

Viewpoint

Mental Health Service User Involvement Charity

Newsletter Summer 2005

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR



Viewpoint is in the final stages of taking on full responsibility for the charity from the Herts Mind Network whose dedication established and steered the beginnings of Viewpoint, formerly known as the User Involvement Project. A big "thank you" goes out to all those who have helped us to achieve our independent charitable status.

Viewpoint has secured a rolling funding agreement to continue its work enabling mental health service users in Hertfordshire to put forward their views on all aspects of mental health services in the county. This gives us the financial security to plan our activities over the next few years.

Several Viewpoint members were involved in the recruitment of members for Herts Partnership Trust's recently established User Council, which met for the first time on 1st July this year. User council members present service user concerns to the Trust which, in turn, consults them about its issues. You can be assured that Viewpoint will continue to work closely with the Council to ensure that the service user voice is heard by the Trust.

With these exciting new developments, there has never been a better time to get involved in making your views about current and future mental health services known.

I hope you enjoy a relaxing Summer - and remember, your views and your involvement are important!
Heather Straughan, Chair.



Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire **NHS**

INVESTING IN YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

This is a public consultation about mental health services in Beds and Herts from May 9th to Sept 12th 2005. It adopts a 'recovery' approach to mental health and sets out 3 options listing possible sites of new adult mental health in-patient facilities. These may involve building a new site or altering an existing building.

Option 1

*New build at Hemel
New build at Watford
New build at Hoddesdon
Rebuild at Stevenage*

OR

Option 2

*New build at Hemel
New build at Hatfield or QE11
New build at Hoddesdon
Rebuild at Stevenage*

OR

Option 3

*New build at Watford
New build at Hatfield or QE11
New build at Hoddesdon
Rebuild at Stevenage*

Viewpoint is holding meetings around Herts to let you have your say. You can also fill out a questionnaire. This and the full consultation document and copies of booklets accompanying the consultation are available in paper format by calling freephone 0800 389 4182, or online, visit www.investinginyourhealth.org.uk/mentalhealth

J Deakin

Death of Founding Member of Viewpoint

It is with sadness that we announce the death of John Mead of Welwyn & Hatfield Mind on the 19th May 2005. John was part of the Hertfordshire Mind Network which established the User Involvement Project, now known as Viewpoint.

John is greatly missed.



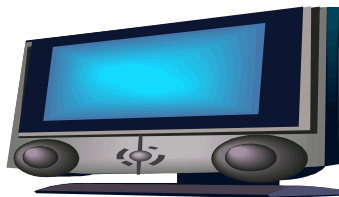
www.hertsviewpoint.co.uk

Visit our Website for:

Up-to-date national and international news.

Discussion board.

Service user artwork and photography.



New Viewpoint Project Worker

I would like to introduce myself as the new Project Worker for North Herts, Stevenage and the Royston, Buntingford and Bishops Stortford areas.

My name is Christiana Ashare and I am passionate about the move towards Service User involvement; something which has evolved over several years in the differing areas of my professional training, employment and personal life.

I have trained and worked as a Registered Mental Nurse and followed this through in the area of Health Law where I was not surprised to find the strength of growth in seeking more knowledge where mental health issues were concerned. I have shown tremendous understanding of the needs of the service user in my different professional roles and of the need for empowerment in positively representing the views of service users. I have followed this through with my recent involvement with the Service User Council set up by Herts Partnership Trust and I am fully committed to its aims and objectives.

The challenge now is for me to work as part of the team at Viewpoint in helping service users achieve the ultimate in service provision and a support structure. I have taken on this challenging role with the aim of strengthening the work already started and working closely with service users, service providers including statutory bodies, voluntary/charities and relevant private partnerships in raising awareness of the positive effect service user involvement could have on service provision and policy making and the great improvement this could bring to the lives of service users.

Please feel comfortable to contact me with any issues for my area as I look forward to working with all of you to achieve our aim.

Christiana Ashare

SUPPORT INFORMATION



“From Victim to Victor” (Ron Coleman)

If you hear voices, Hearing Voices Network can help. We are committed to helping people who hear voices. Our reputation is growing as the limitations of a solely medical approach to voices become better known. Psychiatry refers to hearing voices as 'auditory hallucinations' but our research shows that there are many explanations for hearing voices. Many people begin to hear voices as a result of extreme stress or trauma.

The purpose of hearing voices groups is to offer a safe haven where people feel accepted and comfortable. They also have an aim of offering an opportunity for people to accept and 'live with their voices', in a way that gives some control and helps them to regain some power over their lives.

If you 'Hear Voices' and live in Dacorum (or St Albans if space available) there is a Hearing Voices Network support group run by Dacorum Day & Employment Services.

Please note you will have to have an assessment by the Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) at Slippers Hill to be referred to this group.

For more information, please call the CMHT on 01442 320326



WARE TO MEET

If you are suffering or recovering from mental illness and would like to meet others in a similar position, Rethink's Connect 3 Friendship Club may be able to help.

Connect 3 is an informal drop-in located at **14 New Road, Ware**. We provide a relaxed and comfortable setting where you could have a "cuppa" and chat with others who are often dealing with the same issues as you.

We provide a variety of refreshments and meals each day and there are a range of in-house and outside activities and regular outings.

Why not come along and spend some time with us - we would be pleased to show you around.

We are open **Mondays and Wednesdays** from **11.30am to 6.30pm** and **most Sundays** from **11am to 5pm**. You can telephone us on **01920 485777** or email connect3@rethink.org

(Connect 3 is funded by East Herts PCT)

Brenda Harley
Manager



OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED

VIEWPOINT NEWSLETTER

Compiled by J Deakin & T Kinsella

We are asking for.....



Written Articles
Poetry
Photographs
Art
News around the county



We welcome contributions to our quarterly newsletter or our website. Our policy is to encourage submissions on an informative or recovery driven theme. Please post or e-mail submissions to Tracy or Jacqui (contact details back page).

World Mental Health Day

World Mental Health Day on October 10th will soon be upon us. The theme this year is 'Mental and Physical Health Across the Life Span.' Viewpoint hopes to build on last year's event in Watford by collaborating with Primary Care Trusts and other organisations to celebrate this day.

If you have any ideas as to what might be included in these events or wish to get involved in organising them, please get in touch with Viewpoint, see contact details on the back page.

H. Straughan

Psychological Therapies Strategy Group

Herts Partnership Trust (HPT) and Viewpoint are looking to find out peoples' views on psychological therapies within Hertfordshire by developing a countywide reference group.

Psychological therapies include: psychology, psychotherapy, arts therapy, family therapy, music therapy and cognitive behavioural therapy etc.

The aim of the group will be to aid HPT in improving psychological therapies and to identify any problems such as access, waiting lists or time limited interventions.

If you feel you could input to this group as either a member or by feeding your experience to the group, please contact Simon at Viewpoint on 01707 328014.

Places are limited.



St Albans survival guide

The members of the St Albans forum recently discussed 'access to information' for new mental health clients.

It was agreed that this can be a difficult time for people and they decided to do something about it.

The group is now developing a 'Mental Health Survival Guide' which will provide information from a service user perspective.

The group is also looking for funding to support the guide.

If you would like to attend the forum or contribute to the guide (Members must live in the St Albans and Harpenden area) then contact Simon at Viewpoint on 01707 328014.

S des Forges

MAKING A DIFFERENCE USER INVOLVEMENT SUCCESSES

TRAINING GROUP TO BECOME A CO-OPERATIVE SOCIAL FIRM

Mental health service users who deliver training to professionals and support staff have voted to become a 'co-operative social firm'.

The benefits of being in this type of social enterprise were identified as:

- ❖ Supportive environment
- ❖ Further training opportunities
- ❖ Permitted earnings
- ❖ Flexibility in type of involvement
- ❖ Pro-active approach to delivering training
- ❖ Social benefits - friends!
- ❖ Scope for other ventures i.e. research

Viewpoint will be giving support for the Co-operative Social Firm until it is well established and perhaps has a part or full time worker to support the project.

We are currently looking for a name for this co-op social firm and any ideas will be gratefully received and considered!!

The next Training for Trainers course will be starting in September. We will confirm dates and times in August.

There are a few reserve places available for the September course. Please register your interest with Tracy on 01707 328014 if you have not already done so.

T Kinsella

A STAGE IN RECOVERY!

An opportunity to try out a new and creative activity was given to the Lighthouse Drop-in, Waltham Cross, thanks to Broxbourne Borough Council who funded the project. Joanne, the arts development worker, visited the S E Herts forum, held at the Lighthouse, to meet service users and find out what they would really like to do. The consensus was drama. Ten people signed up and Dave, an actor/artist, ran a series of workshops leading to a performance of different scenes in front of everyone at the Drop-In.

Dave used a variety of exercises. For example, he asked people to take clips out of newspapers and create scenes based on them. He also gave out 'one-liners', such as 'it was you!' that had to be included in the role-play.

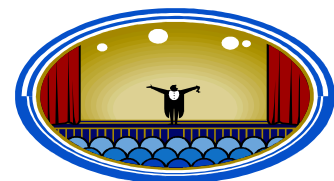
How did people find the experience? 'At first I thought I would feel stupid and embarrassed;' said Kim, 'but it was a real laugh! It helped by making you more confident doing things in front of other people. You could also see other people's talent develop.'

'I was very nervous to start,' said Frank. 'However, I got more confident and the applause at the end of the show was brilliant.'

'It was something to look forward to,' agreed David. 'It would be really good to do a play next time.'

That's the hope for the autumn - that there will be a further opportunity to develop the skills learnt and to put on a show in a local theatre. In the meantime, a vote of thanks to Joanne, the Council, Dave and all those who helped to make the project happen!

J Deakin



SERVICE USER FORUMS

Stevenage Forum

The Stevenage Survivors Forum is going from strength to strength. Members are working towards the opening of a drop-in centre to be managed and run entirely by service users. To get this off the ground, Viewpoint will be assisting during the planning stage and its services will be available at all stages of the project. A visit has been made to the Wot Nots project in Hatfield with a view of understanding the operations of its success. The plan is to work together with the team in Hatfield, build on its expertise and come up with a suitable project for Stevenage.

Meetings are held on the 2nd Monday of the month at 1pm. It is advisable to ring Christiana or Dennis beforehand to confirm the forum is running. See back page for contact details.

C Ashare



Proposed New forums

Plans are under way to set up new forums in the following areas:

North Herts, Buntingford and Bishops Stortford. Viewpoint is in the process of working alongside local groups and clubs to find the most suitable venue and time.

Plans are also underway to set up a service user forum in **Ware**. Viewpoint is in liaison with the RETHINK group at the Warehouse, 14 New Road, Ware, at which it is hoping to hold future service user forums.

C Ashare

NEWS

NEW DROP-IN HODDESDON

COME AND HAVE A LARK AT THE ARK !

The Ark Drop-in Club

Weds 11am - 2pm

Drinks and snacks available

Noah's Rooms, St Pauls's Church Hall,
Paul's Lane, Hoddesdon.

*Please contact Jean or Moreen on
01992 640858 for further details*

Viewpoint Membership

Viewpoint's membership is growing. The charity has signed up a group of service users delivering a user-run social club based in Watford called NOW (Nutters of Watford). This initiative was borne out of the need of service users to get together to engage in various activities and provide support to one other when services were inaccessible during the evenings or weekend. Well done to this user initiative!

Looking to the future, Viewpoint hopes to continue to link in with other service user organisations in order to strengthen the user voice within the county and enable services to be influenced more swiftly by user views. Affiliating service user groups with one another would make the total service user "group voice" more effective.

H.Straughan

Are you Mad for Poetry?



Following the huge success of last year's series of short films, Mad for Arts, the Community Channel and Media Trust Productions has been asked to make five more films for five (Channel five Television).

This year's theme is "Mad for Poetry" and we are looking for people with experience of mental health issues with whom we can collaborate. Do names such as Maya Angelou, Benjamin Zephaniah, Dylan Thomas, William Blake, Sylvia Plath, Siegfried Sassoon or Spike Milligan mean something special to you? We are looking for men and women of all ages from a broad spectrum of the community who have a strong interest in all kinds of poetry.

We are asking people to send us a brief outline of how a poem or part of a poem (or even a song lyric) has either helped them to cope with their condition, reflects their experience, explained it in some way or made them laugh.

Although the people who are in the films might themselves write poetry, the poets they choose to talk about should be well known to the general public.

We hope that the series will spark debate and creativity about people's own work on the Mad for Arts website in the same way as it did for the visual arts series.


If you'd be interested in taking part, email me at: magalim@mediatrust.org with a few short sentences explaining which poem speaks to you and relates to your experience of mental health issues. Alternatively if you'd prefer to have a chat you can phone me on: 020 7874 7656.

You can view last year's series of Mad for Arts films by logging onto <http://www.madforarts.org>

The films will be shown during the week following Mental Health Day on October 10th 2005.

Contact:
Magali Moreau
Associate Producer
Email: magalim@mediatrust.org
Phone: 020 7874 7656





Are you a current or past user of mental health services in Hertfordshire?

Would you like to help improve mental health services in the county?
Then **Viewpoint** would like to hear from you.

Viewpoint exists to **empower** and **support** people who use or have used mental health services to be part of the decision making process.

We do this by bringing together interested groups and individuals to get involved in the development, provision and monitoring of mental health services.

- ❖ We work with local user groups across the county to ensure users can take part equally, wherever they live in Hertfordshire.
- ❖ If you are thinking about setting up a user group in your area, we can offer you support and advice to get started.
- ❖ To keep you updated about what we do, we can send you a copy of our quarterly newsletter.
- ❖ Viewpoint trains and supports service users to take part in meetings to help plan and monitor mental health services.
- ❖ We also welcome your suggestions and ideas for involving service users in the development and provision of mental health services.

If you would like to get involved in helping to improve mental health services in Hertfordshire, we can offer you:

Support

- ❖ A chance to share experiences, information and expertise
- ❖ Support at meetings and travel expenses

Training

- ❖ Confidence, knowledge and skills for participation
- ❖ Background to local services
- ❖ Committee and meeting skills

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