



CREATING A STRONG VOICE – WHAT WE THINK OF HUG AND THE NEXT STEPS IT SHOULD TAKE.

Examining the views of members of the Highland Users Group on the way HUG works and looking at different ways of working to achieve change.

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WHAT IS HUG?

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

At present, HUG has approximately 285 members and 13 branches in:

- Caithness
- Sutherland
- Easter Ross
- Wester Ross
- Nairn
- Inverness
- New Craigs
- Lochaber
- Skye & Lochalsh
- Badenoch & Strathspey

Our main aim is to improve the way in which we, as users of mental health services, are treated. HUG campaigns to improve the rights, services and treatments of people with mental health problems and strives to challenge the stigma of mental health.

HUG works on a local, Highland and national level to influence policy and planning, and to encourage improvements in the management and delivery of mental health services.

Where there are other groups such as the New Craigs Patients Council or the Members Group in Skye, we try, as far as possible, to work in partnership with them when we hold meetings.

Between them, members of HUG have experience of nearly all the mental health services in the Highlands.

HUG AIMS:

1. To represent the interests of users of mental health services living in the Highlands, and to provide information on mental health issues.
2. To identify gaps in services and to find ways of improving services for users.
3. To participate in the planning and management of services for users.
4. To pass on information and news amongst mental health user groups in the Highlands and interested parties.
5. To increase knowledge about resources, alternative treatments and rights for users.
6. To promote co-operation between agencies concerned with mental health.
7. To promote equality of opportunity and to break down discrimination against users of mental health services.

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THE REASONS FOR THIS REPORT

In November 2003 we met in most of the HUG branches across the Highlands to look at the way we work.

The reason that we did this was because we regularly review what we do to check that we are still in tune with our members' wishes.

However there were other reasons; we were aware that amongst many of our members there is a growing weariness about constantly speaking out on the same issues, often with little prospect of quick change. We wanted to look at this to see if there were different ways of working, both to achieve real change and also to keep our morale up.

We were also aware that there are many groups across the country who are also struggling with the same problems and felt that we might be able to make a contribution to what seemed a much wider issue than one that just affects us.

Because of this we have made what would usually be an internal paper into a public report in case it strikes a chord with groups in a similar situation.

In total the discussions involved about 75 people. This report is a distillation of their views with some extra material included from previous meetings.

Alongside the report, it is advisable to read:

"Celebrating the HUG Communications Project 1998 - 2002, Challenging the Stigma of Mental Illness". This publication goes into more detail about this very important side of HUG's work.

WHAT IS HUG AND WHAT DOES IT DO?

HUG exists to improve life for people with a mental health problem in the Highlands by speaking out on the issues that affect its members and by trying to improve the understanding of the public and professionals about mental ill health.

HUG is a membership-led organisation. Without the views of its members it could do nothing. It relies on its members to:

- ◆ identify issues and possible solutions
- ◆ follow up on these issues by speaking out and acting on them

Its workers provide support to its members to do this. They also facilitate the local meetings and distil the issues raised into reports. They often accompany members to the meetings and conferences where views can be expressed by both members and workers.

HUG is supported by the Highland Community Care Forum but has its own committee (the HUG Round Table) which comments on and approves policy and the direction that the group is taking. HUG has recently agreed to create its own constitution but to remain under the Highland Community Care Forum umbrella.

HUG works in two main ways by:

SPEAKING OUT

HUG has a network of 13 branches across the Highlands, which are visited once every two months to find out people's views and to act on them. It does this by:

1. Creating reports

HUG writes reports on the different issues affecting people. These are then distributed widely within the Highlands and elsewhere. These reports act as HUG policy and are intended to influence officials and others in the way they plan services.

2. Attending meetings

Workers and members attend meetings and committees to influence the way services are planned and to raise members concerns. They work at a Local, Highland and National level to do this.

3. Giving talks

Workers and members give talks, presentations and network at seminars and conferences as a way of getting HUG's views across.

4. Identifying issues

Members raise issues that are of concern to them outside of meetings (usually to do with changes to their services) which are then acted on by the group or local branch.

CHALLENGING STIGMA

This is one of the biggest tasks that HUG has set itself.

Stigma and a lack of understanding about the experiences people with a diagnosis of a mental illness go through, have long been identified as a key issue for HUG to act on.

The HUG Communications Project has two part time workers who help our members work on this. They do this by:

1. Carrying out user-led mental health awareness training.

HUG believes that if professionals and the public can meet and hear of the experiences of people with a mental health problem in a safe setting then they can improve and reflect on their practice and gain a better more informed understanding of our lives.

HUG has set and exceeds the target of carrying out one training session a month based around the personal testimony of its members. These sessions are tailored to the requirement of the organisation requesting it and at present are carried out free of charge.

2. Working with young people

This work includes working with young people in school, usually in their personal and social education classes, and giving them a chance to meet and learn from people with a mental illness.

It also includes a series of drama productions commissioned by HUG which have now reached about 1500 young people in the Highlands.

HUG is a key partner in Lochaber Youth Minds; a collection of workers who aim to raise awareness of mental health issues in Lochaber. They also distribute information and have held two "feel good" days in local schools.

3. Working with the media

HUG has good contacts with the local media and has appeared on National, Highland and local news; on television, radio and in the press. It has a small group of members who are willing to speak out about their lives and also responds to breaking news stories. It challenges poor reporting and has produced a media guide to good reporting on mental health issues.

4. Working with information technologies

HUG has its own website. This has been well received and was created by HUG and Highland Community Care Forum workers as well as HUG members. It is hoped that it will be expanded and become a good way of keeping members and the public abreast of current issues and ideas.

HUG is also exploring other technologies - it has already made three videos to give expression to members' experiences and views and has more planned. For the future HUG also aims to use audio to give voice to people's stories and use other more creative mediums such as painting, drawing and writing.

5. Promotions

HUG gets the message across in a number of other ways such as its anti stigma postcards designed on a variety of mental health themes (of which about 80000 have been distributed). There is also an arts and poetry magazine, 'Moonstruck', and a newsletter of which there have been about 7 issues each. These now go out to everyone on the mailing list as well as being posted on the website.

WHERE SHOULD WE BE GOING?

IS WHAT WE DO STILL IMPORTANT AND RELEVANT?

There were three main reactions to this concern.

1. Yes

For many members HUG does a vital job in representing users of mental health services on issues that affect them. These issues are too important to be left alone.

HUG is a good way of meeting each other, supporting each other, learning from each other and keeping enthusiastic about the task of getting the message across.

HUG helps people understand what we go through and, although there are some who are very familiar with what we do, there will always be new people for whom this is a new and exciting process.

The issues will not disappear, even if HUG does. In fact, the feeling of many, is that the need for HUG will always be there and that the importance of having people to speak on our behalf will only increase.

Keeping the issues live and real is a very good way of keeping our members aware and involved in what we do.

We need: *"stickability - we need to stick at it, stick at it, stick at it."*

2. It is tiring

For some members the task of constantly talking and campaigning on the same theme is very wearying. For this reason some people no longer participate in meetings. They are tired of saying the same thing and have little belief that we can create meaningful change.

Some are also very disillusioned about the help they receive and because of this want as little contact with anything connected with mental health as possible, including groups like HUG.

For some people: *"it feels like one step forward and three steps back."*

3. We need a new direction

Other people see the need for new directions in the work that HUG undertakes. They feel that we have got used to pointing out the problems and sometimes identifying the solutions but (with the exception of the Communications Project) we do not act directly on our findings but expect others to.

In some ways we act in a very passive way. If we could have more control of our destinies and didn't wait for other people to provide the answers and services we need we would have a much more positive and realistic prospect of change. This may include developing our own services, supporting each other, developing advocacy skills and self-help techniques and looking at our own lives more positively.

"Do not sit back and complain about a situation, instead look at how we can actively change ourselves and each other."

HOW DO WE KEEP WHAT WE ARE DOING WORTHWHILE?

The work of HUG remains worthwhile because of the importance of what we are trying to achieve for people with mental health problems.

We should never forget the trauma and pain of the past. These experiences remind us of why we do what we do and need to be remembered and acted on rather than hidden. However this should not take us away from the fact that what we are doing is trying to change the *future* for ourselves and those that come after us.

To keep it worthwhile we need to remember that we have already gone a long way down the road of creating change but equally still have a very long way to go.

On this journey we need to keep on getting feedback and confirmation that what may seem like small steps are actually moving us forward. It can be a long process and feel tiring and can need a lot of faith and commitment.

To keep our morale up, we need to accept the reality of this long journey. However, sometimes we also need to give ourselves permission to sulk because of the lack of progress. And yet at other times it is very important to celebrate and recognise the positive as well.

We need to know that professionals understand us and recognise what we are doing. They need to know that we won't go away and need to treat us as a credible organisation. Whilst we need to monitor what professionals are doing we also need (where appropriate) to include them and join with them and with carers in this cause.

It can feel very isolating, so it is important to learn of other groups and individuals doing similar things, to celebrate good practice and keep up to date with the research on what may help us.

It is important that we continue to encourage new people to get involved and to celebrate their new ideas, approaches and ways of working.

Keeping it worthwhile also means keeping it positive – we need those around us to realise that people with a mental illness have a great deal to give and offer; we need to build on these skills and interests – our lives are not all negative.

We should keep a record of what we are doing. The HUG workers need to come out to the local meetings and need to keep the HUG representatives informed, supported and aware of what is happening.

THE HUG REPORTS

The HUG reports are the way in which we gather the opinions of our members on the issues that affect them.

They are intended to be written in plain English and to describe the full range of opinions our members have: we happily include opposing points of view in recognition of the fact that we are all different individuals and hold a variety of differing beliefs.

In the past many reports have clearly resulted in change and influenced the development of new services.

However, we have now written many reports and need to check they are still useful.

The feeling is that they are still very important and demonstrate the success and importance of groups like HUG. They pull together the views of users and combine personal feedback into a bigger picture which is an important resource for users, people with an interest in mental health and professionals. They are a useful tool to use when representing HUG.

They are also an important way of keeping members (especially new ones) informed about what is going on and of showing the range of opinions and experiences on different subjects.

However, some of the reports are now quite old and we don't always give enough feedback on their effect. It is important that we check whether the recommendations they made have been acted on and check that they are still relevant.

If necessary we may need to revisit some subjects but not in a way that makes us feel that we are just repeating the exercise for the sake of it. Any new reports must have a clear purpose and aim.

It would also be good to improve the presentation of the reports and to make them into publications that are more attractive.

OTHER WAYS OF GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS

Going to meetings and writing reports are just one way of getting our views heard and are mediums that only appeal to a limited number of people.

We looked at how people felt about using other ways of speaking out:

- ◆ Use the internet; both to communicate on current ideas and to send routine information out.
- ◆ Use video as a tool in a variety of places such as in mental health awareness training or conferences.
- ◆ Use video as a tool to help users, showing patients what a hospital or drop in centre is like or about self help.
- ◆ Build up a video library from other agencies for our own use in helping show how people can cope.

- ◆ Have tapes about how we can cope in meetings about our own care as well as those dealing with planning.
- ◆ Use CD-ROMs as well as film and graphics.
- ◆ Use artwork as it can be a very effective way of getting our message across and some groups have already held exhibitions.
- ◆ Use displays of work (crafts).
- ◆ Use photography, drama, poetry and writing.
- ◆ Develop a record of the past.
- ◆ Put reports on to CD.
- ◆ Show people what we can do and are capable of.
- ◆ Celebrate the positive in our lives, in HUG and in the services we use.
- ◆ Promote good practice.
- ◆ Make sure our members know what is happening i.e. increased use of the newsletter.
- ◆ Get everyone together to learn from and meet each other.
- ◆ Don't always use the same people for speaking out.
- ◆ Find out our different talents and help us use them.
- ◆ Encourage us to be proud of ourselves, our different backgrounds and cultures.
- ◆ Encourage celebrities to be open about their mental health problems.
- ◆ Encourage workers in mental health who are also users to be open and to join HUG.
- ◆ Use the media – radio, television and press.
- ◆ Provide more mental health awareness training.
- ◆ Educate young people, especially in schools.
- ◆ Get visible, get talked about, get noticed, speak out for our rights, demonstrate and march.
- ◆ Help us share our experiences with each other.
- ◆ Meet people in one to one situations to help them understand our lives.
- ◆ Encourage self-help techniques and practical and positive ways of managing.
- ◆ Use the website (as long as it is regularly updated).
- ◆ Encourage professionals (including GPs) to hear about our issues.
- ◆ Market HUG itself to users across the Highlands.
- ◆ Provide information to help families understand us.
- ◆ Involve employers in hearing our message.
- ◆ Invite staff to some of our meetings and involve them in our cause.
- ◆ Get our message across to the general public.

KEEPING THE ISSUES UP TO DATE

We have been looking at what affects us for so many years that we have wondered whether we should call a halt to this process and recognise that we already know the issues in our members' lives and have no need to keep on finding this out.

Most members said that we still need to continue finding out what is important to people. It enhances our credibility and means that we are always fairly certain about the main things affecting people at any one time. For some people, talking about the issues they face is an interesting exercise in itself.

However, with the HUGE variety of issues being raised, it could be important to act on priorities amongst them, so that we can become more efficient in our work.

WHAT ARE THE BEST WAYS TO ACHIEVE CHANGE?

It is relatively easy to find out the problems users face and not particularly hard to find out from our members what they think would help them.

However, it is extremely hard to convert the views of our members into changes. HUG has no power except for the persuasive power of its arguments and the authority direct experience can convey.

People's views on what we could do to achieve change are:

- ◆ Our members need to stand up and be counted (as long as it feels safe for them).
- ◆ Use the media to get our arguments across.
- ◆ Create strong supportive links amongst our members.
- ◆ Be sure that we are contributing to our community.
- ◆ Be sure of our facts and arguments and then persevere.
- ◆ Be clear about what we want.
- ◆ Observe and act on our observations.
- ◆ Be confident and proud of who we are.
- ◆ Learn from each other and have the chance to exchange ideas perhaps at HUG conferences.
- ◆ We need to accept ourselves. Being able to accept ourselves may be the biggest change we can make.
- ◆ The awareness raising we do in the community can be just as powerful at changing life as any campaigning.
- ◆ Make links with groups with common issues and interests -not necessarily just in mental health.
- ◆ We need to find out what our members want to do to create change and to create opportunities for them to do so.
- ◆ Make sure what we say is real and tangible.
- ◆ Help people understand our views and get allies for what we want to do.
- ◆ Be capable of responding quickly to new developments.
- ◆ Lobby MSPs, MPs and Councillors.
- ◆ Use national events such as Mental Health Week.
- ◆ Make HUG more visible: badges, sweatshirts.
- ◆ We can do things ourselves and gain control of our own lives without waiting for other people to do so for us.
- ◆ Get training from people who know how to do it - i.e. the 'See Me' campaign
- ◆ Work with young people.

THE BIGGER PICTURE OR SMALLER MORE ACHIEVABLE TARGETS?

Sometimes we feel that what we are trying to achieve is so ambitious that we will never get there and that this is one of the reasons that some people get dispirited and feel like giving up. Because of this we wondered whether we should focus on smaller changes that we had a better chance of achieving.

However, our members felt that the bigger picture is vital – without it we lose grasp of what we are aiming for. In order to achieve this we may still need to work along a series of “smaller” issues that will help us achieve our ultimate aims.

The range of issues are also important. Perhaps we should have a theme to follow but equally we need to be flexible enough to respond to issues as they occur in people’s areas. It could be good to raise funds for a series of small but achievable projects.

HOW ASSERTIVE SHOULD WE BE?

We believe that we have built a reputation for being gentle and reasonable in our demands of the services that help us. Some of us have begun to doubt the wisdom of this. Perhaps we would achieve more if we stopped being reasonable. Maybe if we shouted and stamped our feet more we would create more change for our members?

Although we agreed that there are times when we will need to be very vigorous in the way we express our views and that we shouldn’t be too shy of doing this, we thought that the gentle approach had worked well so far and should generally continue to be the one we use.

We felt that an outspoken approach could rapidly alienate those that at present have great sympathy for our cause. This approach means that we are now automatically approached when new developments occur, so that we have a very real prospect of influencing change.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD HUG WORKERS VISIT THE BRANCHES?

Most people thought that the 2 monthly visits to the branches were fine but that we needed to be sure that we continued to remain in tune with our members’ lives; we shouldn’t lose touch with people’s everyday reality.

WHAT SHOULD WE STOP DOING?

Most people felt that what we were doing was very good and that we should keep on doing it. The two things we were asked to stop or make sure we didn't do were:

1. We should not waste resources – a HUGE amount of literature is sent out in paper form. It would be more ethical and cost effective if we used e mail for those that had access to this.
2. We should also make sure we never repeat issues for the sake of it – and only do this if it adds weight to our cause.

SHOULD WE CREATE OUR OWN SERVICES?

Some of our members have felt very frustrated at the lack of progress we are making in creating tangible changes to the lives of the people we represent.

Some of them have lost faith in the idea that services will ever change in the ways we want. To these members, the next natural stage is to complement what we do with our campaigning by providing our own user-run services.

Maybe we will have a greater chance of seeing real change if we do it ourselves.

The sort of things that people have been enthusiastic about are:

- ◆ Creating buddying and peer support systems using our existing networks or I.T. perhaps linking with the developments in the transitional discharge model.
- ◆ Offering self help possibilities.
- ◆ Developing clubhouses or social firms.
- ◆ Starting a user-run respite centre.
- ◆ Developing a comprehensive information project about Highland Mental Health services.
- ◆ Finding out what skills we have amongst our membership and offering them out to the mental health community.
- ◆ Developing more opportunities within HUG for work.
- ◆ Developing the concept of recovery.
- ◆ Carrying on building on the work we do to challenge stigma.

Within HUG there are many people who would like to see these ideas acted on. Equally there are many other members who resist such ideas. Their reasons for this are varied but include the following:

- ◆ We need to acknowledge that professionals have spent years developing the skills that help us and that most of us do not have these skills at present.
- ◆ The system may be too suspicious of these developments or might not understand why we might need to do this.
- ◆ We are often unable to work or contribute in this way because of our illness. To get involved in developing services or supporting each other could place an intolerable burden on us.
- ◆ We would be better doing things together instead of separately.
- ◆ providing our own service could compromise the independence of our voice
- ◆ It needs to be something we know we can do well and may damage our reputation if we do not provide a high quality service

WHAT SUPPORT DO WE NEED?

Many HUG members feel that there is already enough support. The meetings themselves are supportive by bringing people together to discuss the things that concern users.

Most members are happy with the work of their Round Table representatives and the HUG workers. As long as they are kept up to date with what is happening and they have the opportunity to contribute ideas they are happy with what HUG is doing.

However, there is still room to provide support. This support should be self-evident if HUG workers keep their eyes and ears open and are aware of what is happening in people's own areas.

Areas where support could be enhanced are:

1. Where people are working alone on local issues it would be good to provide advice (but not necessarily direction) on how to plan and carry out a campaign as well as who to contact and influence locally.
2. There is a need to help people get involved on their own terms (especially new members). This needs to happen at their own pace and in the areas they are interested in.
3. Support involves letting people know what is happening across the network. More frequent issues of the newsletter would help with this. Contact by e mail and the internet would also help as would opportunities for everyone (or different groups) to meet together at HUG conferences and away days.
4. We can also offer each other informal support, both as workers but also as members. Going on a social activity or outing could be good and would provide the opportunity for us all to get to know each other.
5. Some support is very simple and consists of identifying opportunities for HUG members to do things. Wanting to get involved and having nothing to do can be just as hard as being too involved.

6. Support is also about not having undue pressure put on you. We often hear of people who would like to join HUG, but who don't feel up to active participation. Involvement by offering goodwill but nothing else is also important.
7. Support can be the provision of encouragement through the communication of positive news and ideas to members. Things that are encouraging, such as self-help tips in the newsletter and articles about good services or ideas, can be as useful as any campaigning news. It would be good to build up a library of resources such as books, videos and audio materials to be used across the network.
8. Questionnaires could be a great way of finding out our interests. This would allow us to target our work at the wider network and have a clearer idea of who wants to be involved in what activity.
9. Joining a group like HUG can be daunting. We need to make ourselves more accessible perhaps by having videos of what HUG is and does, or meeting potential members in social situations. It would also be good to let people know what will be discussed at a HUG meeting in more detail – perhaps through sending out agendas and questions in advance.

WHAT TRAINING IS NEEDED TO HELP PEOPLE IN THEIR WORK WITH HUG?

Any training should be targeted at those that want it, not those that may feel pressurised to join in. The following things might help people (especially new members).

1. Meeting other disadvantaged and stigmatised groups to find out common issues and learn from each other.
2. Feeling comfortable going to HUG meetings as individuals.

Training topics would include:

- ◆ sending positive and effective messages
- ◆ effectiveness in speaking out
- ◆ finding our voice and being confident with it
- ◆ dealing with confrontation
- ◆ lobbying, representation and negotiation
- ◆ feeling comfortable in meetings with professionals

- ◆ getting the message across creatively
- ◆ skills for campaigns and meetings
- ◆ jargon and abbreviations and the different structures and committees
- ◆ getting our views heard in meetings about our own care
- ◆ protecting ourselves when we get involved with HUG's work i.e. protection from the memory of past experiences
- ◆ self-help skills
- ◆ advocacy skills
- ◆ motivation
- ◆ video production skills
- ◆ skills that could ultimately be used wider than the HUG network

FINAL MESSAGES FROM HUG MEMBERS

We need to be sure that we are not weak and need to feel comfortable about what we do. We should be seen as clear and effective and ready to respond to new situations. We need to praise and celebrate what we do.

We need to be sure that we are grounded in our communities. We need to embrace and nurture the talents we have. We need to remember the power of humour. We need to recognise that there has been a lot of change since we all started on the work of HUG. We need to let people know that mental health affects everyone.

We need to make sure that a range of opportunities are available to anyone who wants to get involved with HUG at a pace that encourages them to get involved but not in any way that puts pressure on them. Some members may like to have more formal placements with HUG. Equally some of our members are involved so much that they have little time for their own personal lives; we need to make sure they don't get overburdened.

It is possible to get stuck in a rut and to go stale. We need to keep our eyes and ears open to new ideas.

CONCLUSION

HUG is still going very much in the right direction, however some people are weary about the constant struggle for change.

We still need to continue with what we are doing, but need to improve the support and information we offer our members.

There are a number of training opportunities that we can offer which need to be available to established and newer members.

We need to consider the possibility of developing our own services and to promote self-help and recovery techniques.

We need to find ways of meeting together. We need to celebrate achievements and, when appropriate, work alongside professionals.

We need to develop new and alternative ways of getting our message across and to generally continue with the gentle, reasonable but assertive way we use to call for what we need.

We need to build on the success of the Communications Project in challenging stigma.

We need to make sure that people see the changes that have actually happened in mental health across the Highlands in the last few years.

APPENDIX 1

THE HUG BUSINESS PLAN

In October and November 2003 the HUG workers and HUG members spent some time developing a Business plan for HUG. The following are extracts from the draft plan.

THE HUG VISION STATEMENT

“We want 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 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.
Educating the public, professionals and young people about our lives and experiences.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES FOR HUG

MAIN HUG PROJECTS

1. Make sure that the Communications Project and its work in challenging stigma goes onto mainstream funding (see HUG development plans for their future activities).

2. Investigate the possibility of an information project about help available to people with a mental illness in the Highlands.
3. Explore the possibilities of peer support especially based around people being discharged from hospital (transitional discharge).
4. Explore the possibility of a young persons' HUG.
5. Explore the possibility of a volunteer co-ordinator.
6. Promote self-help and recovery techniques and ideas.

BUILDING THE INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Become constituted.
2. Recruit more volunteers including those who do not normally attend drop in centres and such places.
3. Find out the skills and interests of our members.
4. Increase training and support for members.
5. Hold away days to build networks and develop skills.
6. Hold HUG conferences.
7. Increase the involvement of HUG awareness raisers in that process.
8. Build on the variety of voices we have; celebrate the fact that we don't have a party line.
9. Explore equal opportunities – don't let geography or culture or gender etc, be a barrier
10. Market HUG more widely.
11. Brief elected officials regularly.
12. Increase the use of the internet for lobbying, communication and speaking out.
13. Revisit HUG reports.
14. Strengthen local HUG branches.
15. Use different media to get out message across.

APPENDIX 2

WHERE WE HAVE GOT TO?

In 2000 we looked at where we wanted HUG to be in three years time. An example is taken from the Wick Branch notes. The bold type indicates what we have done:

CAITHNESS HUG WICK SECTION

WHERE SHOULD HUG BE IN 2003 ?

We should achieve local community services including a place of safety and out of hours services: **The place of safety in Wick & Thurso became operational in February 2004 and resources were allocated for out of hours services in winter 2003.**

We should have helped challenge some professionals' attitudes: **HUG has continued to provide user lead awareness training to professionals exceeding its target of once a month - evaluations have mainly been "very good" or "excellent".**

Our mental health awareness training should have become ongoing. **HUG has funding from the Scottish Executive for its Communication Project until 2006 and then hopes to move on to mainstream funding.**

We should have better knowledge of our illness as should the public: **HUG members continue to share experiences through meetings, newsletters and the arts magazine but there has been no special emphasis on educating ourselves. HUG has met its targets in getting messages about mental health to the public through television, the press and the radio.**

All High School children should realise that mental illness is an illness. **HUG has now taken the issue of mental illness into the schools through the use of drama (reaching 2000 young people), through continued presence in schools PSE classes and through schools "feel good days" with Lochaber Youth Minds.**

People will know when to seek help. There is now funding for out of hours services in the Highlands so that people can access help, but no education initiatives to make people aware of when to seek help. The defeat depression initiative (that HUG played a part in) helped GPs in identifying depression earlier.

We will have an answer for when people say that change cannot happen due to lack of resources. We don't have this answer but continually lobby officials and representatives about the need for increased but fair investment - investment in mental health has increased substantially over the last 4 years.

People will begin to think that it is possible and realistic to hope again. That would be fantastic - will we ever get here?

Younger people will have services appropriate to them and the profile of young people and mental illness will increase. A substantial part of the Communications Project is aimed at young people. Young people's services have expanded considerably (although we can't claim credit for this.) over the last few years. We have plans to one day create a young person's HUG.

Stigma will become irrelevant: HUG is a partner in the 'See me' campaign, the national campaign to eradicate stigma in Scotland. Its own work has been acknowledged as an example of good practice by the Scottish Executive. Stigma does still exist but many people are saying that we are all having an effect.

People will be able to cope with and accept illness. We need to do more work on this.

It is good to see we are having an effect and meeting the wishes of some of the branches of HUG about where we should have got to by 2003. For a group with just over 2 full time workers it does feel as though we are responding to the ambitious wishes of our members though we still have a long long way to go.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With thanks to all the members of HUG, and other mental health service users, who contributed to this report.

(Please feel free to photocopy this Report)

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