



For better
mental health

Bristol Mind Annual General Meeting 2004

Held on the 21st of October 2004 this was a great opportunity to reflect on the work done by Bristol Mind over the last year and to thank all staff , volunteers and trustees for their continuing commitment .

New trustees were elected Suzanne Pearson (re-elected) , Hazel Hammond, Keith Hall , Ross Hughes with new advisors Jacek Mioleta , Gary Watkins & Alex Raikes on board .

Jeff Walker in the inaugural position of Director spoke on the great expansion of Bristol Mind whose services which now include :

MindLine: Telephone helpline for people in crisis needing a listening ear. Open Wed.-Sun inclusive 8pm - 12 midnight - staffed by trained volunteers. Tel :0808 808 0330

Drop in at Windmill Hill City Farm Sundays from 2 til 5pm and Easton from 1pm til 5pm on Saturday this available open without referral to anyone over the age of 16 , who has experienced mental health problems , feels emotionally distressed or is feeling vulnerable/isolated or lonely

The Outreach Support Service operates to provide to reach out to any individuals who are feeling isolated in the community with trained volunteers

Advocacy InAction: a groundbreaking service offering advocacy within Horfield and Eastwood Park prisons and Fromside secure unit.

Advocacy Service:provides trained volunteer advocates to assist isolated individuals to communicate their needs and wishes, provide information about local services and users' rights within the mental health system.

User-Focused Monitoring Project: Researching users' views on mental health services recently publishing a report "Crisis What Crisis ?" investigating users experience of being in a crisis in the Bristol area

Information Project: Mind leaflets supplied to mental health outlets free of charge

Future developments for the next year include

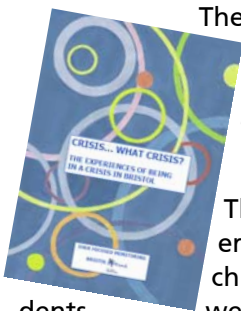
- An In patient advocacy service at Barrow and Southmead Hospitals
- An investigation of outreach support services by the UFM project
- Expansion on the information project to include telephone and internet resources on mental health issues.
- Expansion of the drop in to Easton and Eastville.
- Continuing development of Bristol Minds links with smaller user groups and its commitment to provide them with advice , resources and training

Further details of the past years activities can be found in the Annual Report which can be obtained from the Bristol Mind offices or downloaded at www.bristolmind.org.uk



Bristol Mind UFM report Crisis , What Crisis ?

The Bristol Mind User Focused Monitoring (UFM) project interviewed 65 people who had experienced a mental health crisis at some time over the past two years . The aim of the study was not to evaluate services or service providers but to focus on the experiences of crisis, where people sought help from and what help they actually got.



The first part of the study asked respondents to identify the causes of their crisis. Four main causes emerged from the survey – low self esteem; family/relationship problems; traumatic experiences and childhood experiences. For most respondents there was no single cause of crisis, but several. Respondents were also asked to define what a crisis was to them – the overwhelming majority talked of crisis in a term of a feeling. This finding was particularly poignant when the study went onto look at what respondents wanted during a crisis – mostly greater emotional support and what they got during a crisis, mostly medication. Respondents also reported varying, and often not very high, levels of empathy from service providers and professionals at the time of crisis. many respondents reported a low level of mental health awareness from non-mental health professionals (GPs, Police and Ambulance personnel, Accident and Emergency staff), which they regarded as a barrier to the acknowledgement of their crisis.

The study also looked at the level of involvement of service users in their own care and care planning and how much they were involved in writing their care plan (when they had one). The capacity to make informed choices about their care and treatment prior to, and during a crisis, was restricted by the lack of routine quality information available to respondents. Many of them reported that they would have liked to know more about other services available, but were infrequently offered any.

It was not hard to draw links between the low level of involvement of service users in care and crisis planning, reported low levels of empathy & awareness of mental health issues etc., and the proportion of service users who felt that their crisis could have been prevented. The combination of low level of mental health awareness and poor information was also a contributory factor in not using services for a number of individuals

The study was able to show that a crisis is a dynamic, diverse and complex experience which is first and foremost a feeling or set of feelings. This report shows that there is a need to engage more with service users – in planning strategies before a crisis occurs, listening to them during a crisis and offering the support they most want – namely emotional support. In addition there is a need for services to offer a more creative and holistic response.

Bristol Minds Response to the Mental Health Bill

Bristol Mind and SURG (Service User Reference Group, Avon) would like to express grave concern at the tone and content as well as at some serious omissions in the Draft Mental Health Bill.

The local user community which we represent strongly supports the views of the Royal College of Psychiatrists whose members have expressed “grave anxieties in terms of civil liberties, ethics, practicality and effectiveness” (08-09-2004). Dr Tony Zigmond believes that there could be as few as a dozen people who meet the criteria (described by Ministers as having dangerous and severe personality disorder or DSPD) in the community. He criticised the government for drawing up a new mental health law designed to deal with a dozen people that would affect 50,000” (Guardian, 9 September 2004).



Bristol Mind and SURG welcome the commissioning of new research ‘which should as far as possible be evidence based’ which ‘focuses on outcomes for service users and carers” It is therefore particularly disappointing that the bill appears in some areas not to follow these ideas through.

We also welcome the underlying principles outlined in the remarks on the projected Code of Practice although it is disappointing that research already completed -that might shed light on these issues- is not referenced.

In particular, there does not appear to be anything in the Bill that addresses the cycle of exclusion identified in the Social Exclusion Report (June 2004) including stigma and discrimination, a lack of clear responsibility for improving vocational and social outcomes for adults with mental health problems, different services not always working effectively together, poor quality of diagnosis and over focus on medical symptoms etc. These are proven factors in causing or making worse a person’s mental health problems. The Bill does nothing either to work towards eradicating stigmatisation but instead increases the criminalisation of people with mental health issues.

For Bristol Mind and SURGS’ full response to the mental health bill please contact Bristol Mind or download the full text from Bristol Mind at www.bristolmind.org.uk

New Drop-in Easton Community Centre.....

Bristol Mind is please to announce a new drop in at Easton Community Centre on Saturday Morning this drop in will operate from 10am til 1.30pm to compliment Bristol Minds longstanding drop in in South Bristol at Windmill Hill City Farm Sundays 2 til 5pm . Volunteers offer listening and support without referral to anyone suffering from mental distress for further details contact the Tahir on 0117 914 914 2545



Training for user groups

Bristol Mind is to offer a training programme in Spring 2004 for anyone involved in running a user group a series of workshops sessions will include including running and facilitating groups , fundraising and marketing , training skills & using the media. For further details contact Jeff Walker on 0117 914 2541 or email director@bristolmind.org.uk

She saved my life

Maybe that's a cheesy headline but in my case it's true. The first time I met Jackie at the drop in , we discussed how cooking seemed to put the world to rights. She seemed to understand what I was getting at straight away, so when she became my counsellor I felt was safe and understood. I said to her that I felt I'd flung myself into her care... but she caught me and lifted me. An amazing, healing, experience. How trivial the words look on the page but if you give each one its real meaning as you read you'll get a better sense of how good she was as a counsellor. She always said I was doing the work but I think she did not give herself credit for following, carefully, the twisted threads of my difficulties and helping me see what I needed to do next. I remember how gently she taught me the skills I needed to start my new life in Bristol. I cried all the way through the sessions but nothing seemed to 'phase' her. For our last session I tried to find some things that reflected back to her some of her qualities as a counsellor that had been so good for me. I chose home made jam for the sweet soothingness of her work with me, a string of beads and mirrors that represented the professional structure she brought to the task, two dolphins swimming close but not too close to represent the relationship, always held in safety, a little wooden pot with a snake inside, to represent the dark places she helped me open up. So how did she save my life ?. well I would have gone under, given in into the depression without her help. The skills she taught me, the insight she gave me, will last the rest of my life .

Anonymous from a Bristol Mind service user

Poem from a survivor



The tears on my pillow, like a branch of a weeping willow,
I cry myself to sleep, in a river that runs so deep,
The sobbing into a tissue, for all the times that I miss you,
My heart begins to break; The River turns into a lake,
Sorrow cuts through me like a knife; Is this the story of my life?



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Drop-In/Outreach : 0117 914 2545
MindLine Admin: 0117 914 0866
Mindline: 0808 80 80 330
User-Focused Monitoring: 0117 373 0336

www.bristolmind.org.uk
info@bristolmind.org.uk

We positively welcome contributions to this newsletter, or if you are a user group that would like to promote your services either in this newsletter or our website please contact Becky at Bristol Mind

Self Help Groups in Bristol

Changes

Hearing Voices Group

Changes-12 Steps to Mental Health has run a free weekly support group for people suffering with Mental Health problems since the beginning of February 2002 . It offers a safe supportive environment to help people to make genuine Changes in their lives. It takes place at One in Eight , 160 Gloucester Road from 7-15pm to 9-30pm every Tuesday .People are welcome to just turn up.

N.B From early 2004 meetings will change to Monday evenings from at the Bristol Mind Offices on Cheltenham Road

For more information or a chat about coming along, phone Richard on 07988 584524 – email:

changesbristol@hotmail.com

or visit

www.depressiongroupsbristol.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

If anyone is interested in this project, Changes would like to expand and develop more groups and is looking for people to form a management committee. Ideally you should have had a direct experience of a Mental Health problems. If you would like more details please contact Richard.

Changes

Every Tuesday from 7.15-9.30pm

A new **hearing voices** group has been set up in Bristol. A meeting, open to everyone, was held on Wednesday 29 May at the Methodist Church Hall, Prewitt Street, Bristol—the regular venue for the meeting.

Initially, the group will have facilitators, with one main coordinator attending on a weekly basis. It is hoped that the group will be led by voice hearers themselves.

The group is open to all voice hearers - further details can be obtained from Timothy Dowling (0117 973 0225) or Kate Chapman (0117 924 8824).

You can also contact Kate or Timothy if you are interested in becoming a facilitator of a weekly session, or if you would like to offer any other support to the group. No specialist training is required to become a facilitator.

Hearing Voices Group

Every Wednesday 4.30pm—6pm