



# Welcome to our Winter 2003 Newsletter



HUG is the Highland Users Group, a network of users of mental health services across the Highlands, which campaigns to improve the rights, services and treatment of people with mental health problems and to challenge the stigma surrounding mental illness.

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

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## Hello from Karen

Hello everyone! My name is Karen and I am the new Communications Worker for HUG, and will be working closely with Graham and Emma.

A lot of my work will be working with you all to use ICT and the media to challenge the stigma of mental ill health.

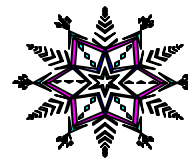
I am originally from Easter Ross and I moved back home from working in Edinburgh. It is good to be back home. I have just bought a house in Inverness and am looking forward to moving in, at the beginning of the Year!!!

My background is working for a National organisation based in Edinburgh looking at social firm development and assisting people with mental ill health into employment.

One of my main aims over the next 12 months will be to really focus on the media, both radio and newspaper, and be proactive in getting mental health issues discussed and articles published. The use of ICT will also be at the top of my priorities and I will be looking into how we can connect the HUG network using the internet and e-mail and develop the HUG website.. If anyone has any issues, views and ideas PLEASE CALL ME as I would greatly appreciate any help or suggestions.

I hope you all have a fantastic Christmas and New Year. Bye for now and I look forward to meeting all the HUG members over the coming weeks.

PS. I hope you enjoy the Winter Edition of the Newsletter and if you have any contributions for further newsletters I would be delighted to receive them.



## Visions & Voices Conference 7th/8th July

On the 7th & 8th July, I attended a Conference in Dundee entitled Visions & Voices organised by the Hearing Voices Network Dundee in association with the Scottish Hearing Voices Network and the Arts Advocacy Project.

Over the course of the two days, we listened intently to Psychiatrists and Psychologists whilst they gave their presentations, On the programme, along with the professionals, were "Voice Hearers" a number of people who have personal experience of hearing voices who gave a presentation of their experiences. These presenters came from as far away as Manchester.

The workshops were varied and included autogenics, Voices Group, Video Stories, Writing, Counselling Room—to name but a few.

I took part in several workshops over the two days with my favourite being one called:

**"A laugh a day keeps the Psychiatrists at bay".**

An ex-service user Audrey Reid took the group and we divided into two sets of three. She asked each of us to tell a funny story or a joke while one of the others in the set drew an illustration on paper. When we had finished, we each had to tell the group the other's story or joke and this in turn Generated many more stories from the group. Overall this was a very enjoyable session and I had my particular favourites, it's just a shame some of the stories cannot go into print. **Lorna**

In June of this year HUG funded me to attend the Visions and Voices Conference which took place in the West Park Centre in Dundee, I was really excited and thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience but like everything in life it seems, there is a downside—Emma has asked me to write a small piece about it for the HUG Newsletter!

Where do I begin? What did I get out of it? HOPE, I think, that's what I got.

It was really refreshing to be listening to stories of recovery. We are so used to hearing of ways of "coping" with psychosis. This can often feel quite negative—a hard, dark long road. Of this particular conference the emphasis was on recovery. People do recover and go on to live full, happy lives. People talked of what they had gained from their "illness" and the fact that their experience has made their lives all the more fruitful.

Another thing which struck me was how friendly and supportive people were to another, users, carers and professionals alike. There seemed to be no boundaries and everyone mixed well.

Dr Carr, from Braeside, did a presentation about autogenics. People were very interested in this "self healing" process and it made me feel we are very lucky to have him here in Inverness. Mind you, I did feel sorry for him as Psychiatrists did not fair very well. Nearly all the speakers had a negative story to tell. I think he should have worn a t-shirt with "Psychiatrists are people too!" printed on it. Well, maybe not, perhaps "SOME Psychiatrists are people too!".

**(Continued page 4)**

Visions & Voices Conference 7th/8th July (continued from page 3)

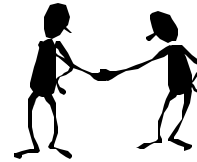
Other speakers included a voice-hearing Psychologist, a Psychologist who specialised in sexual abuse and a number of ex service users who have turned their lives around and now facilitate training to help others.

There were a number of workshops including autogenics, sexual abuse, spirituality, recovery etc as well as some of the more creative activities such as aromatherapy, quilting and video. I myself took up the opportunity to make a video of my experience, which will be used to create an archive of individual people's stories. Perhaps my grandchildren will watch with great amusement at how we "suffered" with voice hearing. Hopefully by that time it will be fully understood, it may even be seen (as with Mediums) as a gift.

The accommodation was great. En-suite facilities, double bed and tea and coffee facilities in each room—what more could you want, I had previously thought that student accommodation would be very basic. It seems they don't rough it much these days! The food was also very excellent, as was the drink at the dinner dance!

All in all it was a very informative, enjoyable and uplifting experience and I would fully recommend it to anyone thinking of attending next year. **Susan**

**TO ACCEPT**



Around two years ago I was with a group being shown round a hostel in the foothills of the Pyrenees. Our guide spoke good English. He was also minus the lower part of one arm. He told us that there had been a man staying at the hostel who had lost both feet in an accident. This man thought he was lucky, because he was a skilled craftsman and would have had to give up work if he had lost his hands. He could still cope without his legs. Our guide thought he was lucky because his hobby was hill walking and that would be difficult without feet. He could cope without half an arm.

It's not easy to accept the loss of something, but both these men had managed it. Still being able to do what they enjoyed and were good at made a big difference.

A loss of something that holds you back from what you do well and want to do is really hard to accept. Or what if doing the things you can do well and want to do can result in illness? In my own experience this is a very good recipe for frustration. At each point in time there are three possible ways to go.

**One** is not to: you see what should be done and ignore it. **Two** is go ahead as if nothing was wrong: which you might get away with, but depressive illnesses takes no hostages. **Three** is to go ahead with your eyes open, ready to pull back if your personal warning signs begin to show: which often depends on the understanding of whoever else is involved.

The trick is, knowing when to stick with number one, when to go with number three, and how not to get sucked into number two. So far I have not quite managed to get this sorted out. Anyone got any useful tips?

**Garry**



## **STIGMA STOP WATCH -** Calling all HUG members to help monitor the Media

'see me', the national anti-stigma campaign in Scotland have recently launched **STIGMA STOP WATCH** which aims to make sure that media coverage of mental health issues is balanced and fair.

The media have a central role in shaping the general public's opinions on major social issues. **Stigma Stop Watch** aims to make journalists, editors and producers think carefully about the way they report on mental health issues. The Press Complaints Commission's code of practice states that:

**'The press should avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to a person's race, colour, religion, sex or sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or disability.'**

**Stigma Stop Watchers** have a part to play in improving the quality of mental health coverage. 'see me' will publish a regular **Stigma Stop Watch Update** with news of who has attracted criticism or acclaim and we will publish their reactions if they choose to respond. All you have to do is report back to us on good or bad practice wherever you find it.

Linda Dunion

'see me'

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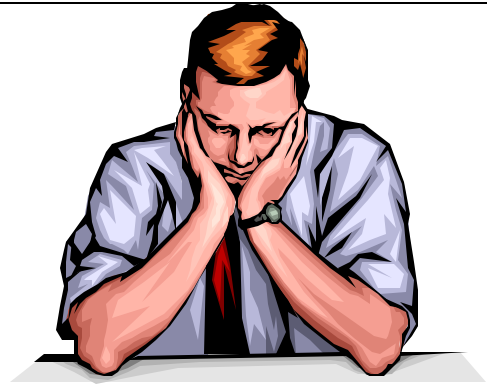
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## ***Rural Mental Health Services***

**An investigation into the management of psychiatric patients in remote areas has identified a "very high level of concern" among health workers.**



The investigation by an NHS Scotland-funded body found that staff may have been exposed to "highly stressful" situations and "unacceptable risks".

The report also revealed cases of patients being placed in police cells, a practice it deemed "inappropriate".

It recommended that a Rural Mental Health Network should be set up.

### **Highly stressful**

The network would share good practice and encourage collaboration between NHS boards for the safe management of psychiatric patients in remote areas.

The report, by the Remote And Rural Areas Resource Initiative (Rarari), was presented by its author, Arran GP Dr Malcolm Kerr. He said: "The project has identified a very high level of concern and in some instances frustration among health and social services workers at the problems they face during mental health crises.

Incidents occur infrequently but are highly stressful for all involved and may entail unacceptable risks. It is strikingly apparent that much of the current service hangs on good will."

The report documented the various issues facing staff and patients in remote and rural areas.

The most pressing issues were transport and escort, the uses of "places of safety", clinical governance issues and the availability of appropriately trained staff.

The case studies highlighted in the report indicated the wide variety of accommodation pressed into use as a "place of safety".

"These included the use of police cells, which although at times were unavoidable, were deemed inappropriate in the report's recommendations.

**(continued on page 7)**

### Rural mental health services

(continued from page 6)

Rarari Chairman Stewart Whiteford said: "If you are physically unwell, even in remote areas, there are very clear pathways for rapid access to appropriate health services, but this is not always the case for the mentally unwell.

"Various solutions are being developed in isolation without collective support and co-ordination and I commend the suggestion of the establishment of a Mental Health Network."

The report has made 10 recommendations, including robust psychiatric emergency plans, protocols and standards, better transport and escort arrangements, as well as the establishment of the Mental Health Network.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/scotland/3306197.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/scotland/3306197.stm)

### My Dreams for the Future



I would like to see a safe haven for people who are acutely unwell.

A place of real beauty. Not just physically, although that would be nice, but a place which feels beautiful, where the staff and patients work together in a loving and caring environment. It would be a place where cognitive behavioural therapy and autogenics would be available for everyone who wanted to try it, and there would always be people to listen if you wanted to talk.

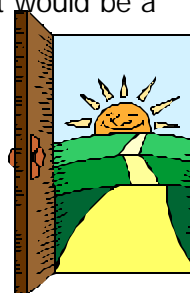
So many people say that when they become unwell they find day to day tasks such as shopping, planning for meals, bill paying etc. becomes almost impossible so help would be available to re-learn these all important basic tasks.

Many people talk about how important the comradeship with other patients is and how they feel it is only people who have been through a mental illness who can really understand what they are going through. They also say that they get great joy and a sense of well being from helping others. The 'haven' would encourage and appreciate volunteers who felt they were at a stage in their recovery where they could volunteer a helping hand.

Ideally there would be a beauty therapist/hairstylist on the team. It can be difficult to take care of personal appearance when acutely unwell but it can make people feel so much better to have a little 'make over' now and again. There would also be a fitness instructor and a healthy living coach.

Psychiatrists and Psychologists would be available to all and we would know a little about how they work, what are their views, what type of treatments they offer etc. so that we could pick one who had similar views to our own and who we felt we could trust and work with.

Most importantly the expectation would be for people to get better, it would be a place where recovery is discussed and expected right from the start.



## NEWS FROM GRAHAM

### THE LAST ROUND OF MEETINGS.

It was good to see you all in our last round of meetings across the HUG network and a warm welcome to the new members who joined as a result of meeting us at them.

Hopefully the report on them will be out soon, but briefly we talked about what the HUG workers and members had been doing recently.

Things like working alongside other groups of people such as the Patients Council to stop the closure of beds at New Craig's or building houses near the hospital and hearing how much closer we are to getting out-of- hours and crisis services were welcomed. Seeing the publication of reports on things like transport to Hospital, with which we were involved or hearing that our own reports have been used both nationally and locally in planning and setting standards was also good. The steady round of attending committees and groups in people's local areas and at a National and Highland level as well as being involved in visits from other groups and agencies were also all appreciated.

It is good to hear that you are still happy with the way we are going –sometimes the struggle for change seems to grow dark and depressing but we continually heard people calling for stickability and persistence in our work.

We wondered whether we should be more assertive and aggressive in our campaigning but most of you said that while in emergency that has its place the route of reasonable and rational argument is the wiser route.

We asked whether the reports were still useful and again you said they were vital to what we do and a great way of keeping people in touch with the issues. The only thing we did need to do is to revisit them and follow up what still needed done.

We asked if we still needed to talk about the issues at the meetings and heard that it was vital that we keep these issues alive as they are the route and reason HUG exists and must not be neglected.

We asked about continuing the usual round of meetings and were encouraged to continue them; it is vital to be routed in our member's lives and experiences so that we are always aware of what is happening locally.

All in all it was a very encouraging set of meetings – However despite the encouragement we were reminded of how much more we need to do. Some groups called for a greater emphasis on what works and what doesn't and the need for even more education of the people around us.

**(Continued from page 8)**

Some of you went a step further and talked about the possibility of setting up our own user run services, whilst others were more hesitant and wondered whether we had the skills and capacity to do such things.

Most people said we need better feedback about what we are doing on your behalf. Many people talked about new methods of expression, video, artwork creative writing, drama, the use of the internet and equally there was a call for more opportunities to meet each other and learn from each other.

These ideas are all very useful and will help guide us in what we do in the future with HUGs work. Many thanks to all of you.

**GRAHAMS SECONDMENT WITH THE SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE.**



Most of you will know that I spent the last 6 months with the Scottish Executive as part to the mental health services assessment team. I was trying to find out users and carers views about whether there were enough resources to implement the mental health act.

It was a very different experience for me, as I have never had to work for a large organisation before with its own rules and procedures and ways of doing things. However for most of the time I was based in my little cubby hole of an office at home or was zooming around Scotland with laptop and mobile phone in tow. It was great meeting all the users and carers, and really helpful to have the company of Keir on occasions as life could get a little lonely.



Some of the things that particularly struck me were how well organised people are locally – most areas do have their own user or carer group; with a little organisation we could develop really effective networks across Scotland.

Many groups whilst being very willing to discuss the issues affecting them were also disheartened at the time it took to achieve change as I think some of us have felt in Hug recently – I wonder if there are other ways of doing what we do that would keep the whole process of speaking out rewarding?

It was especially good to meet the carer groups as I have only occasionally met carer groups before. They had some great things to say and faced some hugely moving and important issues in their lives.

In total we met with about 500 users and carers and have produced small reports for each meeting which will hopefully be sent out soon. Hopefully all these will be released in one way or another either in the main report or on the Scottish Executive website.

Even better than just having our voice heard at a high level in the Scottish Executive.

Communications Project  
Challenging Stigma and Raising Awareness of Mental Health Issues  
(June - December 2003 Report)

**Introduction**

Hello, well it may have been some time since the last Newsletter (!), so a lot has been going on over the past 6 months, the major focus being the drama production with Eden Court. This has been a great success and HUG has reached out to over 1,500 young people over a packed two week period. The feedback forms from the kids will be evaluated in January and a report produced by February. It has been a great experience working with Eden Court Outreach team and hope we can continue this partnership for future projects.

Below is quite a brief run down of the main areas of work the Communications Project has been doing since the summer:



**STIGMA: A Play Update**

The STIGMA Play Roadshow round 20 schools went extremely well and reached over 1500 school pupils. The informal feedback has been very positive and the final evaluation on the play and its impact will be available in the Spring.

**Mallaig Feel Good Day**

HUG took part in a 'Feel Good Day' in Mallaig High School on 9<sup>th</sup> December. The day was aimed at 14 year olds and incorporated a day of music, drama, dance and workshop sessions all focussing on keeping mentally healthy. HUG lead a workshop entitled Cool Heads, which opened up discussions on the major mental illnesses and helped the pupils to think about their attitudes and feelings towards people experiencing mental ill health.



**Young People's Research**

HUG is currently working with Inverness College School of Social Studies to conduct an exciting new research project with secondary school pupils in six Highland schools to find out about their attitudes to mental illness. The study aims to explore, in depth, young people's perceptions and understanding of mental health problems, their attitudes, feelings and potential behaviour towards people with mental health problems and the language and images associated with mental illness.

HUG NEWSLETTER

The launch of this research gained coverage on Moray Firth Radio (hourly news bulletin) and the Highland News. A report is due to be produced by the end of January. If anyone is interested in receiving a copy, please contact Emma.

**Training**

Training has been going well and we have been involved in quite a range of training days covering such subjects as self-harm, treatment and care, good and bad practice, the impact of mental health problems on learning and education and hospitalisation/detention. HUG members have also spoken directly, and through video, at a conference in Inverness attended by 70 support workers.

We have been involved in two sessions with second year mental health nursing students and it is hoped that HUG can continue to have a direct role in the training programmes of nursing and care staff.

**Media**

Most of the media work over the past few months has been linked to the Eden Court and HUG STIGMA play. We were featured in the Highland News, the Scotsman, the Press and Journal and HUG members spoke on BBC Radio Scotland.

**See me**

HUG, as a key partner in the See me alliance, has been involved in the direction of Scotland's first national anti-stigma campaign. Two HUG members recently attended a networking day in Edinburgh, which was an opportunity for anti-stigma projects throughout the country to showcase their work and share experiences. The next phase of the campaign in being developed and young people and employers will be a particular focus. For more information, give Emma a call or contact See me directly on:

0131-6248945, [www.seemescotland.org](http://www.seemescotland.org)



As always, a HUGE thanks to all the HUG members involved in the work of the Communications Project and have a great Christmas.



**MESSAGE FROM CHRIS**



It still feels strange not having to commute weekly from Strontian to Inverness, but it's good to have some time at home. I've just about got the hang of being a Job Seeker! I really want to thank all the HUG members who helped and supported me while I was working for you at HCCF. Graham was there at the end of the phone, despite having his own job to do, and many professionals were extremely helpful. I know I got very irritable when there seemed so much to do - thank you for your patience!

This isn't an easy time of year for everyone, but I would like to wish you all the best for 2004. I especially hope Karen enjoys working with you.

It was a great surprise and honour to receive an invitation from Tom McCabe MSP to a reception at the Great Hall of Edinburgh Castle to mark the enactment of the New Mental Health Act. Obviously Graham had one as well - we really enjoyed the evening, but sorry there's no photographic record of Graham's suit and tie!

I'm not known for my brevity, but as there are lots of other items in this edition:

- ◆ The Rarari Bid'79 report was released amid some publicity on Dec 10<sup>th</sup>. Hopefully this will provide some extra impetus for places of safety to be up and running across Highland.
- ◆ December 10<sup>th</sup> was the date I learnt Lochaber had its crisis services/out-of-hours money in its' budget - other areas must also have theirs!
- ◆ It was great to see Cheryl Forchuk again in November. She is helping to plan a peer support/buddying scheme as part of a transitional or bridging model of discharge from New Craigs.
- ◆ Work continues with the Highland response to "Choose Life" (the national reduction in suicide strategy). There were information sharing/workshops around Highland - I went to the one in Caithness (Lybster!) which was extremely interesting and quite intensive.
- ◆ Together with Keir and Graham I participated in the SDC Acute Care in Mental Health Conference in Dundee on Dec 2<sup>nd</sup>. HUG had a large input, with Keir, Susan and Catriona relating their experiences of acute care via video. Trying to be objective, it was great and really effective.



**VISIT TO THE ARGYLL & BUTE HOSPITAL**

On the 10<sup>th</sup> October, Graham Morgan, John Lennan (Facilitator, Patient's Council, New Craigs) and myself attended an Awareness Day at the Argyll & Bute Hospital, Lochgilphead, where they are setting up a new Patient's Council.

There were many guest speakers, including Graham and John, and we also met several of the service users.

Dr Grace Fergusson, Associate Specialist at the hospital gave a very interesting talk, followed by Anne Bardsley, self advocate and advocate for other service users.

Pete Ritchie, former director of Scottish Human Services for the last ten years also spoke. He is currently balancing consultancy work with the running of a small organic farm.

We heard from Nicky Conner, a representative for the Re-habilitation Unit at the Argyll & Bute where he works closely with staff and service users. Also, Lawrence Wilson, who was diagnosed ten years ago, and since become employed as a development worker and a member of the Mental Health Network which covers the greater Glasgow area.

Joanne Topalian, SIGN (Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network) est. 1993 by the medical Royal Colleges to develop evidence-based national guidelines for the NHS. This is a multidisciplinary network that includes doctors, nurses, pharmacists, dentists, allied health professionals and patient representatives. SIGN are currently working on guidelines for Bipolar Affective Disorder and should be published in 2004.

We also took part in a couple of workshops – one by Houston Fleming, Chairperson, Dykebar Patient's Council and another by Dave Bertin, Clinical Nurse Manager at the Argyll & Bute hospital.

**Lorna Hardie**  
**HUG & Patient's Council Volunteer**



## A Christmas Wish



### **Christmas time for me is a time of reflection**

A time to look back over the last year  
And to see how far I have travelled on my Spiritual journey,  
It is a time to ask myself 'How proud will my brother Jesus be of  
me?'

It is a time to remember that I share his blood, as do all mankind  
That he is counting on me to share his message  
A difficult task in this strange world we have created  
But he is counting on me not to give up  
He is counting on all of us

Christmas time for me is a time of great joy  
Laughter and fun  
And presents, I love them, the more the merrier!  
And Jesus doesn't mind  
He loves Christmas, and Santa  
It is the one day of each year when children are the focus of  
attention  
Who wouldn't love that?

### ***Christmas time for me is a time to make a Christmas wish***

I wish that all mankind would join together and realise  
We really can have a beautiful world  
Why don't they realise?  
Yes that is my Christmas Wish  
For everyone to realise and go about creating

**PEACE ON EARTH**



