



ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2006 – MARCH 2007

Stopping Stigma: Increasing Awareness

The HUG Communications Project

'At one time I felt very ashamed of my diagnosis and could not live a normal life because of this. The support of the HUG group has set me free and made me feel much more confident and accepting of myself and others.'

HUG Member

'I believe I am doing something that is needed and worthwhile. I feel useful and appreciated and ... [this] enhances my self-esteem and wellbeing.'

HUG Member

'I do not hide at home and can tell people I have a mental illness.... I have learnt a lot from HUG. I have got my life back.'

HUG Member

'Before I joined HUG I felt isolated because I could see no hope of recovery. Now I realise that I am not alone and that recovery is possible.'

HUG Member

Highland Users Group can be contacted through Graham Morgan, Highland Community Care Forum, Highland House,
20 Longman Road, Inverness IV1 1RY

Telephone: (01463) 723557 / Fax: (01463) 718818

Email hug@hccf.org.uk

www.hug.uk.net

CONTENTS

WHAT IS HUG	3
INTRODUCTION	4
HUG COMMUNICATIONS PROJECT - STOPPING STIGMA: INCREASING AWARENESS	5
INVOLVEMENT: Supporting our members to speak out	6
EDUCATION: Mental health education for young people	8
TRAINING: User-led mental health awareness training	15
CREATIVE EXPRESSION:	19
PROGRAMME MAKING: Educational and training DVD's	19
MEDIA WORK: Reaching out to communities	23
CONCLUSION	26
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	28

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 343 members and 13 branches across the Highlands. HUG has been in existence now for 10 years.

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.
- Educating the public, professionals and young people about our lives and experiences.

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

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 a mental health problem.
- 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

Over the last year HUG has continued with its work to speak out on behalf of people with a mental illness in the Highlands, to challenge discrimination and stigma, to increase awareness of mental illness/mental health and to pursue its wish to promote social justice and equality for people who have mental health problems.

It has been a busy and productive year full of activity and achievement. The office is as chaotic as ever and often empty as our workers are constantly engaged in meeting HUG members and other people who can make a difference in our lives.

It has been great to see that our reports have an effect well beyond the date that they are released and although we don't claim to be researchers it is heartening and encouraging to see our work quoted and appearing in a number of respected journals.

As ever our work in challenging stigma and raising awareness has come along in leaps and bounds. Our DVD'S have gained a huge reputation and our play (probably in its last tour) reached at least 2000 young people with an immense impact. Our awareness training exceeded its targets and is still gaining fantastic evaluations. It really does feel like a great achievement when we see what can be achieved with such a small workforce (less than three full time workers) but with such a committed membership.

As with the rest of HCCF we still struggle with funding and as we move into 2007 we find that our work to challenge stigma and improve understanding is yet again under threat. If we do not find new sources of funding soon then we will lose this vital piece of work at the end of the year. As ever we will do all we can to continue this work but it is hard to struggle with an uncertain future.

On a positive note, our young peoples work was nominated for a Community Care Award this year (well done to Emma for this achievement) and to the rest of the staff for the excellent work they do in raising awareness about mental health in Highland and beyond.

This report of our work is quite detailed and is divided into two separate documents one celebrating our speaking out work and one celebrating the work of the communications project 'Stopping Stigma Raising Awareness'. We hope this is not too much for some of you to read but it seemed like a good opportunity to show just how much we do in the HUG Network.

HUG Communications Project - **Stopping Stigma: Increasing Awareness**

Ever since HUG was established in 1996 our members have said that the stigma and lack of understanding they face as a result of mental illness has been one of the hardest aspects of their lives.

At the extreme the attitudes of other people can lead to physical and verbal harassment, but stigma can also be seen as a shift in attitude from friends and neighbours or be a result of the actions and perceptions of the professionals that treat us. It can be seen in distorted, sensationalist media coverage or it can be a result of the internal view we hold about ourselves which sometimes causes us to be ashamed, embarrassed and guilty about our experience.

Challenging stigma and raising awareness is a central part of HUG's work which, by being rooted in the lives and experiences of our members, aims to create understanding, awareness and tolerance. The main strands of this work are:

- i. **INVOLVEMENT** - Support and enable the involvement of people with mental health problems in all areas of the project's activities (through a range of involvement opportunities).
- ii. **EDUCATION** - Use high impact, innovative methods of educating young people about mental health issues (interactive drama, peer education, music and song-writing).
- iii. **TRAINING** - Deliver inspiring, personalised user-led mental health awareness training to professionals, schools, colleges and universities.
- iv. **PROGRAMME MAKING** - Produce high quality, training and educational resources (using DVD/digital media), enabling us to get our message across to a wider audience.
- v. **CREATIVE EXPRESSION** - Develop artistic and innovative ways to enable people with mental health problems to speak out and be heard (poetry, photography, ICT).
- vi. **MEDIA** - Use the power of the media to reach into local communities and increase understanding and empathy around mental health issues.

i. INVOLVEMENT

User-Involvement:

Supporting people with mental health problems to speak out and be involved

'Being able to speak freely builds and strengthens self-confidence and helps create a greater awareness of who you are, and that you have a contribution to society.'
HUG Member

The most important role for project staff is to support the involvement of HUG members in all areas of the project: quite simply HUG's anti-stigma work is nothing without the huge amount of dedication of our members. This work can be draining, emotional and at times bring back very painful memories, but also extremely rewarding, inspiring, and motivating.

Being valued and listened to has a significant role in increasing people's self-confidence, self-esteem, making them feel less alone and isolated, forming friendships, significantly, realising that having a mental illness is not something to be ashamed of - that by speaking out together we can change stigmatising attitudes and behaviours:

'It has increased my self-esteem. I feel in control and think for myself and do what I feel right for me. I feel like I have gotten my life back. I can mix with people and also feel comfortable speaking out about how I feel.'

'I believe I am doing something that is needed and worthwhile. I feel useful and appreciated and I learn to 'do my bit'; and the response enhances my self-esteem and wellbeing.'

'I have regained all the confidence I lost when I was very ill ... and I have gained new skills. I have a wide circle of friends within the network.'

HUG members have the opportunity to be involved in the work of the project at the level and degree they wish. We have a small group of very active members (15-20 people) who are extremely involved in many different areas of the project, who buzz around the office, taking part in training, DVD's and talking to young people. Of equal importance are those who are involved in a quieter way (but no less vital) who bring in their skills and experiences for specific pieces of work. We have others who wish to show their belief in our work through their expressions of support.

Below are some examples of the breadth of work HUG members are involved in:

- Giving personal testimonies, directly and on DVD
- Taking part in mental health awareness training
- Working with young people to help them understand mental illness
- Working with our school-based peer education group
- Taking part in the 'Skills Development Programme' e.g. training for our members
- Developing the HUG website
- Developing and monitoring the message board
- Providing office and administration support
- Talking to the media, (feature articles, news stories)
- Contributing articles to, and producing, the HUG newsletter
- Compiling and editing our creative arts magazine, 'Moonstruck'

- ❑ Writing poetry
- ❑ Speaking at local and regional conferences
- ❑ Sharing our work and experiences with other user groups across Scotland
- ❑ Producing a HUG powerpoint presentation
- ❑ Taking part in our transnational work (Grundtvig 2) with user groups across Europe

'I feel I have gained skills and Even talk on live radio – something I would never have dreamed of doing! *HUG Member*

ii. EDUCATION

Educating Young People:

Tackling taboos & broadening minds

In our educational work we aim to provide young people with accurate information on mental health issues, challenge misconceptions and 'myths about madness' and provide positive messages of support and recovery.

We continually explore new and creative ways of communicating key mental health issues to young people, including: interactive drama; film; direct testimonies; music and songwriting; peer education; classed-based discussion; games, quizzes and videos/DVD's. Through this approach we hope that young people:

- Will have improved attitudes and no longer stigmatise people.
- Will be more informed about mental health issues to help reduce the risks that lead to mental health problems, self-harm and suicide.
- Have greater knowledge and understanding, giving them confidence to discuss emotional and mental health issues.
- Experiencing mental health problems feel more confident in receiving support and understanding from their peers and are encouraged to access help at an early stage.
- Experiencing mental health problems will share their stories and experiences to help educate their peers.

Our educational programme for young people is very exciting, rewarding work to be involved in, albeit at times quite nerve racking! Facing a group of 50+ teenagers, many of whom have very misinformed, negative views of people with a mental illness, fuelled by the images and associations created in the mass media and Hollywood, can be a daunting prospect. Seeing this same group opening up, being gently challenged to explore their attitudes and behaviour, asking us often amazing and thoughtful questions about our experiences, being *interested* is wonderful to see.

We often get young people who themselves are experiencing mental health difficulties (or their friends who are concerned about them) coming to speak to us for more information and advice. This is a very important part of our work, as we know that sometimes this is the first time these young people have felt able to reach out for help and support.

Below are some specific examples of our young people's work over the last year:

'STIGMA' Play

This is the fourth year of our very successful 'STIGMA' play project which tours Highland secondary schools, using interactive drama to explore, examine and discuss key mental health issues within the context of young people's mental health (it is primarily about self-harm, depression and young people's attitudes).

'STIGMA' is a joint project between HUG, Eden Court Theatre and the Department of Child and Family Psychiatry/Primary Mental Health Worker Service.

For more comprehensive information about the development and impact of the STIGMA play over the last four years please refer to the HUG reports 'A Report on the Stigma Play' March 2004 and 'Drama, Young People and Mental Health' January 2006.

HUG members (as always!) were involved in the preparation of the STIGMA play – including providing mental health awareness sessions to the actors and director on self-harm, depression and stigma to ensure an accurate and realistic portrayal of the mental health issues. HUG members played a crucial role in briefing over 200 young people in Millburn Academy prior to the play going into the school (this prior briefing is a vital protective part of the work, and was carried out by the Primary Mental Health Workers across the other schools).

The 2006 tour lasted for four weeks and reached at least 2000 young people across most of the secondary schools in the Highlands (24 out of 28 schools). We decided to target the play at a younger age group (S3/4, rather than S5/6) as we felt that young people needed to hear these messages at an earlier age, particularly as the average age for young people to start self-harming is 13.

Whilst this in some ways was more challenging due to the developmental stages and maturing of the pupils, we felt – and feedback confirmed – that the project was very well received and did make an impact on the young people. We also know from our feedback that approximately 100 young people were able to access help and support for mental health issues as a direct result of this project.

A sample evaluation of the 2000 feedback forms (10%) was collated and the main findings are detailed below:

Having seen the STIGMA play do you think you will now be more understanding towards someone experiencing mental health problems?

96% of pupils said 'YES'

Do you think it will now be easier for you to talk about mental health issues with a friend/an adult you trust?

76% said 'YES' it would be easier to talk to a friend.

70% said 'YES' it would be easier to talk to an adult they trusted.

Increased understanding of key mental health issues:

54% of pupils said their **understanding of self-harm** had increased 'hugely' or 'a lot'.

57% of pupils said their **understanding of depression** had increased 'hugely' or 'a lot'

45% of pupils said their **understanding of stigma** had increased 'hugely' or 'a lot'.

Linked into this project were self-harm workshops (lasting on average an hour and a half) in fifteen schools, led by HUG and the Department of Child and Family Psychiatry.

The workshops were aimed at teaching and non-teaching school staff to increase their awareness and understanding of self-harm and how to support and respond to a young person who is using self-harm to manage their distress. To support these workshops two HUG members gave their personal testimonies through the production of a DVD called 'Silent Cry' and a HUG worker provided personal testimony in 10 schools. The workshops were very well received, and in all reached over 100 school staff.

This year's tour was our most ambitious yet, and it would be a mistake to understate the scale of undertaking a tour of 24 schools, briefing all the pupils and providing

training and support to school staff. Workers were under a great deal of pressure to ensure that this work was carried out in a responsible way, with the safety and emotional well being of the school pupils and HUG members a central concern, compounded by complex and emotive issues such as child protection.

The main lessons we have learnt about delivering such a high impact, powerful project to schools is the vital importance of working in partnership with our local child and adolescent mental health services/primary mental health worker service. Their involvement, support and commitment to all stages of this project has been crucial: briefing pupils and staff prior to the play; being there on the day to support pupils; picking up immediate and later referrals; de-briefing pupils post play, and being a central link between the school and HUG.

Whilst sadly we do not have funding to continue providing the STIGMA play project to schools, we hope that what we have learnt over the last five years developing and delivering this highly successful project will be of benefit to other organisations across Scotland.

Millburn Academy Peer Education Group (PEG)

'Working alongside young people has helped immensely in me overcoming my fear of this age group, having been bullied at school myself. I feel very privileged to be part of the peer education work and to contribute to a more informed and caring generation.' *HUG Member*

This is the second year we have worked with pupils and staff at Millburn Academy to support the PEG group. This year HUG members and 15 pupils (all girls) spent almost nine months working together, and sharing experiences, to learn about mental health issues.

The pupils spent 6 months researching a range of mental health topics, through interviews with people with mental health problems and mental health professionals and undertaking their own research. Then a further 2 months developing educational materials to inform/educate their fellow peers about 3 main illnesses as chosen by the group (eating disorders, depression and self-harm).

Once the pupils had completed their research and had a good understanding of a range of mental health issues they devised materials to educate their peer group, including a mental health quiz, powerpoint presentations, games and an interactive drama exercise. The peer educators delivered 4 sessions to over 100-125 pupils in March with the aim of reducing stigma and misunderstanding around mental illness, increasing general awareness and show how common mental health problems are.

Four HUG members were central to the Peer Education Group, helping the pupils to hear first hand about the reality of living with mental health problems, the impact of stigma and discrimination, treatment and recovery, and their hopes for the future.

The pupils also spoke about the PEG Group at a community event organised by Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland as part of their 21st Birthday Awards (won by HUG in the Highlands for our work with young people), at an International Leadership conference and at a national conference for HeadsUp Scotland.

Four pupils assisted the HUG worker in briefing pupils within the Personal Social Education (PSE) classes in August prior to the 'STIGMA' play being staged at Millburn Academy in September.

Feedback from pupils

The peer educators:

For one of the PEG group members the most important thing they passed onto their peers was the message that:

'... mental health should not be a taboo subject but something that people should feel they can talk openly about.'

Other group members felt it was important that young people learnt about mental health issues as:

'... people should be aware that it may affect them or their peers.'

'They may experience mental illness in their lives and understand it better.'

In terms of how an increased knowledge and understanding of mental health issues would help them in their future lives, the main things the pupils identified were that they would be less prejudiced, more aware and more able to get help if needed. Two pupils specifically said it would help them in their future careers within the medical profession:

'It will help me a lot in many different ways. In doing medicine it will be even more handy as I would maybe like to look more at psychiatry or mental illness as a speciality.'

Through being involved in this project, members of the PEG group said they had a much greater awareness of mental health issues, can recognise the most common signs and symptoms of illness, and would be more tolerant and less prejudiced towards people with mental health problems. Some pupils felt a strong sense of achievement, along with improved research and communication skills.

'I am more aware of how widespread mental illness is, and if I were ever to develop an illness I would feel more comfortable in getting help.'

'Will be less prejudiced and more open.'

However, the overwhelming feedback from the group was the value and importance of meeting with HUG members, and hearing directly from them in an open and honest way:

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

'The interviews with HUG members allowed us to learn a lot ... and we felt able to discuss and ask questions.'

The peer educatees:

In March 2007 the PEG Group gave 4 lessons (of 1 hour 10 minutes) to 120 S5 and S6 pupils. The lessons formed part of the PSE (Personal Social and Education) curriculum and were a mix of formal presentations, quizzes/games, group discussion and an interactive drama exercise.

The aims of these sessions were for the pupils who were 'educated' by their peers to gain a basic knowledge of key mental health issues, and a reduction in stigmatising attitudes.

The sessions went very well, with the pupils readily getting into the spirit of being educated by their fellow pupils, responding well and taking part in the activities. Feedback forms were handed out during the PSE class the following week and 111 forms were returned. The main findings are detailed below:

- 82% of pupils said they had learnt 'lots' or 'quite a lot' on mental health issues from the presentation.
- 71% of pupils said they would now feel more comfortable seeking help if they were to experience mental health problems.
- 46% of pupils said their attitudes towards people with mental health problems had changed (improved).

'Learning all the different kinds of mental health as I wasn't aware of them before.'

[my favourite part] was when people wrote down what they already knew [about mental health issues] and you realise that some people assume all people with health issues are crazy.'

'Almost all of it was a highlight. I thought the whole group were outstanding talkers and kept it interesting and the class involved throughout.'

'Free Your Mind' (Youth Drama Project)

'My knowledge has taken a huge leap through doing project.'

'Amazing learning experience and something I've really enjoyed doing. Cause we're involved in the whole process and drama is something I'm very interested in. Double winner, as very interested in both topics.'

Young Person, Youth Theatre

Over the last year HUG has been working with 16 young people (15-17 years old) from Inverness Youth Theatre, Eden Court Theatre, HUG members and a professional film-

maker to research, write and make a film on a teenage boy's first experiences of developing psychosis.

The film explores the early signs and symptoms of a psychotic illness, the confusion and fear experienced by people at the early stages of a mental illness, stigma and messages of hope, treatment and recovery.

We decided to focus on psychosis (with an eventual diagnosis of schizophrenia) as our work with young people over the last few years has shown that the psychotic illnesses, and most notably schizophrenia, are surrounded by the greatest fear, misinformative and perjorative, damaging views.

In addition, we wished to develop an educational tool which reached out to all young people as around 3 out of every 100 young people will experience a psychotic episode, making it more common than diabetes in young people.

However, we wanted to most specifically target teenage boys/young males as these are often the hardest group to engage in this kind of work and are also most vulnerable to the development of a psychotic illness in their late teens/early twenties.

The film was heavily informed by the views of people with mental health problems, young people and professionals. Four HUG members were involved in the Youth Theatre project, providing the young people with insight into living with a psychotic illness and dealing with the emerging mental health problems. One HUG member with a keen interest in photography was responsible for keeping a visual record of the group.

The process of developing this project was important. We wanted to incorporate a peer education approach, whereby the young people had ownership of how the material was developed and how they would wish this information to be conveyed to their peers. We used improvisation as the basis for developing the script, checking continually with HUG members that the scenes portrayed were authentic and imbedded in direct experiences. We were greatly supported in this by a young person sharing with us their experience of descent into psychosis at the age of 15, and how he came to terms with a diagnosis of schizophrenia and is now on the path to recovery.

Accompanying the film on DVD is a song written and performed by a teenager who experienced psychosis and 2 testimonies of a young person and an adult speaking about living with a psychotic illness.

The programme is designed for the post-15 age group and is aimed at educational institutions, such as schools and colleges. We hope that, with support, teaching staff will use the material within the Personal Social Education curriculum (PSE) and in relevant curriculum based and undergraduate courses, eg nursing and social care.

The film and accompanying resource pack calls on people to examine their knowledge, attitude and understanding of one of the common forms of serious mental illness, discussing ways in which people can be supported. The resource pack will contain additional written testimonies, quizzes and exercises for use in the classroom and practical information about signs to look for, and also about places to turn to for help.

Through this project we hope that young people (and teaching staff) will be encouraged to talk openly about mental health issues, will have greater awareness and

understanding of schizophrenia/psychosis (one of the most misunderstood and stigmatised mental illnesses), encourage young people to access help and support at an early stage and promote a strong message of hope and recovery.

This project is due for completion in summer 2007, when the DVD and teachers' resource pack will be distributed free to all Highland secondary schools, and youth and community groups. We are planning a series of psychosis/hearing voices workshops to promote the film during the autumn.

Work within schools Personal Social Education (PSE) Curriculum

Our work within the PSE curriculum continues as we receive requests to go into schools to talk about mental health issues. These sessions can be one-off sessions or, more often, part of a series of classes that ultimately reach a whole year of students.

The sessions centre around people with mental health problems sharing their 'stories', helping young people understand a range of mental health issues, including how to get help, support and information.

Currently this work is focussed predominantly in Inverness based schools and we hope to extend this work to schools in more remote and rural areas.

iii. TRAINING

Mental Health Awareness Training:

Challenging perceptions & improving practice

'I have learnt that the most effective way of reducing stigma is to present an individual example ... '

HUG Member

'[the training] blasted through all our stereotypes and gave us real people talking about their real experiences, not apologising, not hiding, just standing up confidently saying 'I have a mental illness, and these are my experiences. ... This work ensures that those prejudices are being dismantled and that social inclusion for all can be a reality.'

Social Worker

At the heart of our user-led mental health awareness training is our belief that if people hear directly from people with a mental illness then attitudes can change and practice improve and become better informed. The training is custom made and is built around the voice of people who have experienced mental illness.

Our training is tailored to the needs of our trainees. We ask most trainees what they want to learn and find out from us in advance and from this construct a session based on these learning aims.

We do not have to promote our training as most of our sessions come from recommendations or repeat requests.

Our training can be as long as a day or it can be much shorter depending on the needs of our clients.

This year we have provided sessions to:

- Key Housing three times – general mental health awareness training
- Comic Relief - general training
- Psychiatrists at New Craigs – on spirituality and mental health
- Staff from Birchwood Highland - on advance statements
- Nurses at Stirling University – on bipolar, depression and schizophrenia
- Staff at Cale House – on alcohol abuse and mental health
- Support workers for Inverness Community Mental Health Team – general training
- Mental Health Officers – dual diagnosis and advance statements
- Northern College students – general training
- Staff at Highland Home Carers – general mental health training
- Second year nurses at Stirling University – general training
- Mental health officers – on detention
- Psychiatrists in Fife – on our views of psychiatrists
- Young people using Careers Scotland services – about HUG

Over the years we have built up very good relationships with the agencies that we have trained. Many of the above have used our services on a repeat basis. Stirling University have included HUG's training as part of their coursework for Trainee Psychiatric Nurses.

After the great success of the training session on spirituality and mental health with the psychiatrists at New Craigs they have given us an invitation to join them at another meeting to discuss the concept of recovery. Given the lively debate at the last meeting this should prove to be an enjoyable training session and we look forward to good attendance both from HUG members and psychiatrists.

In addition we have provided training as part of our educational work with young people: (see section detailing educational work with young people)

- 10 sessions, in partnership with the Department of Child and Family Psychiatry and Primary Mental Health Worker Service with school staff on the issues of young people and self-harm.
- 5 sessions as above where the HUG DVD on self-harm ('Silent Cry') was shown without the HUG team.
- A training session, in partnership with the Department of Child and Family Psychiatry with community paediatricians on self-harm.

The majority of these sessions were evaluated immediately afterwards and an analysis of these evaluations shows that we really do make a difference, as participants reported:

- a greater understanding of the views and experiences of people with mental health problems
- improved knowledge of mental health issues
- increased empathy and understanding
- commitment to being less judgemental and more tolerant
- increased confidence to work with and support people with mental health problems
- commitment to improve practice personally and at an organisational level
- a commitment to seeing people as individuals not simply as a diagnosis

"It is invaluable to hear from people who have experienced mental illness, especially as many of the people I work with cannot vocalize or explain how they are feeling. Thank you." *Mental Health Professional*

An analysis of 13 training sessions with 142 people in total showed that 97% of participants found the sessions excellent or 'very good'.

An analysis of the user testimonies delivered by HUG members to 142 people in 13 training sessions showed that 87% of participants found the testimony excellent, and 12% 'very good'.

Perhaps a better way of describing the impact of these awareness sessions is through the quotes of the people we worked with:

"Remembering that people with mental illness have a great contribution to make". *Staff member, Key Housing*

"I feel that I have gained an insight into what it can be like to experience a serious mental illness which will help me in dealing with people in the future" *Stirling University, nursing undergraduate*

"I have (re)learnt the importance of nurses being honest and empathic to patients."

In order to support and involve our members we try to plan training sessions together and to meet in advance and after the training. We intend to build on this process in the future as well as developing a tool kit of skills training that HUG members can learn from and take into training sessions.

This year we have run 2 training the awareness raisers events involving around 9 HUG members on each day. The purpose of these days is to increase the confidence of the HUG members who would like to be involved in awareness training in the future. The days were structured very informally with plenty of room for questions and discussion.

We explored what HUG could do to make it easier for members to take part in awareness raising and addressed many of the fears that members have about giving personal testimony to a group of professionals or students. Participants reported feeling more reassured about giving testimony and enjoyed the discussions.

'I particularly enjoyed the afternoon group work. Hearing so many varied opinions on what would make 'Awareness Training' easier.'

HUG member

Key to each of these days was HUG member testimony about why they are involved in the training and what they get out of participating in these events. HUG members already involved reported an increase in their confidence and said that they felt privileged to take part.

'I feel it is a privilege to take part in Mental Health Awareness Training. It has given me more confidence to speak out. We have influenced professionals about the direction of their careers. I feel that face to face testimony has a huge impact.' *HUG member*

At the end of the session HUG members were given the chance to evaluate the training day and asked if they would be interested in shadowing an experienced member at future training events. The majority of participants felt that awareness training would be something that they would like to take part in and welcomed the chance to train alongside other HUG members to make this possible.

There was also some discussion about the possibility of peer support and mentoring and many members felt that this would be a good idea and would like to be involved in the process should this be possible in the future.

These were well received:

'I enjoyed the whole training session. I think it is quite exciting to be a part of the development of future mental health awareness training and for our experiences to be valued.'

These sessions have also helped us to give new awareness raisers opportunities to shadow sessions before they become more centrally involved.

The past year has seen some exciting developments in training and some valuable lessons have been learnt:

- We need to take into account that some of the participants in training may have heard the HUG testimonies before; therefore there is a need to keep close account of the timetable and the HUG members who have spoken to any given group at a previous training session.
- We need to widen our pool of HUG volunteer members as sometimes HUG members do not feel up to testifying on the day.
- We need to always plan extra activities for each training day as sometimes one particular activity can fail to inspire the participants.
- We must always include a set of ground rules before the start of each training session as this serves to make the HUG members and the participants feel safe.
- We must make sure that we have sufficient time to brief and de-brief the members as their testimony is central to the HUG training.

iv. PROGRAMME MAKING

Programme making - producing training and educational media:

'.... giving my personal testimony (on DVD) has helped me feel validated as a human being.'
HUG Member

'The DVD works very well as a training tool by bringing the service user perspective right to the heart of the training and making it much more alive for practitioners in both statutory and voluntary agencies.. Well done to everyone who participated and put themselves in the spot-light in order that our learning can be enhanced.'
Trainer, Mental Health Act Implementation

HUG is fast developing a reputation in the area of programme making. We believe in getting across the real story about mental health, told by those who know. HUG produces programmes with the experiences of people with mental health problems right at the centre. The programmes are used in HUG's mental health awareness training sessions and educational work and further afield.

The production of these programmes gives people who are isolated through stigma, geography or illness, a direct voice both locally and beyond and enable us to reach a much wider audience than is possible through the delivery of our training.

Over the last few years we have produced a series of programmes on DVD, video and CD covering topics related to mental health issues all based on direct personal testimony. They have been used at conferences, seminars, as part of the training that HUG delivers to professionals and are used in training delivered by some other agencies.

With our productions we aim to create not only informative programmes but ones that are visually stimulating for the viewer to watch.

The production of videos/DVD's is co-ordinated and produced, and sometimes edited and filmed by HUG but often uses the many skills of the Highland Community Care Forum Connecting Communities Project and Wee TV Ltd, a Highland based film-making company.

'The DVD continues to be very well received and forms an integral part of our training on the new Mental Health Act.'
Highland Council Social Work Services

'I have had people come up to me in the street after the DVD [Mental Health Act DVD] and play [STIMGA] and all the responses have been very positive once they have explained why they are speaking to me.' *HUG Member*

One of the biggest highlights of this year was when HUG won the national commission by NHS Health Scotland to produce the Scotland Mental Health First Aid (SMHFA) DVD to be used in the national training programme.

Scotland Mental Health First Aid (SMHFA)

The Scotland Mental Health First Aid course is for everyone in Scotland, whoever they are and wherever they live and work. The aim is to have 300 instructors trained and 40,000 participants complete the 12-hour course in Scotland by 2008. So far, 196 instructors have been trained and about 5,700 people have attended course.

The SMHFA training programme has a central role in meeting all of the Scottish Executive's National Programme for Improving the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the Scottish Population. The National Programme provides funding for this work and works in partnership with NHS Health Scotland to ensure Mental Health First Aid training is available for the general public, frontline public services staff, voluntary and community groups and workplaces.

The DVD produced by HUG's Communications Project is based on the personal testimony of 12 people from across Scotland, with a range of mental illnesses and experiences. The programme focuses on self-harm, suicide, drug and alcohol issues and recovery. The programme also features key messages from professionals and also shares the views of carers. The programme is now complete and was launched at the Scotland's Mental Health First Aid National Networking day in Glasgow on the 20th June. A selection of clips from the DVD was shown at the Networking Day and the feedback from trainers was wholly positive.

"HUG, working with Wee TV Ltd, was given the contract on the basis of their clear dedication to the area of mental health improvement and supporting services and the obvious enthusiasm that this piece of work instilled in this cohesive and proactive team.

The resource was launched on 20 June 2007 to an incredibly receptive audience of SMHFA Instructors. We are so proud of the work that has been created and cannot thank the collaboration between HUG and Wee TV Ltd enough for the fantastic resource that will enhance the training courses for Instructors and participants alike. It is a testament to the dedication of HUG to those with mental health issues that such an emotive and relevant resource was produced with such sensitivity and commitment." *Jane Cook, Communications Manager, NHS Health Scotland*

"Just wanted to say that I took part in the "Mental Health First Aid" training at my work and the trainer had the new HUG DVD with him and showed some clips! Looks great." *Catherine SMHFA trainee*

Other Recent HUG Productions

'Nice Work If You Can Get It' – this programme was commissioned by Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives and is aimed at employers and employees to help reduce discrimination, challenge stigma and support people with mental health problems to return to the workplace. On this DVD people with mental health problems share both positive and negative experiences of accessing, regaining and maintaining employment. The programme also features a local employer sharing his company's experience of employing and supporting people with mental health problems in the workplace.

The DVD now forms an integral part of Healthy Working Lives “Commendation Award for Mental Health and Wellbeing” training course. The course has subsequently been rewritten around the “Nice Work if You Can Get It” programme.

500 copies of the programme have been distributed to the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives.

‘This DVD is an impressive, emotive and informative piece of work, which will have a significant role to play in the context of Workplace Mental Health in Scotland over the next few years.’ *Nina Goodlad, Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives*

“Congratulations to you all on a very impressive piece of work. Nina and I have enjoyed looking over it a number of times. I am very impressed with the quality of work”. *David Adam, Project Co-ordinator, Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives*

Speaking Out 5 “The Mental Health Act” Funded by the Scottish Executive this programme was the first ever training DVD to focus on the views of people with mental health problems on the new, ***Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003***. This programme was produced by HUG to ensure the users’ voice was heard during a period of monumental change to mental health law in Scotland. On the DVD HUG members talk about the new Mental Health Act and how in light of their experience, the new Act is implemented correctly, gives hope for the future care and treatment of anyone with a mental illness.

Over 600 copies of Speaking Out 5, “About The Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 have been distributed and in a series of training events was shown to over 3000 people in the Lothian’s and a further 1000 people at events in Tayside. The programme continues to be used extensively in training in Highland and nationally.

Commission staff have been particularly impressed with the way the Mental Health Act DVD brought the principles to life and we have used the DVD widely in the training of our staff.

Douglas Seath, Mental Welfare Commission

“A Silent Cry” A DVD on Self-harm (version 2): This DVD features two HUG members talking about their experience of self-harm with an introduction from the Department of Child and Family Psychiatry. Due to the very sensitive and personal nature of the testimony, the DVD is only used in training sessions once permission is granted from the members who took part in it.

We edited the original DVD with another HUG member’s testimony as one of the HUG members who gave their testimony initially was concerned about the programme being used locally.

It has been shown in a variety of settings but mainly in our work with teachers and support staff in local schools where it was well received:

'The DVD of HUG members talking about self-harm was very moving and beautifully done.'

Member of school staff

'A Day in the Life of HUG'

The aim of this programme is to give new HUG members a real insight into how they can become involved in HUG's work.

There is a considerable amount of footage been gathered for this programme but is still to be edited.

Key Issues

As can be seen from the above list HUG has produced a number of programmes based on personal testimony. The following are some of the key issues that need to be addressed when producing programmes of this nature and are taken into account in all of our productions.

Working sensitively

It is essential to behave sensitively when working with people who have, or are experiencing, mental distress and it is important to be non-judgmental and open-minded. People are experts on their own mental distress and everyone's experience is very individual. It is important that we earn individuals trust and build up a relationship with them. This relationship building often takes time and can mean a number of meetings before individuals are willing to commit to sharing their testimony to camera.

Briefing and supporting people giving their testimony

The preparation with people prior to giving their personal testimony is very important as it allows room for people to find out what to expect and decide what they want to say.

We anticipate that a number of the participants giving their personal testimony will be HUG members. HUG is in a unique position in that over the years we have built up a close personal and working relationship with our members and therefore people feel more comfortable about sharing their story.

Importance of debriefing and follow-up contact

It is essential that once people have given their testimony they are given the opportunity to reflect and are given support afterwards if needed. It is part of HUG's practice to contact people in the days following to check that they are OK and to offer any support that we can.

Setting the right environment

It is essential that people be filmed in a "natural" and informal environment where they feel comfortable and secure enough to tell their story. We therefore are happy to travel to where people live and film them in a setting that is familiar to them.

Setting realistic timetables

Talking about yourself to camera is not easy at the best of times but when you're talking about experiences, which are very personal and often very harrowing, sensitivity, and understanding is paramount.

Subjects such as suicide and self-harm are often very difficult to talk about and it is important to understand that the people willing to give their testimony are living these experiences on a daily basis. Sometimes because of the nature of people's illness we need to be flexible and sometimes rearrange filming, which can put pressure on deadlines.

Other things we do to make sure people feel comfortable:

- Allow some editorial control/input into the programme
- Pay a small fee within allowed rates for those on benefit
- Stop a shoot if we think it's causing distress or is unsafe
- Take extra care to explain what we are doing, why and who it's for
- Send an interview sheet to interviewees in advance so they know what to expect
- Invite them to join us for lunch
- Try to involve support workers and/or carers and advocates where this is appropriate and requested

Quality of Programmes

The programmes HUG produces have high production values, are well structured, with high sound and picture quality. Our programmes are accurate, balanced and well researched and allow people who have experienced mental distress to speak for themselves.

Other Creative ways of sharing our experiences

Working with the Media

'I have done several newspaper articles about living with a mental illness and each one has generated a very positive response from people who know me.'

HUG Member

Whilst we know that direct contact with people who have experienced mental health problems is one of the most effective ways of diminishing stigma and raising awareness we also know that there are other ways of doing this as has already been seen with the stigma play.

We believe that direct contact with the media, especially when it features people who have experienced mental ill health, is also effective. We work with journalists and broadcasters to inform their coverage of mental health issues.

This year we have had placements in the following publications:

- The Herald (Scotland Mental Health First Aid DVD)
- Inverness Courier (Scotland Mental Health First Aid DVD)
- MFR (Scotland Mental Health First Aid DVD)
- Open Mind magazine (on HUG Psychiatrists Report)
- Well Magazine (Information on Free Your Mind)

- Mental Health Today magazine (articles on recovery, 'STIGMA' play, genetics)
- BBC Radio 4 'All in the mind programme' (on the Mental Health Act)
- Mental Health Officers Journal (on the Mental Health Act)
- Community Care Works (on the Mental Health Act)
- International users' magazine (on HUG Complaints Report)
- New South Wales publication (on HUG Medication Report)
- Welsh Mental Health Magazine (on issue of recovery)
- Moray Firth Radio News items (on young people's work/Peer Education)
- Bulletin of the Royal College Of Psychiatrists (psychiatrists)
- The Herald (preview of the 'STIGMA' Play)
- Radio 4 (Stigma Play)
- Radio Scotland Arts Programme (on the 'STIGMA' Play)
- Nairnshire Telegraph (campaigning for the Gardeners' Cottage drop-in sessions)
- Acted as consultants for Comic Relief for a script on mental health issues
- Acted as consultants for 'Casualty' hospital drama on a young person's story aired in Comic Relief Week
- Speysound Radio (programme about HUG and a range of mental health issues)
- BBC Radio Scotland (on the Mental Health Act)
- BBC 2 'Eorpa' (on a programme about suicide in the Highlands and Islands) shown twice
- Community Care Magazine (on being nominated for a Community Care Magazine Award)
- 'Well' Magazine (Recovery talk published)
- Highland News (feature article on a HUG member's experience of acquired brain injury was inspired by the recent TV drama-documentary 'Recovery'. The Highland News reported that this article generated the biggest response they have ever had to a feature article by members of the general public)
- Moray Firth Radio link up with independent stations across Scotland on election night – (views of HUG on mental health issues)

It is always a risk appearing in the media and being so public about our experiences and for this reason we cultivate good relations with a network of committed and respected journalists.

We also provide support and advice to any members who appear in the media on our behalf. Earlier this year we ran a superb media skills training day which was mainly facilitated by a freelance journalist. Discussion, role play and fun were the order of the day. There was a general consensus afterwards that this was one of the best in a series of training sessions that we have provided for our members.

HUG Website

The HUG website (www.hug.uk.net) has been running for a number of years now and we are continually thinking of new ways to get our messages across. We are still complimented on it and often hear from people that they have used it for research or to find out user views on a wide variety of subjects.

Despite knowing it is used and knowing that some of our new members have found out about us through the website we are unsure of the best way of evaluating it and at present have difficulty updating it because of a shortage of resources.

The HUG Message Board

This started with high hopes. Initially we tried 3 different ways of using message boards (yahoo, EZboard and MSN) to keep in contact with members who cannot make meetings, perhaps because of geography or because they are not comfortable in meetings or maybe because they just prefer this form of communication.

We had hoped that by doing this we could start a virtual HUG branch which constantly discussed the issues we face and therefore provided material for the user voice.

After a trial period we settled for using EZboard and in the first year of running it there were 4400 visits from a group of about 12 people. However in the last few months we have had very few visits and few posts.

The main reasons for the lack of use is that a number of the original members forgot how to access the site, we didn't post new subjects on the board regularly enough and we did not market the site vigorously enough to new members.

Having a message board feels good and has already proved to be a great way of keeping in touch and hearing about new issues and we would be loathed to lose it. However, if it is to continue we may need to re-look at the function it serves.

The E-bulletin List

We have a group of about 30 HUG members who have asked to be kept in touch by email. We regularly send them information on events, conferences and consultations. We have found that this has been a quick and effective way of keeping our members up to date with what's happening.

Publications

We continue to produce the HUG newsletter three or four times a year, which is edited by a HUG member and features stories and ideas from our membership. Each edition reaches about 600 people from across Scotland.

As an awareness tool it is invaluable in helping people understand our views and what is important to us. As a recovery tool it is a great way of sharing experiences and ideas of what helps. As a communication tool it is a great way of letting our membership know what the HUG team have been doing and what issues we are currently addressing.

Conferences

Members of the HUG team and the wider membership have spoken at various conferences this year:

- The Royal College of Psychiatrists annual meeting (on the Mental Health Act). This talk was reproduced in a number of publications, and was used on the radio. It was also quoted in at least 2 questions asked in the House of Lords about the English Mental Health Act.

- The launch of VOX (voices of experiences). This was the key note speech at the VOX conference and launch.
- The Scottish Recovery Network Annual Meeting. This speech was printed in a number of publications and websites after it was given.
- Conference on child protection and mental health. 5 members of the HUG team participated and three talks were given from HUG. The HUG contribution was seen as one of the highlights of the conference. One of the talks was given at a follow on seminar as an example of how user testimony can be used in training.
- A HUG member spoke at the AGM of Catch 23 in the Western Isles.
- Gave a talk at a workshop on collective advocacy at a British Council event on mental health and human rights involving delegates from many countries.
- 2 members of the HUG team gave a talk at a workshop about Rural areas and the work HUG does at the annual MIND conference.

CONCLUSION

There is a groundswell of opinion amongst our membership that to be ashamed and guilty about having a mental illness is wrong and needs to change. We feel our work is making a big difference in this area and think that this has been demonstrated in the preceding report. Over the last seven years we have been increasingly successful at challenging misconceptions and in raising awareness about what we really experience: if discrimination and prejudice could disappear, then life would change dramatically for many people. The change we promote is not about blaming people for our experience but assuming that if they engage with us as ordinary people ignorance will disappear and an understanding of our shared humanity blossom.

At the root of our success are our members and allies; their vibrancy and their willingness to be open and honest, to engage and to take risks. We have a group of awareness raisers who not only support each other but gain skills and competencies and emotional resilience which will benefit them in their journey through life and in their struggle against the barriers mental ill health causes. Their feedback has given us the belief, authority and confidence that together the HUG team of workers and members are making positive changes to people's lives.

We are in an ideal situation to take the work of this project forward in novel ways based upon a bedrock of past experience, flourishing partnerships and sound evidence of what works. Yet, whilst this project compliments and converges with current national strategies, policies and initiatives our future is under jeopardy once again due to lack of sustainable funding.

It is sad to finish this successful year yet again having to make it clear that our future is uncertain because of a lack of investment to support our work. With certainty about our future we could plan more efficiently and really bloom with the new ideas that we think of as workers and which are inspired by our members. In the dark days in the office we often say if only we could just get on with the work we know we are so good at doing then life would be rosy indeed. Instead there is uncertainty and stress. However we have every intention of overcoming these difficulties and will continue to press forward our work and message to the bitter end. We welcome messages of support and ideas from our members and others

about how to take forward our work and so allow the words of our members to flourish and inspire those that hear them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We hope that you have found this report interesting. If you wish to comment on it then that would be very welcome as we love to get as wide as possible a perspective on the work we do.

The people we need to acknowledge most of all are our members and other people with experience of mental ill health in the Highlands. Without their voice we couldn't do anything. A big thank you must go to the young people of the Highlands who have not only been keen and active audiences with the Eden Court Stigma play but have actively volunteered to get our message across. We also have to thank Charlie for his expertise in filming and editing and Brian in his parallel work with other DVD's. Then there are so many professionals who support us by listening to and enhancing our voice. Without the partnership of people in health, social care and education our message would be so much less effective.

So a big thank you to all those that support us and work alongside us. Long may it continue.