Hello and welcome to the Spring 2005 edition of Reflections.

As usual and if we are lucky, a new year brings the promise of new and exciting developments and opportunities. Here at the Forum, this is very much the case. Over recent years we have talked about the Forum’s ongoing challenge to enable more “service users” – people who use or have used mental health services, or have experienced some form of mental illness – to become more involved with effecting how and what services are provided to mental health sufferers in our area. Now, this is really starting to take shape. On pages 2 and 3 of this packed issue of Reflections we introduce you to Sarah Battersby the newly appointed Women’s Mental Health Development Worker, employed by the North Dorset Primary Care Trust, who will be working closely with the Forum and looking for service users who would like to be involved with her work. Furthermore on page 7, we introduce our Service User Representatives who are heading up our new Service User Representation and Involvement project.

In addition to this, regular readers will notice that the Forum has some new faces and fresh blood. One of these is Andy Pask, our new Vice Chair, who reports on pages 8 and 9. These are exciting times and we are looking forward to building on the successes of the past with the new ideas and perspectives of those folk who are becoming more involved with the Forum’s work today. If you are interested in becoming more involved and would like to become part of a wider group of people who represent us at meetings, help to train mental health professionals, are involved in setting up peer support groups and the shaping of specific services, then please become a member of the Forum and tick the “service user involvement” box on page 9.

Also inside this edition, we have our usual and very popular Personal Experience article, followed by a feature about the First Tuesday Manic Depression Fellowship Self Help Group on pages 4 and 5, along with much more.

If you would like to make a contribution to Reflections, you can contact the Forum as below. Please keep sending in your articles, experiences, letters, poetry and anything else you would like included in a future edition of Reflections. Other readers find your views and experiences inspiring and profoundly helpful.

The Editorial Board
A new focus on gender sensitive practice within the mental health system aims to improve services for women, but why is this needed and why for women? In this article I explore the issues surrounding women’s mental health, past, present and future.

### Past
Throughout history women’s gender has influenced the mental health care they have received. Women’s accounts of mental health treatment stretch back to the 15th century where women could be named as witches and sentenced to death. From 16th century this was punishable by imprisonment in a psychiatric institution. By the 1950s and 1960s clinicians were still being taught that women were morally inferior to men, dependent and passive creatures. Historical accounts at this time show that regardless of diagnosis women were frequently locked up, physically, sexually and emotionally abused in asylums. Illness associated with childbirth such as post-natal depression or puerperal psychosis (a rare form of psychosis affecting 1 in 500 women in the weeks following childbirth) was often cited as a cause for admission. In fact my own grandmother was admitted with post-natal depression after the birth of my mother in 1953 to somewhere she can only describe as ‘an awful place’.

By the 1970s the women’s liberation movement, and more specifically Phyllis Chesler’s now renowned book, ‘Women and Madness’, highlighted the failures in the mental health system for women and raised the profile of gender issues. So how have things moved on?

### Present
Clearly the mental health services have, thankfully, moved on from the draconian methods of much of the 20th century and have improved for everyone. Current figures show that women and men do not differ in terms of prevalence of mental health problems they are indeed common in both sexes. However, there are significant differences in type and presentation of disorder, for example women are one and half times more likely than men to be diagnosed with depression and anxiety but show very little difference in rates of bipolar affective disorder and schizophrenia.

Research shows that women continue to experience significant social disadvantage, which in turn contributes enormously to their diagnosis and experience of mental health problems. Women constitute 75% of benefits claimants and are still paid significantly less than men often in part-time work due to childcare responsibilities because they are also more likely to be single parents. Locally Weymouth and Portland have the largest percentage of benefit claimants in Dorset and therefore amongst the highest levels of poverty.

These socio-economic factors often influence, if not determine, a woman’s sense of self-esteem and well-being and conversely her mental health. Other gender specific is-

---

### Contents

| Pg 2/3 | Local Mental Health News  
Sarah Battersby talks about Women’s Mental Health |
| Pg 3 | Hearing Voices Groups News |
| Pg 4/5 | Hazel’s Story |
| Pg 5 | 1st Tuesday Self Help Group |
| Pg 6 | Self Help Page |
| Pg 7 | Service Users Representatives |
| Pg 8/9 | Not an easy Act to Follow”;  
Vice Chair’s Report |
| Pg 9 | “Yes But ….” a final poetic comment by Patricia Hannah |
| Pg 10 | Forum Membership |
| Pg 11 | Carers & Club News |
| Pg 12 | Groups Information |
sues to consider include experiences of domestic violence and sexual abuse. According to national figures up to 30%-40% of women are survivors of some form of sexual abuse and 50% of women in touch with mental health services have experienced domestic violence.

What about Men? The current focus on women’s mental health does not imply that men’s mental health is not important. Historically services have not considered gender as a major factor during their development. Currently women have been identified as experiencing more psychosocial deprivation than men which, evidence shows, leads to significant mental health problems.

Future
Through Consultation with women the government has developed a Women’s Mental Health Strategy aimed at developing services sensitive to women’s needs (and it’s also the reason I have this job!). The documentation emphasizes a ‘whole person’ approach to women’s care where talking therapies and women-only services are key. Locally we are developing a Women’s Mental Health Strategy for this area and have begun working with our partners to develop better services for women throughout North and South West Dorset.

If you would like any further information, have any comments or would like to participate in Women’s Service User Steering group, I would love to hear from you. I can be contacted on 01305 267420 or email Sarah.Battersby@northdorset-pct.nhs.uk

Hearing Voices Network – Weymouth “Get Together”

On Wednesday 20th April 2005 the Weymouth branch of The Hearing Voices Network are holding a “Get Together” at the Weymouth Pavilion from 10-4.

The main aim of the “get together” is to introduce different ways of coping with the distress caused by hearing voices when people are experiencing psychosis. It also acts as a social event, which can help decrease social isolation and give people a change to share and discuss experiences and ways of coping that may have a benefit alongside medication.

The day will be split into two parts and workshops will be run in both. In the morning you will have the chance to try Mindfulness meditation, Yoga, Drama and Music workshops. The afternoon offers Aromatherapy, Yoga, Chakra Chanting, Mindfulness meditation and a guided walk around Weymouth.

“The Great Escape” art workshop will run throughout the day and a buffet lunch will be offered between 12 and 1pm.

Hearing Voices Network groups have been running since 1989 and the Weymouth branch have been meeting for over 3 years. The value of the group is shown by these quotes from group members, “It helps to hear other’s stories.” “Helps people share ways of coping and swap ideas about what has worked for them.” “Helps people know that they are not alone.”

If you are interested in coming to hear other’s experiences, to get information from the bookstall and handouts or to join in with workshops please contact Sue Ives on 01305 361000 to book a place.

New Voices Group
Alison, the Occupational Therapist at the unit at 20 Cornwall Road, Dorchester, has started a new informal peer support group for patients who hear voices. They are meeting on Thursday afternoons from 2—3 pm, at Cornwall Road. Anyone who would like to join should ask their care coordinator to submit a written referral.
Depression: it comes over me like a big dark cloud. I struggle for air. Everywhere seems muggy and stuffy; every move takes so much effort and feels like I am wading through treacle. Noise, such as traffic or road repairs, seems to rip right through me - I feel ultra-sensitive. My thoughts become heavy and negative. Every time I try to have a positive thought my brain quickly replaces it with something melancholic or macabre.

People talk about Mental Illness but in fact it is just as much a physical impairment - I become physically unable to function and get a lot of painful sensations. Why oh why am I like this? When did this affliction start? Was I born a depressive character? Perhaps in a past life I was some evil character and I have to pay for that with this strange and at times pervading sickness. Who knows?

Well, I believe it started when I was 10 years old, the year my mother's father, Grandpa Tom, died. Up 'til then my memories are almost all happy and sunny - life was fun. When he died I think I cried a few tears and then I sang a song, "The House of the Rising Sun", and after that I cannot remember any expression of sadness at his leaving or celebration of his life - blankness.

I did not see my mother or my grandmother shed a tear. I can understand my mother's numbness, as she believes that she was abused by her father. If that is true, then what an awful legacy for a father to leave his offspring. Not only his daughter has been traumatised, but the ripples percolate down to me too, his granddaughter, my children and siblings: in fact all his offspring have been tarnished until the cycle is broken.

The way I cope with this depression is to take each day as it comes and to try and get in touch with the authentic me. This is a slow process, as I learnt from my father to be a people pleaser and, from my mother, to be excruciatingly self-conscious and to hate myself. At last I am learning to nurture myself. I did not know how and I so I became very ill.

I now ask myself, what do I need physically? Am I tired, full of energy, hungry, thirsty, feeling sexy, in need of a big hug etc. etc? Instead of thinking what I 'should', 'ought' or 'could' do, I ask my body to tell me what I actually need.

I also find exercise invaluable - if I am active, such as going for a jog or a brisk walk, the cloud of depression lifts a bit or sometimes completely. I try and vary the activities I do - cycling, swimming, tennis, running etc. The other key for me to mental well being is rest and sleep. I tend to do too much and then get over-tired to the point where I am unable to sleep. One way of helping to avoid this is to make sure I have a rest after lunch and to get to bed reasonably early.

Going High: Sometimes going high can be quite a pleasant experience, when it almost feels like I am going into paradise - no more worries, everything just becomes perfect. As I walk along it feels as though the trees are bearing sweet fruits for my delectation. If I want an orange all I have to do is reach up and pluck one. I feel more beautiful, and my skin looks browner, and everything seems simpler and more manageable, instead of my usual life where everything seems such hard work, such an uphill struggle. If other people like going manic or high and they experience these same feelings of peace and paradise, I can understand the attrac-

Our Reader Survey highlighted the popularity of ‘Personal Experience Stories’. Why not share your experience with other readers of this Magazine. You can give your name, or a nom de plume, or even just an initial, whichever you choose, to protect your privacy. Do contact us to discuss the possibilities. Remember, your story can bring hope and comfort to other sufferers.
Hazel’s story continued, and
More mental health news.

Bipolar Disorder or ‘Manic Depression’ is a term used to describe a form of mental illness in which sufferers experience extreme mood swings—between ‘high’ (which doctors call mania or the milder hypomania) or ‘low (which doctors call euthymia). The illness begins most commonly in early adult life and its first onset may be associated with stressful life events such as exams, problems at work or at home, childbirth or bereavement.

The frequency of episodes vary—on average sufferers will have 4 attacks over a 10 year period but all individuals have their own pattern of illness. Although episodes of illness can resolve spontaneously, this can take some time and being ill can have a profound effect on the sufferer’s life. So, it is important to seek help from your GP, Psychiatrist, Mental Health Nurse or Self Help Group, as soon as symptoms occur.

If you are a mental health service user; a carer of a service user; needing to be heard; feeling isolated; lacking in self esteem and confidence; angry; unsure; needing information/advice; caring for someone with a Manic Depression; someone with ideas on self management or complemen-

tary treatment; not able to talk to friends or work colleagues; if friends don’t seem to know how to help— become part of a bipolar/manic depressive fellowship self help group.

You will find mutual support with others in a similar situation to your own. The more you get to know about bipolar conditions the more likely you are to be able to help yourself and manage your condition.

The group is run entirely by users and carers with help, advice, training and support from the staff of the Manic Depression Fellowship. All groups are open—you can join at any time. Just come along on the night.

First Tuesday MDF Self Help Group

Meeting on the first Tuesday of every month in Dorchester, this Group offers a safe environment for people to learn more about bipolar conditions (manic depression), share information and benefit from peer support

Important to express my ‘high’ side in a safe way.

Contact the Manic Depression Fellowship on 020 7793 2630

For further Information on First Tuesday MDF Support Group ring Nick on 0790 555 0768.

First Tuesday Self Help Group meets at Friends Meeting Place, 8 Holloway Road, Dorchester on the First Tuesday of the month, 7—9 pm
Over the last few issues of Reflections, our list of “Helpline, Support and Information” numbers has grown and we have also received feedback that it is a popular and well used section of our newsletter. If you have any useful numbers that you would like to share with other readers, or would just like to comment on this page (or anything else!) please contact the Forum office.

### Help/Support/Information Lines:

**Bristol Mind Helpline.** 0117-983-0330  
**Cruse-Bereavement Care**  
(Western Dorset) 01305-260216  
**MIND Helpline.** 08457-660-163  
(Mon—Fri, 9.15am to 4.45pm)  
**Mindline.** (Somerset) 01823-276892  
(Fri & Sat 8pm to midnight)  
**NHS Direct.** 0845-4647  
**ParentLine Plus.** 0808-800-22-22 (Free confidential helpline, for anyone in a parenting role)  
**Relate.** (Dorset) 01305-262285  
(Yeovil & District) 01935-472485  
**RETHINK Helpline.** 020-8974-6814  
(Mon to Friday, 10am to 3 pm)  
**RETHINK.** (formerly NSF) 0208-974-6814  
**Samaritans.** (National) 0845-790-9090  
(IWeymouth) 01305-771777  
(Yeovil) 01935-476455  
**SaneLine.** 0845-767-8000 (12 noon to 2am)  
**Wand Support Line (N. Devon).** 0808-800-0132  
**Youngminds’ FREE Helpline.** 0845-766-0163 (Mon & Fri 10am –1pm, Tue to Thur 1– 4pm.)  

### Domestic Violence:

**Dorset Women’s Outreach Project.**  
Freephone 0800-58 77-480  
**National Domestic Violence Helpline**  
24 hrs: Freephone—0300 2000247  
**Women’s Aid Advice Line.** 01305-262444  
**Women’s Refuges:**  
Bournemouth. 01202-547755  
North Dorset. 01747-858555  
West Dorset. 01305-262444  
Weymouth. 01305 772295  
Yeovil. 01935-427594  
**Rape Crisis Line.** 01202-547-445  

### Drugs & Alcohol:

**Alcoholics Anonymous.** 01904-64-40-26 (to find local group)  
**ADFAM.** 020 7929-8900 (confidential support and info for families/friends of drug users)  
**Al-Anon Family Groups.** 020-7430-0888  
**Battle Against Tranquillisers.** 0117-966-329  
**CADAS.** 01305-266535 (Community Alcohol & Drug Advisory Service)  

### Advocacy / Mediation / Advice:

**Citizen’s Advice Adviceguide.**  
www.adviceguide.org.uk  
**Consumer Credit Counselling Service.** 0800-138-111  
**Dorset Advocacy.** 01305-251033  
**Dorset Mental Health Advocacy.** 01305 261483  
**Dorset Family Mediation.** 01305 751781  
**Shaftesbury Advice Centre.** 01747 855822  

### Children:

**Childline.** 0800-1111  
**Children’s Legal Centre Advice Line.** 01206-873-820  
**Children’s Society Waves.** 01305-768768 (Advice and Info. for young people under 25)  
**Kidscape** 0845-1-205-204  
**National Youth Advocacy Service.** 0151-342-7852  
**Outlooks—NCH Action for Children** 01303-823794  
**Routes (Dorchester).** 01305-261318  
**The Shaftesbury Young People’s Project (TOBYS)** 01747-850860  
**Tides (Weymouth).** 01305-780563  
**Treads (Young People).** 01258-455449  

---

### Contact the Forum Office Between 9.30 am and 3.30 pm on 01305 257172  
**Contact the Forum’s Advocacy Service on 01305 261483**  
**Ask for Catherine Bramble** (West of the County)  
**or Sarah Sherran** (East of the County)  

### Dorset Social Care and Health (out of hours) 01202 668123  

---

### Self-help/campaigning groups:

**Carers National Association.** 020-7490-8818  
**Depression Alliance.** 020-7633-0557  
**Eating Disorders Association.** 01603-621414  
**First Step to Freedom.** 01926-851608  
**Hearing Voices Network.** 0161-834-5768  
**Help & Care (Pokesdown).** 01202-432288  
**Manic Depression Fellowship.** 020-7793-2600  
**National Self Harm Network.** PO Box 16190, London NW1 3WW  
**No Panic.** 01952-590545  
**Pax** (for anxiety) 0208-315026  
**Prisoners Advice Service.** 020-7405-8090  
**Shelter** 0808-800-4444.0380 (Dorset)  
**Triumph Over Phobia.** 01225-330353

---

### Drugs & Alcohol:

**Alcoholics Anonymous.** 01904-64-40-26 (to find local group)  
**ADFAM.** 020 7929-8900 (confidential support and info for families/friends of drug users)  
**Al-Anon Family Groups.** 020-7430-0888  
**Battle Against Tranquillisers.** 0117-966-329  
**CADAS.** 01305-266535 (Community Alcohol & Drug Advisory Service)  

---

### Dorset Drug & Alcohol Advisory Service. 01305-472195 or 01305-760799  
**Drinkline.** 0345-32-02-02  
**National Drugs Helpline.** 0800-77-66-00

---

### Self-help/campaigning groups:

**Carers National Association.** 020-7490-8818  
**Depression Alliance.** 020-7633-0557  
**Eating Disorders Association.** 01603-621414  
**First Step to Freedom.** 01926-851608  
**Hearing Voices Network.** 0161-834-5768  
**Help & Care (Pokesdown).** 01202-432288  
**Manic Depression Fellowship.** 020-7793-2600  
**National Self Harm Network.** PO Box 16190, London NW1 3WW  
**No Panic.** 01952-590545  
**Pax** (for anxiety) 0208-315026  
**Prisoners Advice Service.** 020-7405-8090  
**Shelter** 0808-800-4444.0380 (Dorset)  
**Triumph Over Phobia.** 01225-330353

---

### Advocacy / Mediation / Advice:

**Citizen’s Advice Adviceguide.**  
www.adviceguide.org.uk  
**Consumer Credit Counselling Service.** 0800-138-111  
**Dorset Advocacy.** 01305-251033  
**Dorset Mental Health Advocacy.** 01305 261483  
**Dorset Family Mediation.** 01305 751781  
**Shaftesbury Advice Centre.** 01747 855822
The Forum has been successful in acquiring some independent grant funds to develop a project to pay service users to be representatives.

There are four of us at the moment and we will be located about the area. We will be representing the views of our service users to those whose job it is to listen and act on them when planning and implementing services.

How well it works depends on how well we can establish relationships with professionals and with service users over the next few months.

There’s a great deal of work to be done.

Who are we?

The people involved are Ros Copson, Jon Gilbert, Sue Forber (“People who have actually used mental health services have a wealth of experiences which should be central to improving existing services and designing future ones”), and Richard Peacocke (“Grassroots is where it’s all at”). We are all based at the Forum office in Dorchester, but we will be working from local bases in Sherborne, Gillingham, Blandford, Dorchester and Weymouth and are employed by the West Dorset Mental Health Forum. We expect to be working 8 hours a week on average.

What will we be doing?

We aim to meet with local groups and professionals (including CMHT’s, social workers, CPN’s), carers and service users to gather information about how you see your services (or lack of them) being delivered in your areas – in other words, a grassroots view. Then we will feed this information back to those responsible for providing services, in the North Dorset Primary Care Trust (“NHS”) and Social Care & Health (“Social Services”), with a view to making changes happen.

How will we do that?

We are employed as YOUR representatives and that carries weight with the Government downwards, as far as your views are concerned. We are also service users ourselves and have some idea about service users’ experiences and we are looking forward to putting your views across at whatever level is necessary. We ask that you, service users and service providers both, in groups and as individuals tell us honestly what you think needs to be improved AND what is going well. Let us know about your areas of concern – transport, lack of opportunities or support, that sort of thing. We will do the rest.

What are we doing at the moment?

Well, we are being put through a comprehensive and accumulative induction programme here at the Forum, including looking at exactly what each area offers already and where we can slot in most effectively, as well as understanding what opportunities for service user representation currently exist. As you can see, we have had our photos taken and we will be getting the rest of the paraphernalia together over the next few weeks, ready to promote ourselves in the community.

Watch this space! We are all looking forward to getting to know our areas and the people within them.

Richard Peacocke, on behalf of the Forum’s Service User Representatives
Patricia Hannah ....

A vibrant presence and enquiring and perceptive mind ....

.... sorely missed by everybody who worked with her.

It is possible to turn a negative experience into a positive one.

We will make sure that your voice is listened to and acted upon.

“Not an Easy Act to Follow”

Last year’s Forum AGM saw the swan-song of our Co-Chair, Patricia Hannah, who has departed for pastures new in Cornwall. Patricia was involved with the Forum for the best part of ten years and will be very sorely missed by everybody that worked with her – as much for her vibrant presence and enquiring and perceptive mind, as for her more public role in representing and working for the Forum and service-users in so many capacities (something which she did with tireless dedication and energy). Meanwhile, in her absence it has fallen to me to try and fill her role in presenting this section of Reflections, a task which I readily agreed to do but I am now wondering what on earth to say! In so many ways Patricia is a hard act to follow.

One question which many of you may wish to ask is, “who is this Andy Pask?” I won’t tell you my whole life story (it’s not that exciting!) but I hope that a few lines about my involvement with the Forum will serve as a short introduction. I joined the Executive Committee in the Autumn of 2002 as a service-user, having been diagnosed as a chronic depressive after leaving my post as a teacher at the Portland YOI because of work-related stress.

At the time I knew very little about mental health issues and was pleasantly surprised when Becky convinced me that it would be possible for me to turn what I thought of as a negative experience into a positive one, by adding my voice with the other members of the Forum in trying to improve both the image and treatment of service-users.

Since then I have stuffed envelopes, licked stamps, done photocopying etc as well as contributed to the monthly Executive meetings, not to mention attended a conference on depression in Cardiff with John Eveleigh, as representatives of the Forum. I have also been privileged to see the Forum grow in stature, scope, professionalism and effectiveness, moving from the rather familiar but dilapidated premises on High West Street to the present efficient offices in Durngate Street and become the respected voice that it is in the County today. We have been truly blessed with our wonderful staff (both paid and voluntary), who all seem only too willing to “walk that extra mile” in their work which benefits us all.

To return to my own tale, after working nights, stacking shelves at Tesco’s in Dorchester for three years, I managed get a job with Magna Housing Association in 2003 and returned thankfully to a diurnal lifestyle. Unfortunately, this has meant that I have been unable to offer quite as much of my time directly at the Forum offices, but I hope that my new role has (and will continue to do so) given me the opportunity to contribute in other ways. Thanks to my own line-manager who used to work for Rethink, I am still able to attend most Exec meetings and have even managed to attend a recent National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE) conference at Taunton wearing my Magna “hat”.

The theme of the day was “Housing – Getting the Basics Right” and it highlighted just how ignorant and insensitive some RSLs (Registered Social Landlords) can be when dealing with people with mental health issues. Only too often it seems that RSLs care only about collecting rents and have little or no experience or training, of how best to work with and support mental health sufferers.

I am glad to say that this situation is changing, slowly admittedly, but in the right direction. At Magna we have managed to book the 20 or so staff in my own section of Supported Housing onto training courses with NIMHE South Somerset on several mental health topics ranging from self-harming to schizophrenia and have also attended courses regarding young people’s mental health run by Connexions. Even better, Magna have greatly increased their in-house equality and diversity training (which is compulsory for all of their staff) to encompass the ramifications of the DDA (Disability Discrimination Act), which of course covers mental health service-users.

My visit to Taunton also highlighted just how lucky we are to live in Dorset. For all of its faults our County is streets ahead of many others and this is largely due to the work of the Forum. One of the workshops on the day was led by Peter Atkins from the
Vice Chair, Andy Pask, Reports
(….and a final poetic comment from ‘Trish’)
Contact us by:
Completing the form at the bottom of this page
* 
Dropping in to see us.
(Phone first to check that someone is in!)
* 
Phoning to speak to Shaun, Becky, or one of the Advocates.
* 
E-mailing us with your comments.
* 
See the front page for our telephone number, postal and email addresses

Are you a mental health sufferer, a mental health service user, or someone who is interested in mental health issues? Do you have views that you wish to share with other mental health sufferers or professionals about your illness, services you have received, or ideas for future services? Would you like your voice to be heard? Would you welcome the opportunity to be part of a growing group of like-minded and respected individuals who can make a difference to the way mental health services are delivered? If so, then read on………………

In the last few years, "user-led" movements like the Forum have become widely accepted as the best way of putting forward the interests of their members – in this case, mental health service users and their carers. Over the years, we have all worked very hard to persuade those who provide our services, to listen to us and what we say we want, rather than let them decide what's right and wrong for us without asking. Now they are listening! BUT winning those battles doesn't come free! The Forum has to continue to find enough service users and members to join the Forum and become involved in its work, in order to provide a loud enough voice and ensure that service users' views are well represented. As a member of the Forum, you would be able to share your views and hear those of others. Your views help to shape the services that are available to all mental health sufferers.

Until recently, the Forum’s Executive Committee has been responsible both for ensuring the smooth running of the Forum itself, as well as for representing the views and concerns of mental health service users in Dorset. However, the Forum has now developed and grown too big to be working in this way. There is a greater call for service user involvement and views than we have capacity for within the Executive Committee, so we are expanding ourselves, and how we operate, to accommodate this growing need.

Please think about offering your help. This could be anything from just filling in the membership form to add yourself to our mailing list, to being willing to talk to us about helping as a volunteer, or as a service user representative, or as a member of the Executive Committee. You don't need experience – we will help, train and advise you.

Join us if you can. It’s Your Forum. It’s Your Voice.

Membership of the Forum.
You can become a member of the West Dorset Mental Health Forum, free of charge. It is open to anyone who wishes to join. Members will be informed of meetings and relevant events taking place in and around Dorset. They will also be sent a copy of our Reflections newsletter regularly. A 24 hour telephone answering service is available when the office is not staffed. To apply for your free Membership card, cut out and complete the form on the back of this page and return it to the Forum at 29—29A Durngate St, Dorchester DT1 1JP

TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP

1. FULL MEMBERSHIP: Open to users of Mental Health Services in Dorset. Members will be entitled to take part fully and have voting rights.

2. ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP: Open to anyone interested in mental health. Members will be entitled to take part fully but have no voting rights.

The information you send in will be completely confidential at all times and will be subject to the 1998 Data Protection Act.
Carers and Club News

Oaktree Club
The Committee has been working very hard throughout the year and is enjoying the challenge of running the Club. A major item on the agenda at our sixth AGM on 11th March was - How do we raise the money to keep going? Anyone with ideas on that subject is invited to contact Andrew Court (01305 362094) or Ros Copson (01305 257172) or any Committee member. We meet at the Crossroads Centre, Chickerell Road, Weymouth on Fridays (7 - 9.30 pm). Once a month we do something different such as skittles or ten pin bowling and ideas for other events can be given to any of the Committee. Another monthly event is our Sunday Lunch, which has always been very popular. Recently these have been at the Royal British Legion where we have made very welcome.

Green Art Group
We now meet in a room in the Library in Weymouth and the group, which has eight members, enjoy being there. Georgie, our college art student who coaxes the talents out of the members, is very popular. If you would like to join us, contact Andrew Court or Ros Copson. If you find it difficult to get about we use Weyline taxis if it is necessary.

Willow Tree Group
Provides a social meeting place at Castleman Bungalow in Blandford for members on a drop-in basis on Wednesdays between 10am and 2pm, with lunch for those who want it. We also meet once a month for a Video Night, and have occasional outings for coffee or shopping, and have raised our own funds by arranging raffles and Bring and Buy Sales. Having successfully visited the Mulberry Tree Group at one of their fortnightly meetings at the British Legion in Shaftesbury, it has been agreed to do this on a monthly basis. The visit is a grand opportunity to meet new people in another group, go out for lunch and do a spot of retail therapy!

N & W Dorset Carers Forum
The Forum would like to take this opportunity to welcome a new member, Mrs Helen Crew, from Shaftesbury, and our recently appointed administration officer, Richard Peacocke. Eileen initiated and organises the Shaftesbury Carers Support Group and Richard has already organised our huge backlog of paperwork! We continue to be a presence and represent your views at the Clinical Governance meetings. So if you have any issues concerning service delivery, please get in touch with Paddy Radford, our Chair, on 01305 257172.

If you are interested in the work of the Forum and would like to join us please do not hesitate to contact Paddy and come to one of our monthly meetings

Dates for your Diary: Open evenings are held at the Corn Exchange. We have a guest speaker and refreshments and an opportunity to meet with Forum members and other carers and professionals. Next dates are on Thursdays July 21st and October 13th. We will be sending out invitations as usual nearer the time.

Mulberry Tree Group
Our very pro-active and member led group, meeting in Gillingham, is very friendly and sociable and visitors are made to feel very welcome. Many of us are volunteers in all aspects of the running of the group.

Monday is Craft Day led by Lynne, our favourite CCO (Community Care Officer). Many items have been made and sold at various events to raise money for our funds. Last year we raised over £500. We have our own Gardening group which runs throughout the summer, with flower beds outside our building and now, with the spring, flowers are coming into bloom. We also have a small veggie patch and grow a selection of vegetable and salad crops. During the year we have trips and social evenings.

Coming Soon: Life Skills and Computer Course. Information and Advice Drop-In, which will provide confidential support from a member of the CMHT (Community Mental Health Team)

To be put on the mailing list for the Carers Forum give your address to Richard P. 01305 257172

For more information about Social Groups and projects in North Dorset contact Florence Spencer WDMHF Project Manager (North Dorset) on 01747 825400 or Mobile 07979 437076

For times & Contact details for these and many other groups, see the Back Page

Remember to let us have YOUR Group News
SELF-HELP GROUPS, SOCIAL CLUBS + DROP-INS

Saturday Social Group
5 Carlton Road North, Weymouth. Open each Saturday 7pm to 9.30pm. Contact any member of staff, on 01305 771494

Green Art Group
The Library, Weymouth. Meets weekly, Thurs. 1pm to 4pm. Contact Ros Copson on 01305 257172

The Lantern.
2 Ranelagh Rd, Weymouth. Open Monday – Friday. Support Centre offering advice on Benefits, Housing, Advocacy and Counselling. Contact Mick Bramham on 01305 787940

Four Leaf Clover Club
1 Abbey Road, Sherborne. Open Mon. to Fri. 9.30 am to 3.15pm. Sat’ 10 am to 4 pm. Contact Liz McGaw on 01935 389192

Willow Tree Group
Castleman Bungalow, Blandford. Meets Wed. 10am to 2pm (includes lunch). Last Fri, 7pm, Social Evening. Contact Florence Spencer on 01747 825400. Mob. 07979 437076

Bridport Self-Help Group
5 Downes Street, Bridport. Meets every Friday 10am to 3pm. Contact on 01308 459762

Lyme Regis Social Club
Woodmead Hall, Lyme Regis. Meets every Wednesday 10am to 1pm. Contact Caroline Gamble on 01308 459762

Weymouth Carers Group
St John’s Hall, Westway Rd, Weymouth. Meets 2nd Thursday in the month at 7pm to 9pm. Contact Marilyn Hills on 01308 459762, or Mobile: 07866 252046

Mulberry Tree Group
Queen Street Bungalow, Gillingham. Meets Mon & Fri 10am to 4pm, Thurs. 10am to 1pm, Alt Thurs. 7 to 9pm, alt. Sundays for Lunch. Also on 2nd & 4th Tues at British Legion, Shaftesbury. Contact Florence Spencer on 01747 825400 mobile: 07979 437076

Oak Tree Clubhouse
Crossroads Centre, Weymouth. Meets weekly, Fridays 7pm to 9.30pm. Wed. 6pm monthly for outings. Sunday lunchtimes once a month. Contact Andy Court on 01305 362094

First Tuesday Self-Help Group (Manic Depression Fellowship)
Monthly, 1st Tuesday, at Friends Meeting House, Holloway Rd, Dorchester. 7 to 9 pm. Contact 079 0555 0768 (National MDF; 08456 340543 or 020 7793 2630)

‘Tuesday Drop-In’
5 Downes Street, Bridport. Open Tues. 10am to 3pm. Contact Caroline Gamble On 01308 459762

North and West Dorset Carers Forum
Meets on last Thursday in the month, 6pm to 8 pm, at the Forum offices: 29—29A Durngate St, Dorchester. Contact Richard Peacocke or Paddy Radford through Forum office on 01305 257172

Willow Tree Group
Castleman Bungalow, Blandford. Meets Wed. 10am to 2pm (includes lunch). Last Fri, 7pm, Social Evening. Contact Florence Spencer on 01747 825400. Mob. 07979 437076

Bridport RETHINK Relatives and Carers Support Group
5 Downes St. Bridport. Meets on 4th Mondays of the month (except Bank Holidays), 3 pm. Contact Sally Montague-Johnstone on 01308 485316

CARERS + RELATIVES GROUPS

Willow Tree Group
Castleman Bungalow, Blandford. Meets Wed. 10am to 2pm (includes lunch). Last Fri, 7pm, Social Evening. Contact Florence Spencer on 01747 825400. Mob. 07979 437076

Bridport RETHINK Relatives and Carers Support Group
5 Downes St. Bridport. Meets on 4th Mondays of the month (except Bank Holidays), 3 pm. Contact Sally Montague-Johnstone on 01308 485316

REFLECTIONS is produced by the West Dorset Mental Health Forum with funding kindly provided by Dorset Social Care and Health.
All material © WDMHF and Contributors
The views in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Forum.
For copies of REFLECTIONS, and if you wish to be placed on our mailing list, contact:
REFLECTIONS, 29-29A Durngate Street, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1JP. Tel: 01305 257172
Artwork by Christine Partington. Printed by Remous 01963 250920