services. Nonetheless, with the increased use of more effective drugs in the treatment of mental illness, the business has become very lucrative.

The programme, instead of clarifying health service procedure in the caring of those with mental illness; by portraying both the positive and negative aspects objectively – it portrayed a drama of confusion and surrealism. What was the motive behind the making of this documentary?

Continued on page 22

Continued from page 21

I thought it ill-advised of Channel 4 to broadcast a programme which left viewers unaware of an extensive amount of facts and information, particularly pertaining to Dr Rufus May.

The programme did not enlighten viewers about instances of the overuse of forcible restraint and the over prescribing of drugs which take place in some hospitals.

It also didn't enlighten viewers to the fact that hearing hallucinatory voices (not necessarily those demanding violent action) is a lifelong condition for some people. Most of those affected cope with life in the community, with or without drugs, and never, ever harm themselves of anyone else.

This programme, rather than giving viewers a balanced view on coping with mental health problems, came across as sensationalist and counter productive to the efforts of those committed to removing the negative attitude and stigma surrounding mental illness.

By Allan & Frances Goodwin

Steph's Curry

Ingredients

Olive oil
1 tsp mild chilli powder
1 tsp sweet paprika
1 tsp cummin powder
2 tsp mild curry powder
2 chopped medium sized onions
2 cloves garlic crushed
1 inch chopped fresh ginger
Tomato puree
1 tablespoon sugar
2 tins chopped tomatoes
1/2 pt of vegetable stock (possibly dash of sherry or wine to taste)
4 tbs ground almonds
4 tbs grated creamed coconut
zest of 1 small lemon
juice of half the lemon
a handful of chopped fresh coriander or parsley
2 - 3 tbs crème fraiche (optional)



Heat some oil in a pan and add the chilli powder, paprika, cummin powder and curry powder to release the flavours. Add the chopped onions; the crushed garlic and the ginger to the warmed spices. Then add a good squeeze of tomato puree, sugar and the chopped tomatoes and the vegetable stock. Heat through then add the ground almonds and creamed coconut, lemon zest and lemon juice.

Depending on how thick you like the sauce more stock can be added. Check taste and add salt/pepper or sugar if required.

Simmer until onions etc are all soft and smooth, and add whatever cooked meat (or vegetables) are required.

At the last stage add a handful of chopped fresh coriander or some parsley 10 mins or so before serving (if using dried herbs, add a little earlier or else they are tough to taste). For a creamy texture, add the crème fraiche.



Jokes!!!



'A pilot took his new girlfriend for a spin in his helicopter. All went well 'the pilot spun the helicopter upside down.

'AAAAH! We'll fall out! 'We'll fall out!' screeched his girlfriend horrified.

'Nah ...' responded the pilot cheerily. 'We'll always be pals!'

'A man was walking a long a street. He was tall, took a size twelve shoe and didnae have a dog. What's his name?'

'Eh ... dunno ...'

'Big Shughie Duggless.'

'Paddy was walking along the street with his two wee dogs when a man asked 'Are they Jack Russells?'

'No.' said Paddy. 'They're mine!'

A man was walking along the road one night when another man stopped him and asked ' Is that the Sun or the Moon up there?'

Couldnae tell ye.' said the first man. 'I'm a stranger here mysel!'

