



Progress Report

Measuring our Record - What HUG has achieved
between April 2008 and March 2009

May 2009



**HUG at
Highland Community Care Forum**

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

WHAT IS HUG?

HUG stands for the Highland Users Group, which is a network of people who use, or have used, mental health services in the Highlands.

At present, HUG has approximately 360 members and 14 branches across the Highlands. HUG has been in existence now for 12 years. Between them, members of HUG have experience of nearly all the mental health services in the Highlands.

HUG wants people with mental health problems to live without discrimination and to be equal partners in their communities. They should be respected for their diversity and who they are.

We should:

- Be proud of who we are
- Be valued
- Not be feared
- Live lives free from harassment
- Live the lives we choose
- Be accepted by friends and loved ones
- Not be ashamed of what we have experienced

We hope to achieve this by:

- Speaking out about the services we need and the lives we want to lead.
- Challenging stigma and raising awareness and understanding of mental health issues.

HUG's aims are as follows:

- To be the voice of people in Highland who have experienced mental health problems.
- To promote the interests of people in Highland who use or have used mental health services.
- To eliminate stigma and discrimination against people with mental health problems.
- To promote equality of opportunity for people with mental health problems irrespective of creed, sexuality, gender, race or disability.
- To improve understanding about the lives of people with mental health problems.
- To participate in the planning, development and management of services for users at a local, Highland and national level.
- To identify gaps in services and to campaign to have them filled.
- To find ways of improving the lives, services and treatments of people with mental health problems.
- To share information and news on mental health issues among mental health service user groups and interested parties.
- To increase knowledge about resources, treatments and rights for users.
- To promote cooperation between agencies concerned with mental health.

INTRODUCTION

The Highland Users Group has been in existence since 1996. We are a group of users of mental health services spread throughout the Highlands and supported by HUG workers who have a strong knowledge and understanding of mental health problems.

The purpose of HUG is to provide a voice for people with a mental illness. We believe that people with direct experience of mental health problems have an expertise that cannot be found elsewhere.

By speaking out, we can influence our own lives and the ways in which services are developed and run as well as helping to educate professionals and the public about the reality of mental illness and what does and doesn't work for us. By speaking out we gain more control over our lives and can be given the opportunity to participate and be involved in changing the way other people view us.

We have a strong belief that people with a mental illness have a history of being excluded and marginalised. In the past this was because many of us were kept in institutions but nowadays is due more to the effects of discrimination, stigma, poverty, lack of opportunities and the sometimes patronising attitudes of some of the professionals that are there to help.

In HUG we believe that this is wrong and feel, that to challenge this, we need to speak out directly about our lives whilst also involving allies in our cause.

We are known as a collective advocacy group but are part of a wider movement that aims to create social justice for our community.

For the last twelve years we have been a project of Highland Community Care Forum (HCCF). Whilst we have our own unique independent voice and aims, objectives and membership criteria and our own committee that the workers report to; our infrastructure, administration and governance are provided by HCCF.

We have reported on our activities in the past through a wider service level agreement and through the HCCF annual report. However we are now being monitored through a system that covers all advocacy projects in the Highlands. We have chosen this development to produce our own annual report of progress.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN HUG

MEMBERS

HUG is open to anyone with a mental health problem living in the Highlands.

To join, people just need to declare that they have a mental health problem. There is no process of deciding whether people 'qualify'.

Until recently we did not allow people with dementia to join HUG believing that other organisations and groups could represent their interests far better than us. Recently, we have decided that this is not an inclusive way of working. Although we still believe other organisations are better placed than us to represent the views of people with dementia we have now opened our membership to people with dementia as well.

HUG members come from throughout the Highlands and are from all sorts of different backgrounds, for more information on this area please refer to our section on diversity.

SUPPORTERS

People who are not HUG members can join as supporters or allies. This means that anyone with an interest in our work can receive our publications free of charge be they carers, professionals or members of the general public. In order to keep as environmentally aware as possible we try to supply most publications by E-mail.

THE HUG ROUND TABLE

The HUG Round Table is our committee drawn from the 14 HUG branches in the Highlands. It acts as a steering group to discuss present and future activity, policy and information and skills sharing. Each HUG Branch has two spaces reserved for these positions.

Last year we held elections in some of our branches to the Round Table. These opportunities for election will be held every three years. The committee meets 5 times a year.

Our members in January 2009 were

CAITHNESS WEST	David, John
CAITHNESS EAST	Garry, Billy
SUTHERLAND	Neil
EAST ROSS	Debbie, Andy
MID ROSS	Joanna, Fiona
INVERNESS	Keir, Susan
NAIRN	John

LOCHABER	Ronnie, Elizabeth
ARGYLL	Dougie
SKYE AND LOCAHALSH	Marja-Liisa, Rosina
WESTER ROSS	David

Chris and Tabitha attended as observers throughout the year. We would like to thank Pam and Margaret for their assistance as representatives earlier in the year.

THE HUG MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

This committee will be established by the HUG Round Table in the summer of 2009 to ensure that HUG members play a role in directly managing the work of HUG and ensuring a degree of independence from HCCF as a whole. The Board of Directors of HCCF still remains ultimately responsible for HUG and its governance and line management is carried out by the director of HCCF.

The HUG Management Group members are selected by the Hug Round table from our general membership. There are 2 positions reserved to co-opt people with special expertise.

HUG STAFF

The HUG workers are:

Graham Morgan:	Project Manager
Emma Thomas:	Project Development Worker (young people and awareness training.)
Heidi Tweedie:	Project Development Worker (creative expression) - career break cover.

Highland Community Care Forum Staff

HUG has also been assisted by Marina, Mary, Isla and Peta in admin and Sheena the HCCF Director throughout the year.

HOW WE WILL REPORT ON THE YEAR

We have been asked by our colleagues in NHS Highland and the Highland Council to report annually on the activity that we have agreed to carry out as part of our contract with them. This is the list of principles, objectives, outputs and outcomes that we have agreed to work to. **Although they do not cover all the costs of our work we have included in this report all the work that HUG undertakes, in order to give knowledge of all the work we undertake. We have marked areas of work with a star * to indicate areas of work not covered by the Highland Council or National Health Board.**

HUG receives and is grateful for funding from:

Highland Council
NHS Highland
The Scottish Government
Comic Relief
The European Union
The "See Me" campaign (management fee)
Highland psychiatrists (training contribution)
Other various fees and donations for work done.

THE PRINCIPLES BY WHICH WE WORK:

INDEPENDENCE

We act as a voice for our members and in order to be a voice that is true to our membership it is important that we are independent of all organisations that provide services so that we are not influenced by them in what we say. For this reason HUG is happy to be a part of Highland Community Care Forum which acts as an independent voice for users and carers.

In order that there is no way in which we can be compromised because HCCF acts as a voice for other carer and user groups and their voice may compromise ours we have developed a Conflict of Interest Policy and put in place a Management Group so that HUG is still a part of HCCF but is in many ways independent of it as far as our 'voice' and activity goes.

EMPOWERMENT

We value our membership hugely. There is not a single activity that could take place without their involvement and therefore empowerment is crucial to all that we do. We have a statement of how we want to be treated by others which we also try to respect, we have a questionnaire asking how people would like to be involved, we promote a whole variety of different ways of involving our members according to their needs and desires, we have ground rules for our meetings and try always, to treat our members in a way that respects their dignity, talents and potential.

USER-LED SERVICES

All HUG members are users and all the workers have or have experienced mental health problems.

We make sure that our members are central to the organisation by electing from each of our 14 branches two members who attend the HUG Round Table which provides guidance on the direction we take, the topics we discuss and the policies we adopt. The Round Table in turn selects a Management Group which has a majority of HUG members on it to help with the management of our project.

In the course of the year we set up focus groups and established advisory groups to help with particular pieces of work.

Our voice will always be the direct voice of users and users will always be involved and supported in speaking out about our lives and services. All of our anti-stigma and awareness raising activities have HUG members' experiences at the centre.

DIVERSITY AND GEOGRAPHY

It is important to us that HUG includes members from throughout the Highlands and from the wide range of communities people are a part of.

We make sure that we can keep in contact with our members by going out to meet them in places that are convenient to them such as their houses drop in centres and employment projects.

In the Highlands we have members in the following places:

Area	Number of HUG members	% of HUG membership	% of Highland Population
North and West Sutherland	1	25	20
West Caithness	27		
East Caithness	59		
Sutherland	23		
East Ross	59	26	25
Mid Ross	17		
West Ross	14		
Inverness	111	37	40
Nairn	19		
Badenoch and Strathspey	12		
Lochaber	27	8	10
Skye and Lochalsh	20	6	2
Argyll	3		

As can be seen the spread of HUG members across its network closely matches the population figures for Highland with perhaps more people in HUG coming from rural areas than the city. This would reflect our desire to reach out to people who may be geographically isolated because of the rurality of their situation.

We did not measure Badenoch and Strathspey as we could not find the data and did not include Argyll as we operate via 'acumen' a local organisation there and therefore our membership figure is not accurate.

PEOPLE FROM ETHNIC MINORITIES

We do not have an accurate record of people from ethnic minorities but do have people as members of HUG who are from ethnic minorities.

In the last year we have been in contact with the Highland Polish Association and had an article publicising HUG in the Gazetta the Polish language newspaper.

We have featured the story of a Polish member in our local issues report and the story of an Indian member in our newsletter.

Through our European * work we have worked with users in Romania, Poland, Spain and Portugal and publicised this. We have hosted a visit by a Polish user and he publicised his work with us on his local radio station.

We have established links with Ghana, Kenya and Nepal and regularly published articles from them in our newsletter about the situation in their countries. We have had an article about our work published in a Nepali newspaper.

We have further links through the International Initiative in Mental Health Leadership.

Through this work we hope to enhance our work and establish links with countries across the world and provide an accessible and welcoming image of HUG to people with mental health problems from B.M.E communities living in the Highlands.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

We have an accessible office and usually hold our meetings in accessible venues. Our members pack makes it clear, that we want to be accessible to people with disabilities and indeed we have many people with disabilities who are members.

We do not have deaf members and very few visually impaired members and need to reach out to them.

GAY BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

We have both gay and bisexual members but our only transgender member has now moved away from the area. We feature her story on our website.

PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT AGES

Our membership is mainly people in their 30's 40's 50's and 60's. We need to reach out more to younger and older people.

PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT FAITHS

We have no idea about the faith of our members, although we have produced a report and newsletter articles reflecting our members views on faith and spirituality.

FURTHER ACTION

Until now we have kept no record detailing our members different backgrounds as we felt that it was intrusive and went against our desire to have minimal records kept about our membership.

We have now decided to see if we can collect some of this data and will be sending out equal opportunities questionnaire to new members that they can fill in if they wish so that we can monitor the diversity of our membership and seek to include groups that are underrepresented.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Along with our other ground rules for conduct at meetings we ensure confidentiality for our members although we still publicise their stories, views and experiences as this is the purpose of a group such as ours.

OBJECTIVES

ACCESSING HUG

It is important to us that anyone can be a part of HUG if they are a user of mental health services.

In order to make this possible we do the following things:

- We make our information as accessible and as easy to understand as we can.
- We visit groups where they are naturally meeting.
- We are happy to meet up individually with new members.
- We provide expenses to allow members to attend meetings and activities.
- We are accessible by email, phone and text.
- We provide a range of different opportunities to be involved in HUG so that people can get involved according to their interest and ability.
- We make our office accessible and offer interpretation if necessary for our publications and meetings.
- We provide training and support so that new members can get involved.
- We provide a new member's pack detailing ways of being involved and seeking to find out how members want to be involved.
- We send out an equal opportunities questionnaire to new members.
- We are developing new leaflets and posters that we will distribute widely.

HELPING WITH LOCAL PLANNING

It is very important to us that local activities and plans are influenced by the experiences and views of HUG members.

In order that this can happen we ask at each meeting for HUG members' views on local issues and other issues that affect them. We then turn this into a local issues report which we send to our Round Table and to local officials and planners.

We have produced two of these reports in the last year. We have had the following response to these reports:

"what a rich mix of points statements, opinions, facts ideas hopes wishes and fears. It gives something for each locality's current thinking...."

Associate Medical Director Primary Care NHS Highland.

"...thanks for sending us a copy of the local issues autumn winter 2008. It was very powerful reading... thinking how we can use some of the information you have collected to influence the agenda at some of the strategy groups where VOX have representatives..."

VOX (voices of experience)

We also gather the views of our Round Table members on local issues and encourage them where possible to contribute to local planning.

We attend various planning groups:

We have attended the:

- Lochaber Local Implementation Group
- Skye and Lochalsh Mental Health Development Group
- Caithness Mental Health Group
- Inverness Local Implantation Group (but rarely)
- Badenoch and Strathspey Local Implementation Group (but rarely)

We have not attended the Sutherland, Wester Ross, East Ross Mid Ross or Nairn groups due to lack of capacity and in some cases lack of an invitation or a group to attend.

We have also acted on issues identified by users locally as being important to them. The last issue we were actively involved with, was the successful relocation of the Nairn Drop In to the Links Clinic.

IDENTIFYING ISSUES AFFECTING PEOPLE WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS

This is the key role of the 'Speaking Out' (traditional collective advocacy) part of HUG. We identify issues by meeting with our members at our branch meetings, our Friday Forum, our Round Table and through individual contact.

We then raise these issues in reports letters and phone calls and meetings with officials and other people.

EXPERT PATIENT

An expert patient is someone who can manage their condition and cope with it better because they have sought out information and ideas on how to do so.

We like this idea as it helps us all stay healthier. We promote this by the informal discussions we are always having between ourselves, by publicising people's stories of illness and how they have coped with it in our newsletter and by promoting the ideas of recovery in our everyday work.

SPECIFIC AREAS OF WORK ON SERVICE CHANGE

The two main areas where there have been specific pieces of work this year have been the Mental Health Act and Integrated Care Pathways.

The Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) act 2003:

We have been involved in the act in the following ways:

- By attending meetings of the Mental Health Act Review Group
- By attending the Mental Health Act Review Group consultation event in Inverness
- By finding out the views of 84 members on the Mental Health Act and submitting these to the review group.
- By speaking on the Mental Health Act at a conference organised by Holyrood Events and at a celebration of the principles of the Mental Health Act.
- By attending meetings with the Scottish Government as part of the Mental Health Network Group.

Integrated Care Pathways

We have been involved in a number of ways. We have regularly met with the worker responsible for co-ordinating the implementation of integrated care pathways.

Hug members attended meetings of the general group and management group We attended workshops for sub groups and provided members willing to attend sub groups although subsequently attendance was limited.

PROMOTING INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY

HUG is an independent advocacy group and by promoting itself and its way of working it promotes independent advocacy.

We have done this by meeting new members in their environment to talk about our work and by re publishing our members' pack.

We have also spoken about HUG at the launch of Plus in Perth and at a conference on research and mental health.

We have used HUG as a model of good practice when training users and workers in Romania, Poland, Spain and Portugal * and are assisting them to develop a leaflet that describes the benefits and ways of developing collective advocacy.

We have also met with workers and users interested in HUG from Fife, Dumfries and Galloway, Moray, the Western Isles and East Lothian.

DEVELOP DIFFERENT WAYS OF FINDING OUT THE VIEWS OF USERS

We are always keen to find out our members views in as many ways as we can.

Our basic format of branch meetings, Friday Forum meetings and one to one meetings is a tried and tested way of gaining views that has been very successful and which we will continue to do.

However there are other ways of gaining and producing views. One of these, developed by the Communications Project, has been our Creative Writing Group where we have a range of different perspectives given through prose and poetry.

HIGHLAND ADVOCACY NETWORK

HUG is not the only advocacy group in the Highlands, there is also People First for people with learning disabilities, the Citizens' Advocacy Project for people with learning disabilities, Advocacy Highland and Carers Advocacy.

By meeting together we can exchange information and improve the way we work. This can be very useful.

OUTPUTS

KEEPING OUR MEMBERS UP TO DATE

We report verbally to our membership at each branch meeting and Friday Forum meeting and verbally and in writing at the HUG Round Table.

We have also started producing annual reports on our progress.

We have developed a pack for new members and now have our website up to date.

For those members who cannot attend meetings but are keen to be involved we use text, phone and email as ways of keeping in touch with them.

THE HUG NETWORK

We now have 14 branches across Highland in:

West Caithness, two in East Caithness, Sutherland, East Ross, Mid Ross, Inverness, New Craigs hospital, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey, Lochaber, Skye and Lochalsh and two in West Ross.

We also meet jointly with Acumen in Argyll in acknowledgment that NHS Highland now covers this area too and that users have a right to representation here too.

This year we have met three times in our network in a total of 45 branch meetings. We usually meet four times but staff illness prevented one set of meetings from happening.

REPORTS

We have produced 8 reports this year.

The effect of our reports:

Local Issues Report

These two reports (involving 84 and 107 people) have been circulated to local planning groups and put on our website. We have had feedback from NHS Highland, Lochaber and Sutherland but not from anywhere else.

Mental Health and Physical Health Report – 84 people involved

Comments:

“Thank you very much for sending me this extremely relevant and interesting report. I fully agree with the emphasis made on the link (both ways) between mental and physical health problems and the problems which people experience in improving health care are well described”

Clinical Lead for Mental Health Services NHS Highland

“Many thanks for sending me a copy of the above report. As ever I read these reports avidly and with interest.....”

Associate Medical Director (Primary Care) NHS Highland

"I was very impressed with the [report] would you mind if I forwarded it to the Royal College of Psychiatrists Editorial group . We are developing something on exercise and the information in here is brilliant.... As usual you have come up with some excellent work."

Consultant Psychiatrist

The report has been placed on the viewpoint section of the Royal College of Psychiatrists website.

The report was quoted from in a lecture to sports science students at Gloucester University, referenced in a Scottish Government publication on the same subject and publicised by the International Initiative in Mental Health Leadership.

A précis of the report was published in 'wellness update' the E-newsletter of the Centre for Mental Health Services in the USA.

It was used by a Community Mental Health Service in New South Wales in Australia.

Mental Health and Peer Support Report – 82 people involved

It was placed on Scottish Recovery Network website

Comments:

".... Which I found very interesting. I am a consultant psychiatrist ... and am part of the peer support steering group lead by the Scottish Government... may I take the report to the next meeting and quote from it in future presentations?"

Consultant psychiatrist

".. . It's a really valuable document ... I will definitely use this as a reference to any help I can give..."

Service User Involvement Support Worker

"... to say how much I enjoyed reading the views from HUG on peer support....its a comprehensive report and interesting to hear the different comments from people..... I like the honesty and insight of the participants..... the report presents a good argument for peer support while at the same time teasing out the different concerns and possibilities in practice."

Training and Consultancy Agency

"as always with your work this report provides honest dialogue in giving freely to promote insight and self direction. You and HUG have great integrity"

Larry Fricks (peer support project) USA

A Mentally Healthy Workplace Report - involved 98 people

Comments and actions:

"...just read the employment report and thought it was wonderful. The testimonials were fantastic, truly moving (and so true)"

Service User (Highland)

"I really enjoyed reading your report and agree that the best way to reduce stigma in the workplace is to reduce the them/us divide. This means promoting mentally healthy workplaces for all workers...."

Consultant Psychiatrist.

"Congratulations on Hug's brilliant and inspiring publication " a mentally healthy workplace". I would like to print off copies to put on a stall at the Royal College of Psychiatrists conference on choice next week...."

Service User (England)

"Another great report. Thank you. I have forwarded it to our Director of Public Health.... I thought your report would help raise the profile of mental health and try to get some positive action started around the recommendations from users..."

Director of Community Care, NHS Highland

"This is an excellent report and neatly sums up the key areas for a good working environment for everyone. I am sure I will use it to influence our thinking."

Highland Home Carers

The Disability Working Advisory Group in the British Council used the report as a basis for discussion at one of their meetings.

The Police and Mental Health Report– Involved 100 people

"I would like our police similarly to read it and comment. Many of the views and experiences expressed in the report reflect similar views from this area (including the positive ones) and are indeed what Oban Mental Health Forum have discussed recently with the Chief Inspector."

User Argyll

(Report complete but awaiting release)

The Impact Of The Diagnosis Report - Involved 101 people

Comments:

"the content is brilliant and it is a really interesting one to read, well done."

Service User, Highland

"it offers an excellent example of the question which Jon King and I have been raising as to how we can best help you disseminate these sorts of reports to the right groups and individuals and what might be done to ensure that this information assists in training, reflection, refreshing and general improvement processes across the Health Service."

Associate Medical Director Primary Care NHS Highland.

"As always a good read"

Befreinders Highland

"thank you for the really interesting report –please let colleagues in HUG know it was excellent."

Advocacy Highland

"I found your latest report on the effects of a diagnosis on mental illness really excellent and helpful, especially the quotes that help bring the conclusions alive... I shall be letting colleagues in my team know about the report and encourage them to read it."

Associate specialist in assertive outreach

Wotton Lawn Hospital (Gloucester)

"which I found very enlightening...the hardest thing for a sufferer is to actually admit to themselves that there is something wrong with the way they are... this obviously goes to the inner core of any human being but is the first step along the road to acceptance and hopefully a recovery of their individual illness..... keep up the excellent work that HUG has achieved and keeps achieving for all sufferers of mental ill health."

Caithness Depression Support Group

"which I think is very well put together... I found the comments made very helpful ... we are in the process of looking at the care planning documents that will need to include a section on diagnosis. I will advise colleagues... of the findings of your report and perhaps thereafter we could think together of some practical ways in which using the icp we might try to make improvements."

Consultant Psychiatrist Highland

The report is being used as a basis for discussion with members of Richmond Fellowship anti stigma groups across Scotland and will be discussed with psychiatrists later in 2009.

ADMISSION TO A PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL 2001 (involved 70 people)

This report was quoted in the Scottish government publication: 'Admissions to adult mental health in patient services' March 2009.

MEMBERSHIP OF HUG

In February 2008 we had 343 members and in January 2009 we had 368 members so over this period our new members increased by at least 25 or 7%.

THE COMMITTEES WE ATTEND

Apart from the Integrated Care Pathways group we have already mentioned and local groups; HUG has been represented on:

- The Mental Health Network
- The Mental Health Operations Group
- The New Craigs in Patient Forum And Governance Group
- The Choose Life Group
- The Care Program Approach Management Group

At a national level it has been represented on:

- 'See Me'
- The Mental Health Act Review group
- The Executive Committee of the Scottish Division Of The Royal College Of Psychiatrists
- VOX
- The Service Users Recovery Forum Of the Royal College of Psychiatrists

CONSTITUTION

HUG has a draft constitution which it hopes to adopt or adapt soon.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

HUG adopted the following policies and procedures this year:

A complaints procedure, a conflict of interest policy, the role of Round Table members and Management Group.

OTHER WORK:

CONSULTATIONS

Over the last year we have responded to 34 separate consultations through the HUG Friday Forum.

This has varied from giving evidence to a Parliamentary Enquiry into young people's mental health services, to commenting on the Patients' Rights Bill or the Homelessness Strategy of Highland council, to meeting officials to discuss smoking room policy in New Craigs, the Occupational Therapy Service or the content of Inverness College Social Work course.

QUIET GROUP

Alongside Occupational Therapy we worked with people who find being with people hard to manage and attended a series of meetings of what we called the 'quiet group'. In this way we were able to keep in contact with people who wouldn't ordinarily be involved with a group like HUG.

TALKS

HUG members and workers gave the following talks:

- Men and mental health at a men's health conference on marginalised men
- A young person's experience of mental health services at the joint committee for children and young people.
- A users' view of the Mental Health Act at a conference organised by Holyrood events.
- A users view of recovery, at the Birchwood Highland conference on recovery
- A users view on hospital food at a food day seminar
- A users view of the principles of the Mental Health Act at the principles into Practice Awards Ceremony
- A view on user led research at a conference on user driven research

STOPPING STIGMA: RAISING AWARENESS (HUG COMMUNICATIONS PROJECT)

Principles

INVOLVEMENT AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT

HUG members are integral to the work we do in stopping stigma and raising awareness of mental health issues. They often help plan project work and act as advisors. They sit on focus groups that guide and inform our work and they participate in awareness raising by being filmed, giving direct personal testimony, testimony in writing, painting and poetry, by acting as group facilitators, engaging in question and answer sessions and on occasion by facilitating workshops alone.

There are frequent and varied opportunities to be involved in our anti-stigma and awareness activities, as well as opportunities for support, training and shadowing to help further develop people's skills and confidence.

In the past, it was sometimes easy to approach people we already knew well but over the last half of the year we have been gathering a list of people's interests at each branch meeting and by doing this have broadened our base of activists.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

As a project whose function is to stop discrimination, we are committed to making sure that we do not discriminate against other groups of people. We also try to encourage our members to do the same, and have ground rules for conduct at meetings that make this explicit (these are available upon request).

Next year we will adopt a non-discrimination policy.

RESPECT

If we as a group are to be respected, then it is important to us that we respect each other, our partners and audience. An example of this is that in an awareness session, we find it very important for everyone to feel safe. We recruit awareness raisers who wish to debate and educate rather than "get their own back" for past wrongs. We recognise the support needs of our members but also of our audience who may be subject to traumatic stories that can be hard to deal with.

PARTNERSHIP

Whilst we know that we have a great deal of knowledge and skill internally, we also know that for the best results it is sometimes good to work with other people too, and that as we plan our work we may target it better if we consult with other stakeholders.

Examples of partnership working include:

- Joint training of Mental Health Officers with Robert Gordon University
- Planning joint training of nurses with the University of Stirling,
- Working with an private film-maker (Wee Tv) to produce our DVD's *
- Working with Eden Court in our work with young people.*

SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE

We do agree that this is the best way forward. It helps improve everyone's work.

We have received repeated requests to share our ideas and experience of what we do. These vary from students in high schools to government departments. They vary from local requests to requests that have come from other countries including; Switzerland, Czech Republic, Spain, Portugal, Poland, Romania, Wales and England.*

We have put less work into discovering how to do anti stigma work ourselves, as we have been doing this for the last ten years but we continually seek out new ways of working and new knowledge in order that we can improve our work.

CONSULTING MEMBERS ABOUT ACTIVITY

We constantly engage in this in order that what we do fits most closely with the desires of our members.

This often comes from our branch meetings where our consultation has shown that these areas still wish us to target young people. Another example is that our branch meetings have shown that our members now wish us to provide training to GP's and the Police. This meant that we provided an awareness session to Primary Care Staff in the autumn and trainee GP's in the winter and are discussing the best way forward in awareness raising with the Police.

OUTPUTS

EXPANDING OUR MEMBERSHIP BASE WHO ARE WILLING TO WORK IN THIS AREA AND ESPECIALLY IN SCHOOLS

Since the development of our contract agreement we have been seeking new members to participate in all areas of the project's activities. We have members who have come forward as wishing to be involved, however, it is important to bear in mind that it will take some time to transfer an initial enthusiasm into people being ready and able to carry out work in this area. This is particularly the case with our educational work with young people, as this work, whilst hugely rewarding, is not an easy area for our members to work in.

We have well over twenty five people involved in our awareness raising work.

We have provided two skills development programmes to our members in group work skills and assertiveness training which involved 11 members.

We provided a creative writing weekend* to 12 members that increased their skills and confidence and opened up new techniques of awareness raising. This group has now been meeting (both alone and supported for) over a year*.

All of our members who participate in awareness activities are constantly learning and expanding their skills.

NEWSLETTERS

We have produced three newsletters this year which have been sent to all our members and to many professionals across the Highlands, Scotland and some internationally (795 people in total)

The newsletter is becoming increasingly written by our members and consistently receives good feedback:

"Read a copy today – good stuff!"

"Just to tell you how much I enjoyed reading the latest newsletter. There's always so much in it and so well-balanced."

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS TRAINING

We have provided 14 mental health awareness training sessions to 223 professionals, including:

- Training and Guidance Unit
- Alness College social care students
- Inverness College undergraduate students
- Trainee Mental Health Officers
- Staff and managers at Dounreay nuclear power station
- Medical and clerical staff at Dingwall Medical Practice –
- Trainee GP's
- Eden Court actors
- Stirling University undergraduate nursing students
- Advocacy Highland staff and volunteers (Caithness and Sutherland)
- Acute Nursing Group
- Scottish Personality Disorder Conference*

All these sessions involved 16 individual HUG members, who had their voices heard on 47 different occasions. All training sessions were evaluated very positively. Examples of evaluation included:

'HUG testimonies. Thank you for sharing your experiences. It helped put the role of the MHO into perspective and the impact an MHO may have on an individual.'

'Getting the real experiences of each person, their perceptions, feelings ... I believe is essential to good practice...'

Trainee Mental Health Officer Candidates

'This was the most beneficial training I have received for gaining insight into mental health illness.'

'The testimonies – hearing things from the patients' perspectives. Being able to ask questions knowing we weren't going to offend; being able to hear the patients' point of view and being reminded how much impact a good nurse can have. Encourages us not to get sucked into the big vacuum of New Craigs apathy!'

Undergraduate Mental Health nurses

'To learn about self-harm, that it's something people do to feel better almost. Hearing people share their experiences and what they've had to cope with,'

Staff member, Dingwall Medical Practice

EDUCATIONAL WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCHOOLS

Our work with young people is very important to us and therefore we specifically target young people for education and awareness raising work.

This year we provided 15 **mental health educational sessions** in:

- Milburn Academy/Millburn Peer Education Group
- Charleston Academy
- Ullapool High School
- Alness Academy (whole school awareness raising in partnership with primary mental health workers and Children 1st)

These sessions have reached 503 young people

Our work with young people to develop a **DVD around psychosis*** was completed this year as well as a **resource pack*** to accompany it.

Members of HUG participated in all these activities as advisors, educators or trainers.

VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE

Whilst it is great to get into school, there are other young people who don't get into school much or at all. These young people may be very vulnerable to mental ill health and yet also very ignorant. It is therefore important that we contact them.

We have started positive discussions with The Bridge Project in Inverness to see if we can do anything in partnership with them. We will pursue this in the coming year.

LIBRARY OF TESTIMONY

Although it is great to provide direct personal testimony and we know that this is one of the best ways of getting messages across it is also good to gather people's stories in different ways such as through writing and audio testimony.

We have a considerable resource provided by our members through our newsletter, one off articles and through the creative writing group.*

We are now in the process of turning this testimony into a resource that we can use whenever we want to.

We have also produced a booklet* from our creative writing group that also acts as a source of testimony but also of inspiration by celebrating the talents of our members.

MEDIA WORK

The media are an excellent way of reaching a large number of people and of helping shift attitudes into a more positive frame.

This year we have had media coverage as follows:

- Glasgow Herald – feature article on borderline personality disorder
- The Point magazine – feature article on borderline personality disorder
- The Highland News - feature article on borderline personality disorder
- The Highland News – a feature article on young people and self-harm
- Scottish Government's 'Well' magazine – messages for the future
- The Gazette – feature article on HUG and a Polish colleague
- BBC Radio Scotland – 'dying to talk' program on suicide and young men
- Newsfront (Nepali English language newspaper)- feature article on the Mental Health Act and user involvement.
- The Scotsman – talking treatments
- The Herald – the Mental Welfare Commission
- The Point magazine – feature article on the Mental Health Act.
- The west Highland free press – social firms
- The Point magazine – letters page re hug
- Comic relief red nose day view of one of our members

WEBSITE

Our website is up to date and its maintenance is now carried out by a HUG worker who has taken over from the previous HUG volunteer. The website is being kept regularly updated with new HUG reports and the newsletter.

Whilst we are still given good feedback about it, it would be good to have time to further develop it.

OTHER WORK

DVD'S AND RESOURCE PACKS

We have produced a number of DVD's and resource packs this year:

A **borderline personality disorder resource pack*** which was produced at the tail end of the last financial year by a group of HUG members with the help of a worker and volunteer. It included a DVD of members' experiences of the diagnosis and their treatment, written testimony about B.P.D from users and professionals as well as information support groups and issues that are important to users. The pack was illustrated by art work from HUG members.

The pack produced considerable interest and was showcased at a conference on borderline personality disorder.

Many copies have been distributed. Future copies will be charged for as we need to find ways of recouping the cost of the resource pack.

A DVD on **recovery*** which was inspired by a request from Birchwood Highland for training resources on recovery.

In partnership with Stirling University (Raigmore Campus) we created a DVD looking at **social inclusion and exclusion*** for those with experience of mental ill health.

These projects involved at least ten HUG members in planning through to completion and the production of the resource. They were involved in planning, giving personal testimony both to the camera and via poetry and art. They also helped in the design process.

These were both major projects which, as the DVD's come to be distributed within Highland and across Scotland will have a major effects on these areas of debate.

We also produced a DVD on **self harm***. A total of 5 HUG members participated in its production. We expect that this resource will also have a national coverage and impact.

We have also started building a **library of recorded film testimony*** of our members to act as our own training resource and on occasion as a resource for other agencies such as those that are training trainee psychiatrists. This year we recorded 8 Testimonies* which still need edited.

We have also started providing **WRAP training*** (Wellness Recovery Action Plan.) in partnership with the Occupational Therapy Department at New Craigs Hospital. In this way we hope to improve awareness of recovery and to give users and professionals the tools to engage positively with their own recovery journeys and in the future to help spread this technique across the Highlands.

INTERNATIONAL WORK

We have been involved in a number of strands of international work.

We are partners in the **Grundvig 1 Programme*** which has been looking at helping users and professionals become trainers, look at and engage in activities of empowerment, and learn how to and actually create the establishment of user associations in their home countries.

This has been carried out with

- Romania
- Poland
- Portugal
- Spain

HUG provided training over three days* to 20 users and workers on how to establish a user association using HUG as a model of one possible way of working whilst encouraging the users and workers to develop ideas that reflected the needs of their own countries and cultures.

In addition we have continued with our involvement and in providing support and encouragement to emerging user groups in the poorer world* in

- Ghana
- Kenya
- Nepal

CONCLUSION

As has been evidenced, we have met almost all, and in many cases exceeded the targets that were set out in the contract for both the HUG Speaking Out Project and the HUG Communications (Stopping Stigma: Increasing Awareness) Project.

We have had a busy and productive year, and as ever both members and workers have been extremely busy and highly productive. When we set this evidence in a perspective background of, having only signed the statutory services contract in the last half of the year and in the preceding half, having to negotiate and move on from our near closure in early 2008, we are more than happy with our achievements.

We look forward to being able to carry on the vital work that HUG performs to secure social justice and be a voice to enable equality for people with a mental illness in Highland. We have just secured three years funding from Comic Relief for work on creative expression which has caused us great excitement. This work will start at the end of 2009.

Our contract agreement only covers some of our work, we have placed a star (*) to indicate areas of work that are not funded through the service level agreement.

A Formal Independent Evaluation was completed in March 08 which was very positive about HUG. This can be obtained by contacting the HUG office.

It is wonderful to be able to work with a vibrant and talented community of HUG members and activists. They are the bedrock of all that we do, and demonstrate daily the vital need for a voice for people with mental health problems. The people we work in partnership with and who are our allies in many ways (both in the voluntary sector and the public sector) are fundamental components of change. Equally vital are our funders, without them we wouldn't be able to carry out any of this work.



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