Hello and welcome to the Winter 2006/2007 edition of Reflections. The Forum wishes everyone, especially mental health sufferers, a peaceful Christmas and a very Happy and successful New Year.

Looking back through previous Reflections editorials, we always say how busy and challenging the preceding months have been and this year has been no exception! This bumper issue of Reflections goes some way towards explaining why this has been the case, with so many changes and developments happening around us. These are certainly exciting times and, with so much to report, Reflections is something of a ‘Meat and Two Veg’ edition this time. We hope you will feel well nourished as a result!

On the menu for this edition are articles on the changes to the NHS Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities, changes to the provision of mental health day services and the presenting challenges for staff and service users, the development of service user involvement in the provision of substance misuse services, the opening of the new Forum charity shop in Blandford and much more. As usual we include the Self help page which many of you tell us you find really useful. Other regular features are our Chair’s Report, and another personal experience story.

We’d like to thank all our contributors and to remind you that, 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 and anything else you would like included in a future edition of Reflections. Other readers find your views and experiences inspiring and profoundly helpful and supportive.

Some news hot off the press…… It was agreed at the Forum Annual General Meeting in November 2005 that the West Dorset Mental Health Forum should consider changing its name, to reflect the area that it now serves. After consultation it was voted at this year’s AGM in November that the Forum should become known as the Dorset Mental Health Forum. Watch out for changes to our literature and forthcoming events in 2007.

The Editorial Board

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Changes to PCT's and SHA's

Continuing change – that’s what we have to expect from the NHS in general, and mental health services are no exception. But apart from the changes within mental health services referred to elsewhere in this magazine, what changes are happening to the NHS locally and regionally?

Firstly, the merger has taken place of the three Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) across Dorset, to form one county-wide PCT, named Dorset PCT. The new PCT continues to provide the mental health services formerly provided by North Dorset PCT - so the staff in our Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs) are now employed by Dorset PCT. The new PCT shares the same geographical boundaries as Dorset County Council, which should in theory promote easier partnership working.

Secondly, the merger has taken place of several former Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs), including Dorset & Somerset SHA, to form one regional authority stretching from Cornwall to Gloucestershire, named NHS South West. Their role will be very much centred on driving forward service improvements – they will scrutinise, monitor and evaluate what PCTs and other health providers are doing to fulfil the government’s health policies.

The other big changes yet to emerge with any clarity, are centred on commissioning. Commissioning is the process of deciding what services are needed according to local needs, then developing specifications for those services, and then purchasing them by means of contracts or agreements with providers. One form of commissioning coming into being from next April is Practice Based Commissioning, or PBC, in primary care. This means that GPs will have funding to commission some services, including primary care mental health services. As for secondary care services (including in-patient and Community Mental Health Team services), it is not yet clear whether Dorset PCT will be a commissioner as well as a service provider, or whether another Trust will take on the commissioning role.

We at the Forum are very keen to ensure that service users are central to the new commissioning processes, so that we can influence how money is spent, and what shape services take. You can be assured that, whoever emerges as the commissioner for our local mental health services, the Forum will be making early contact with them, to ensure that service users become an integral part of the commissioning process.

Dorset Bus Pass

If you are receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) at the medium or higher rate and are on the local electoral role, then you are eligible for a Dorset bus pass. The bus pass can be used on any bus – First, Sureline etc, but not on coaches. It can be used for any journey as long as it originates and ends in Dorset and doesn’t require a change of services outside the County. The bus pass can only be used for “off peak” travel, so for travel after 9.30am and is renewable annually.

To apply, go along to your local Borough Council office with your latest DLA award letter. A photograph will be taken while you are there and your bus pass will be created on the spot, for you to take away with you.
Talking to mental health service users about service user involvement conjures up images of ‘grannies’ and ‘eggs’. For users of substance misuse services, it is arguably a different story, there is still much to be done.

To that end, my desk sits in the inspirational space that is the ‘West Dorset Mental Health Forum’.

Because of a difference in service provision for mental health and substance misuse users, and for clarity, I am considering the issues as slightly separate, while in no way disregarding the possible co-occurrence (dual diagnosis).

Like those with mental health issues, people with substance misuse difficulties come from a variety of backgrounds and possess a variety of skills.

At the time of publication I will be five months into a one year project to develop substance misuse service user involvement in the design, through to the delivery and assessment of services across Dorset. The Project is overseen by the Drug Action Team (DAT), a local partnership agency. The onward task is to consider the involvement of carers and young people and the place for advocacy.

So, it’s about changing culture, entering into dialogue, encouraging communication that is meaningful and understood by all stakeholders, about transparency and about a ‘normality’ in consulting service users when decisions are to be made that affect all substance misuse services and their recipients, past, present and possible. It’s also about challenging attitudes; of service users; between service user groups; between ‘professionals’ and between service users and ‘professionals’.

A constituted and maturing Dorset Service User Forum (Substance Misuse), with an elected chairman has been established. The Forum acts as a conduit for service user views via representation at appropriate meetings and networking with other groups; locally, regionally and nationally.

The project is about opportunity and support, not coercion. There are ethical considerations and participants need to be aware of their safe limits and not endanger their own ‘treatment’ journey.

Given the rurality of the county, involvement in satellite groups, or ‘clinics’ is encouraged. Wherever service users are in the county, they have the opportunity to be heard, be it a whisper or something considerably louder!

Like mental health, substance misuse does not exist in isolation; there are more related issues than service users... Becoming involved allows for peer support and to consider ‘wrap-around’ issues and services and their impact within the ‘treatment’ journey.

Sarah Kay-Hawker
Participation Co-ordinator

Council Tax Rebate

The Department for Work and Pensions states that as many as 3 in 10 people who could be entitled to Council Tax Benefit don’t claim. For pensioners it’s 4 in 10 people and for people who own their own homes it’s even higher at 6 in 10 people.

Council Tax Benefit could help towards some or all of your Council Tax bill if you are on a low income, even if you own your own home and whether or not you work. Your council will be able to tell you if you qualify for Council Tax Benefit, by taking into account your individual circumstances, your age and whether or not you live alone.

Contact your local council for a claim form and further information by telephone, in person, or by visiting your local council’s website. Further information can also be seen on the Department for Work and Pensions website: www.dwp.gov.uk
When my mental instabilities first showed, nobody seemed to know or care what they indicated.

A long series of Court battles caused constant pressure....

...it all came to a head in 1998...

A brilliant key worker helped me follow a path towards recovery..... ..... but recovery can be fragile.

My personal journey through mental ill health began quite a few years ago, was exacerbated by later occurrences, and came to a head as the 20th Century folded itself up and we turned into a new Millennium.

Many people saw the unwrapping of the year 2000 as a positive adventure into the future. Fireworks flew high and people cheered and celebrated. I was ill in an inpatient unit, unable to care for myself anymore.

I had been a bomb squad officer for many years, had seen a lot of the world and had made holes in most of it, and had seen a couple of wars. This is when my mental instabilities first showed, but nobody seemed to know or care what they indicated. I became lost in myself and frightened of loud noises and confrontation – not a good thing in my trade, and I became a bad time-keeper and somewhat sloppy in appearance.

I left the Army when it all got too much and joined the Dorset Ambulance Service (before Paramedics, so we did it all) and then the Prison Service. In the meantime, I had been divorced, lost contact with my two boys, and remarried. I became a high-flier in the Prison Service, being seconded to nurse training and then taking over my own hospital wing as a healthcare manager.

I then got divorced again, and so began a long series of Court battles for contact with my 8-year old daughter. These battles continued until she was 16 and old enough to make up her own mind where she lived.

The mental instability initiated by my experiences in the Army was made worse by the constant pressure of the Court cases and the need to service the massive bills I was left with. It all came to a head in 1998, when a series of car crashes left me anxious and depressed.

I found I could not leave the house, was having delusions about people planting bombs on my front gate or car, or MI5 officials watching me all the time. Low-flying aircraft would frighten me and helicopters were seen as a real and present threat. On top of all this, I was afraid to drive or be driven, and very nervous about walking down a busy road by myself.

This period saw me try to kill myself eight times and in eight different ways: I tried jumping off a railway bridge; sitting on railway lines; overdosing on medication; walking in the middle of roads; eating rotten meat; freezing myself to death; drowning myself, and so on. To my utter frustration at the time, none of these worked – luckily.

I was allocated a key worker and she was brilliant. She went out of her way to help me follow a path towards recovery without being sympathetic, along with work at Psychological Services, new medication, social outlets, and so on. I got my money sorted out as best I could and the Court cases stopped. I even joined an MSc programme in Liverpool University to start my academic life going again. Then, as often happens, the bottom dropped out once more.

I had been living with my girlfriend for over five years when I discovered that she had been seeing other men. The relationship crashed and so did I, proving to me how fragile recovery can be. The crash was not immediate but the rot was there. I took up my place at Liverpool University and worked too hard. The Christmas period saw me come home to an empty house and a stay as an inpatient over the holidays. This was October 1999 and the Millennium was rushing at us.

I sold my house during this time and wish now I hadn’t as shortly afterwards my circumstances improved and I wanted to...
be back in it – c’est la vie – but now I had a flat and was settled again. I passed my course and my daughter came to live with me and act as my carer. Things ticked over for a couple of years.

My daughter was pointed towards the Carer’s Forum and the help they can offer to carers in distress – as she obviously was at that time; looking after her dad is getting things the wrong way round, after all. Through her going to the Carers Forum, I met Becky at the Service Users Forum. I sat for three hours and waited while my daughter met with Marilyn, and I read all the Reflections on the table. I then volunteered to “do something” but heard no more for ages. I nagged Becky on our next visit and she gave me some basic administration work – stuffing envelopes or something – and, from that, here I am.

My mental illness has resulted in a skewed life, where I am able to operate quite well academically but can not deal at all well with emotional matters. I have been through CBT and interviews with top psychologists in London, worked through all my suicide bids and self-harming activities, tip-toed through wobbly periods and crashed or got better, needed medication and tried most of them or quit treatment without a second’s thought, been absolutely lost 50 metres from home and yet able to navigate to the Scottish borders for a holiday.

So, how does my illness affect me now, six or so years later? Well, I had expected to be better by now and back in a well-paid job somewhere, rebuilding my life towards retirement, but that hasn’t happened and I remain a service user. I still get very anxious (I hate driving but have to do it) and depressed. I continue to have paranoid delusions and hallucinations – I feel and smell things and see movements where there are none. I have trouble sleeping at times and wake up in a cold sweat after horrible dreams. I am much better when in company than when alone for long periods.

But not everything is bad. Life changes rarely come one-sided. Since being ill and surviving, I have gained an MSc and a post-graduate diploma and am starting now on a doctorate in professional practice with Bournemouth University – this is part-time and will take four years, so I have my future plotted out till then at least. My daughter has been my carer and now has a settled boyfriend and family of her own. I have a sensible and lovely new girlfriend who knows all about my illness and goes with me to CPA meetings and meets the psychiatrist and my Care Co-ordinator.

I still take medication and have low and wobbly times. These are easier to deal with because I have learned to plan for them and put tools in place for when they threaten, but I have learnt that recovery is a brittle thing and I am very wary of changing emotional circumstances.

My work? That has blossomed into me being a Service User Representative, and this is a role I take very seriously. I only work about ten hours a week as that is all I can manage, but I try to use those few hours as best I can. I hope I am an asset to the local service users and I seem to be making progress in some areas while watching things slide in others. But I take things in my stride and don’t overdo things anymore.

I don’t want a repeat of the Millennium.

Richard Peacocke
### 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.** 0808-800-2222 (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)
- **SaneLine.** 0845-767-8000 (12 noon to 2am)
- **Victim Support.** 01258-453100
- **Youngminds.** FREE Helpline. 0845-766-0163 (Mon & Fri 10am –1pm, Tue to Thur 1 - 4pm.)

### Domestic Violence:
- **Dorset Women’s Outreach Project.** Freephone 0800-587-480
- **North Dorset Outreach.** 01747-858555
- **Christchurch & East Dorset Outreach.** 0800-3284457
- **National Domestic Violence Helpline.** 24 hrs: Freephone 0800-2000-247
- **Police.** (in an emergency dial 999)
- **Eastern Domestic Violence Officer.** 01202-226547
- **Western Domestic Violence Officer.** 01305-2266547
- **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
- **Elder Abuse Response.** 080-808-141

### Drugs & Alcohol:
- **Alcoholics Anonymous.** 01904-64-40-26 (to find local group)
- **ADFAM.** 020 7928-8900 (confidential support & info for families/ friends of drug users)
- **Al-Anon Family Groups.** 020-7430-0888
- **Battle Against Tranquillisers.** 0117-966-3629

### 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 Self-Help Page

### Contact the Forum office between 9.30am and 3.30pm 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

### Help/Support/Information Lines:
- **CADAS.** 01305-256535 (Community Alcohol & Drug Advisory Service)
- **Dorset Drug & Alcohol Advisory Service.** 01305-427195 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
- **N. & W. Dorset Carers Forum.** 01305-257172
- **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
- **OCD-UK.** 020-7226-4000 (For people affected by Obsessive-Compulsive Disorders)
- **Pax (for anxiety)** 0208-3185026
- **Prisoners Advice Service.** 020-7405-8090
- **Shelter.** 0808-800-4444
- **Triumph Over Phobia.** 01253-330353

### Advocacy / Mediation / Advice:
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- **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)
- **Kisdcape.** 0845-1-205-204
- **National Youth Advocacy Service.** 0151-342-7852
- **Outlooks—NCH Action for Children.** 01303-823794
- **Routes (Dorchester).** 01305-261318
- **Connexions. (Dorchester) 01305-260600
- **The Shaftesbury Young People’s Project (TOBYS).** 01747-850860
- **Tides (Weymouth).** 01305-780663
- **Treads (Young People).** 01258-455449
Changes to Day Services In Weymouth and Portland

As with the rest of the county, in fact the country, the Weymouth and Portland area has also been facing changes to the provision of mental health day services in the locality during this year. Most significant has been the creation of the new Community Resource Team and their move to the day services building at the rear of 5 Carlton Road North in Weymouth during September this year. The new team is made up of statutory staff that were formerly part of the Community Mental Health Team based at Westhaven, day services staff already based at 5 Carlton Road North and staff from other agencies such as Rethink and Newstart. It is anticipated that the former day services building will become a resource centre, offering information and a variety of services, for people with mental health problems and the general public.

In line with government directives, the proposal to modernise mental health day services in the Weymouth and Portland locality originated from "the need to modernise and integrate day services in line with policy to provide a more responsive and flexible service for users and their carers". (Anne Purvis, 2005)

The Forum was asked to support service users in the Weymouth and Portland locality to participate in the planning and implementation of these changes. To this end and in conjunction with statutory and Rethink staff a service user advisory group was established at the beginning of the year. This group meets every month and has been well attended by service users in the Weymouth and Portland area who are keen to be involved in the planning and shaping of their services and have welcomed the opportunity to do so.

During the year a large number of service users participated in a consultation process about their services, telling us what they liked and disliked about their services, what worked and what didn’t work, what was essential to them and what were the things that they could be flexible about and so on.

All the views expressed by service users have been fed back to the new team through detailed minutes of the service user advisory group meetings and with the report that was compiled following the consultation process. This has been extremely useful for the team and a meaningful and productive mechanism for service user involvement and consultation has been established, enabling service users and staff to work together in partnership in the planning and provision of services in the area.

The new team held a successful Open Day on World Mental Health Day, Tuesday 10th October, to raise awareness of mental health issues and to celebrate their move to 5 Carlton Road North.

Watch out for…….

Dorset Women’s Day on Bank Holiday Monday 7th May 2007
To be held at the Thomas Hardye School in Dorchester

Following the enormous success of the International Women's Day event held at Puddletown School in March, a second event is being planned for May 2007. The event is being organised by the newly formed WAND (Women's Action Network in Dorset) to celebrate women living in Dorset. Entry will be free and lunch will be provided free of charge, with lots of workshops and activities for women and families and crèche facilities available. Come along and join the party! For information oar to get involved, email: dorsetwomensday@yahoo.co.uk
As you are no doubt aware, there have been some sweeping changes in the organisation of the NHS over the past few months and this is inevitably going to impact on Mental Health Services across the county. The full extent and ramifications of these changes is still unknown but, from the point of view of our membership, funding is almost certain to be a major area of concern.

The implementation of the Social Inclusion initiative and the provision and management of Direct Payments are also likely to figure large on the future agenda. Serious stuff, but I strongly believe that the Forum is ready to face the challenges that these changes will raise. Indeed, I think that we should view this as a time of opportunity, a chance to give us an even stronger voice in deciding how things should be done.

The recent Health Commission report has indicated that Mental Health Services in Dorset are among the best in the country. I know that this might raise a few questioning eyebrows and I am also aware that statistics are easily manipulated, but my personal experience in talking to people across most of the South and South West tends to bear this out. Things may not be perfect in the shire but there are many that are far worse off.

Much more to the point, I strongly feel that the Forum’s work has in no small part contributed to this positive appraisal. By continuing to represent the views and wishes of our members and service users in the county – most particularly through the recent excellent work done by the Service User Representatives (SUR’s) – we have done much to put meat on the bones of the idea of user led services and we can and want to do a lot more.

The Forum is currently recognised as being one of the ‘partners’ in the planning of mental health services in Dorset, a responsibility that we do not take lightly. The SUR’s, Forum staff and Exec members have worked extremely hard to achieve this and have been rewarded by being consulted ever more often and at more significant stages in the planning processes. But this is only half of the story. Ideally, both the planning and commissioning (how and where the money is actually spent) of services should go hand in hand and it is in commissioning that the Forum would like to become involved. Surely there can be no organisation better qualified to participate in deciding the future provision of services. If, through all of our efforts, these services match ever closer to the needs of service users then surely this would lead to more efficient service provision and would most importantly give best value for money, in a time where everybody’s finances are stretched to the limit.

Moving on, I have for some time been quite aware of the fact that, despite meeting most of the staff that work for the Forum, I hadn’t actually been to visit their projects. It was lovely, therefore, to be able to accompany Sarah Kay-Hawker (who works with the Dorset Drug Action Team, promoting service user representation in her own field and who is employed by and based at the Forum office in Dorchester) on introductory visits to the Four Leaf Clover Club in Sherborne and the Mulberry Tree Group in Gillingham over the summer.

We were made very welcome at both Abbey Road and the Queen Street Bungalow and I would like to give a big thank you to Liz McGaw and Florence Spencer and their teams and all of the service users that we met. Both projects do much valuable work at grass roots level, providing a wide range of activities (not to mention delicious lunches!) and fully embrace the concept of a user-led service. Moreover, they amply demonstrate just how well such groups reflect the needs of their members – a far cry from simply acting as social gatherings, people stuck in an old-style staff-governed limbo. It is here that we “get better”, here that Social Inclusion is developing from the ground upwards, proving that we do know what is good for us and that we are prepared to change
Report From the Forum’s Chair, Andy Pask

and develop and face our own challenges. Such development is not always easy for us as service users. It takes a special sort of skill to enable people to take those first brave steps along the road to recovery, to take a look over the edge of the black pit and discover that we are actually far more capable and worthwhile than we had thought. It can be too easy to simply take charge and tell people what they want and what is good for them as in days past. Such a huge change in the way that services are run is what we are all about, to give service users what they are all about, to actively decide how this should be achieved.

I’d like to say a personal and heartfelt thank you to both Florence and Liz and their co-workers for making such changes possible. It really was wonderful to see the fruits of their labours demonstrated and to meet such great people, happy and growing in confidence and governing their own lives.

I also had the pleasure of visiting the Oak Tree Club in Weymouth on two occasions, first on my own and then with our President, John Eveleigh. Once again both the welcome and the food were warm and the company was excellent. I’ve known Gina Sealy at the club for quite a while but most of the other faces were new to me. It wasn’t long, however, before conversations were struck up and new friendships were made.

The members are highly aware of the fact that this is their club, which they are responsible for running in their way. Great to see everybody pitching in and helping with both the preparation and the washing up! Members take turns in both buying and cooking the food and there didn’t seem to be any shortage of volunteers, although I’m sure that Gina will remind me when it’s my turn – I’ve planned a menu just in case!

S o, from the ground upwards, we are getting stronger and more self-determined and I believe that we are ready to face the challenges ahead of us, all of us. The only really effective way, difficult though it may be, of dealing with change is to embrace it, to look on it as an opportunity to make positive change for us. This is such a time, an opportunity to have an even greater voice in deciding how our services should be run and I know that the Forum will be there continuing to work to make sure that the voice is heard.

Andy Pask

Visits to the Four leaf Clover Club, Mulberry Tree Group, the Oak Tree Club
It is here that Social Inclusion is developing from the ground upwards

Embracing change ... an opportunity to make positive change

Forum Membership: To get your FREE Membership card, please return this form to the Forum

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Telephone Number:

Type of Membership: (See reverse of form for details.)

Tick one

- Full ……………
- Associate …………..

Would you like to know more about Service User Involvement? Yes …………

Would you like to know more about becoming a Forum Trustee? Yes …………

Signature: …………………………………………………………………….

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

Membership of the Forum.
You can become a member of the 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.

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.

To get your Free Membership Card please complete and cut off this form and return it to the Forum at: 29-29A Durngate Street, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1JP

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 members, sufferers and “service users” - 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. This has been successful and now service providers are committed to working in partnership with the people who use their services, in order to provide the best service possible.

The Forum continues to make this happen, but we always need to find more 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 will help to shape the services that are available to all mental health sufferers. As the Forum has grown over recent years and with the successful establishment of our Service User Representation Project, we are able to develop more ways of gathering people’s views about services.

If you are interested in becoming more involved and you would like to become part of a wider group of people who we consult about specific issues, who represent us at meetings and conferences, who help to train mental health professionals, who are involved in setting up peer support groups and the shaping of specific services, then please join the Forum and tick the “service user involvement” box on the form below.

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.

You don't need experience – we will help, train and advise you.

Are you a mental health sufferer, 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………………
New Project in Blandford
“Positive Approach”

Exciting times are ahead for all of us... The Forum has leased a shop at No. 2 Tabernacle Walk, Blandford and together with Blandford Community Mental Health Team we are opening our very own Charity shop, which will be selling good quality second hand furniture, household items, clothes and bric a brac. We will also be selling logs and kindling during the winter months.

In the summer months we can sell produce grown by Teamforce. Initially all our stock is being very kindly donated by Your Choice and WISH who we will be having a close working relationship with. Eventually we will of course create our own marketing and advertising and we expect a lot of donations will come direct to us.

The aim of this project is to raise awareness in the community about mental illness. We will have information leaflets on display for the public to take away.

- It will encourage partnership working as a team and the shop will be run by service users, with staff support from the Forum and the CMHT.
- It will encompass all aspects of running a retail outlet, from sales to ordering stock and pricing. We hope that volunteers will get involved and make this a very successful project.
- It is also an opportunity to make new friends. We are looking for volunteers who can give a few hours to help with the day to day running of the shop. If you are interested, please ask your care co-ordinator to refer you.

Mulberry Tree Group, Gillingham

We are having our annual Christmas Dinner at the Phoenix on Thursday 7th December. This event is always well attended, everyone gets dressed up and we always have a good time, and lots of nice food. Father Christmas usually leaves a present for every one too. I wonder if he will remember this year!! On Monday 18th December we are having lunchtime Christmas Buffet at the bungalow. We all make a contribution to the food so that everyone can enjoy the day and not be too stressed out about all the festivities.

Four Leaf Clover Club

As we are open 6 days a week, different members, volunteers and staff are here on different days so getting together makes the Christmas Lunch very special. This year it will be on 19th Dec at the Sherborne Hotel.

We are progressing with our aim to develop as a local Resource and Information Centre being used not just by members, but also by a wider range of people in the community. Our three ‘SAD’ lamps to help beat the winter blues are free for members and at a small charge for members of the public.

The FREE IT Training Course set up by United Response is now in full swing and well attended each Monday. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service use the Clubhouse every Tuesday after 4 pm. A series of talks by Johannes Tsurkka — “Come To Know Yourself” — will be given at 7pm on Thursday evenings on 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th December. In January a new ‘in club house’ training course, run by Yeovil College, will prepare us to open our Café to the public (currently only open on Saturdays) on more days of the week. Exciting Times!

Willow tree Group, Blandford

This year the Willow Tree Group have decided to have a Christmas Buffet at the Castleman bungalow on Wednesday 20th December. We are all going to bring some festive food and enjoy ourselves.

For more information on “Positive Approach”
contact Florence on: 07979 437076 or Lynne on: 07899 064190

The Mulberry Tree Group, Willow Tree Group and all Staff would like to wish all “Reflections” readers “A Very Happy Christmas and a “Peaceful New Year.”
Facing the challenge of changes to Day Services …..

Day services are changing. People who use mental health day services - and those who could but don’t, because existing services don’t offer what we need - are becoming more vocal about what we like, and dislike, about existing day services, and about what else is needed. Different approaches are needed from day services, in order for them to offer us, the service users, a genuine range of choices.

That range of choices needs to reflect the government’s social inclusion agenda of developing mental health services, which move away from institutional care and towards participation in local community facilities and activities. These could include using leisure centres, participating in adult learning, getting into employment, and taking advantage of social opportunities.

Day services should also reflect the Recovery Model – at long last, we are being encouraged to believe that having a mental health problem does not automatically consign us to society’s scrap heap, but that we can recover, move on, and lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, even with long term or recurring conditions.

The Department of Health wishes to see “person-centred day service provision that caters appropriately for the needs of all individuals, including those with the most severe mental health problems.” The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister’s fact sheets, propose that providers of day services work towards “ensuring people have access to the opportunities they value … ask individuals what they wish to do with their time. Involve people with mental health problems in the design and delivery of services, including people who do not currently use day services. Services need to be designed to take a holistic view of someone’s ability to recover.”

Listening to service users about day services, and acting on our views, shouldn’t be rocket science. This is, after all, the era of the “patient-led NHS”, isn’t it, and we as individual service users with our own particular needs, are supposed to be at the centre of mental health services. This sounds straightforward enough from our point of view. Yet what service users are saying about the need for mental health day services to develop choices in provision represents a big challenge to existing services and the staff who work in them.

In an article published recently in Mental Health Today, James Seward, National Lead for the Choice and Access Programme, National Institute for Mental Health in England states “Choice, or the greater personalisation of statutory services, is at the heart of the government’s modernisation agenda for the public services, and nowhere more so than in the NHS. For people using health and social care services, the choice agenda has begun to redefine the relationship between providers and users of services, giving people a voice in shaping the next stage of reform. It also establishes a platform for people to take greater control of their own lives by making healthy life choices.”

“Ultimately, the relationship between staff and people who use services and their carers should be a partnership where the priority for all parties is choosing the care options that provide the best chance of recovery for the service user - and that he or she is most happy with. To help maintain a quality of life that is normal to them, all people who use services and their carers should get a choice of care options. Staff and service users then need to look at the options available to them to meet their needs and work together to achieve them.”

Many of our existing day services (whether they are run by statutory providers, voluntary sector organisations, or indeed service user-led groups like the Forum) are based around a building which service users come to during daytime hours, and at which we may then stay for several hours, doing one or more time-tabled activities with other service users. One or two members of staff may lead or facilitate those activities, with varying numbers of service users. It is unlikely that

References and Sources:
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004; Fact sheet 2 - The Role of Health and Social Care Professionals in Promoting Social Inclusion
Fact sheet 3 – Mental Health Day Services and Community Participation
National Service Framework for Mental Health (1999)
Mental Health Today, May 2006
anyone other than mental health service users will drop in to the building or join in those activities. Service users may come and go throughout the day (although this is affected by whether we are dependent on transport, which may require us to arrive and leave at set times with no flexibility), but the staff may not be free to leave the building, for example to accompany one or more service users to a class held in the local adult learning centre. The building requires a budget for heating, lighting and maintenance. It is likely to be closed during the evenings and at weekends.

Let’s be clear – there IS a need for the above type of service. The recent survey of day service users’ views in Weymouth showed that the vast majority of people currently using existing day services value them highly. Day services for the users of those services can be a lifeline to normality and a contact point with the real world. Day services need to be responsive, flexible, and open, with local and accessible centres. People should have access to a ‘safe space’ where people are able to be themselves and be free of undue pressures – in some cases this can also mean an absence of newcomers. The day services need to be a part of overall care planning. There should be access to a wide range of activities, and, crucially, there should be involvement and control by service users.

However, no one model of service can be all things to all people, and when staff time and money is heavily tied up in buildings-based services, it makes it that much more difficult to offer other, more flexible and individual models of day services, such as one-to-one support to enable people to get involved locally with non-mental health facilities. Another barrier is attitudes – some staff still seem to approach their work from a paternalistic, we-know-best standpoint, with outdated views about what we, as service users, should expect from our day services. Some (thankfully not all) staff appear to think that we should be passive, grateful recipients of what’s on offer, rather than recognising us as active participants in our own care and recovery, with an entitlement to have and make choices about services.

How do staff feel about changes to mental health day services? At the grassroots level, staff seem almost bewildered by the scope and speed of change happening around them. This is reflected nationally. Some staff seem to have retreated to a position of just doing their jobs to the best of their abilities and going home at night exhausted. Others are relieved to see their personal belief in encouraging self-management and the use of recovery principles for service users to gain control over their own lives being endorsed at government level.

Higher up the scale, enormous changes seem to be taking their toll with service managers attempting to address and change the fundamentals behind the ways day services are delivered, with the usual restrictions on resources.

Involving service users as stakeholders in their services requires an enormous cognitive shift and positive effort to change years of nurse training, mostly based in places like Herrison Hospital. Moves away from delineating roles in Community Mental Health Teams can help to break the ‘them and us’ mind-set, but this is going to take a long time. It doesn’t help when Government policy is disjointed and confusion arises over the inconsistent use of terms such as ‘service user’ or ‘patient’.

Without the development of a range of choices, or in the absence of staff who are willing and able to work with us as equal partners in our own recovery, the reality is that many mental health service users will continue either not to use existing day services at all, or will get “stuck” in them. Let’s work together to create services which offer us the kinds of choice, support, encouragement and practical help we may need to join that club, take that course, get that job, or do whatever our individual goals or interests may be, as well as provide rewarding and stimulating employment for the staff that work with us.

Sue Forber, Richard Peacocke, Becky Aldridge [Service User Representatives]

There are a number of core documents issued by the government that provide guidelines and standards for the modernisation and provision of mental health day services. Among them is the National Service Framework for Mental Health (1999), which states the standards for delivery of NHS mental health services, including ten guiding values and principles to help shape decisions on service delivery. Amongst these standards is a commitment to "workforce planning, education and training".

SUR Project Update

Sue Forber Reports:

Where are we at with the Service User Representatives (SUR) Project here at the Forum?

Well, the project is going from strength to strength, with three active SURs currently in post; they are Sue Forber, based in North Dorset, Richard Peacocke in the Dorchester area, and Bob Shaw who focuses on Weymouth. In addition to our geographical areas of work, we all hold some Dorset-wide remits, representing mental health service users on strategic and planning groups such as Dorset Mental Health Local Implementation Team (LIT), Dorset PCT’s Acute Care Forum and Clinical Governance Forum, as well as giving a service user perspective at mental health training courses run by Dorset County Council’s corporate services directorate.

Across the county there is lots happening around day services and social inclusion. Sue is involved with the recruitment of the new Community Resource Team Leader for Dorset PCT for the north locality; the post holder will be a key player in working with service users in the development of new and improved services across this large rural area. Sue will be gathering local service users’ views about day services – the existing ones, and the priorities for development – and hopes to set up a users’ advisory group to influence decisions about funding and the shape of new services. This will follow the model adopted in Weymouth where Bob Shaw and Becky Aldridge have worked very hard to facilitate local service users to speak out about day services, their likes and dislikes and needs, to have their views taken seriously by service providers, and to be active participants in decisions about future developments.

Richard has ongoing links with service users in and around Dorchester, including at Club 57 and Whitfield Rural Activity Centre, and he has also recently been working on a project with staff at the ECT suite at Forston Clinic called Enhancing the Healing Environment. We at the Forum are very proud that Richard has been accepted by Bournemouth University to study for a doctorate – his thesis, naturally, is going to be on user involvement in mental health services.

All three SURs regularly attend their respective Locality Management Meetings with Dorset PCT staff to represent service user views and influence decision-making. We are also hoping to become more involved with primary care mental health services, and Sue has started doing some work with Rhiana Jessop, the graduate mental health worker based in primary care in the north locality.

Some of our other ambitions include initiating a big push on direct payments for mental health service users, setting up a Citizens’ Panel for mental health, and ensuring that we have a strong, credible presence and voice in the future commissioning of services. We are passionate about our work and about the SUR role, and our only constraints are, as always, person power, time and money – the Forum sees the SUR project as central, indeed vital, to its work, and Shaun continues to fundraise in order to put the SUR project on a sound financial footing. Once this is achieved, then the sky’s the limit!

Richard Peacocke adds:

The SUR project has been a development time for me with its focus on work-planning forcing me into a more bounded area of life. I am still wary of allowing it to take too much of my time as I seem to feel wobbly when that happens, but it is certainly panning out as a positive experience for me. I have found the time constraints of the project rather challenging. I foresaw this in our initial discussions and we are now moving through it. It is good that Sue has extra hours and Bob is now on board, but there is still a lot of unfinished work that I think needs addressing.

All in all, the project moves forward nicely and takes me with it. I hope the funding continues to be forthcoming and look forward to another year of potential being realised.
The Carlton Road Band

We are a small group of musicians, singers and enthusiasts who meet every Friday morning at the Resource Centre at 5 Carlton Road North, Weymouth to play, sing and otherwise enjoy our love of producing and playing music.

Our range of abilities stretches from the very good to the very keen. The only thing that we have in common is that we have all suffered from mental ill health in one form or another and have been referred to the group by the Community Mental Health Team in Weymouth.

We are facilitated and encouraged by two patient members of staff from the Community Resource Team, Caroline and Julie, who do a wonderful job of guiding us through the tricky art of disturbing the peace.

The group have been playing together for just over a year and in this time we have played several “gigs”. Although initially we were playing for pleasure, we have enjoyed our performances and though nervous we all make an attempt to be smart and on time when we play for others. We have played at several venues – The Fairfield Day Centre, The Acorns, the Chalbury Unit, to name a few. We have even played Christmas carols outside Alf’s fish and chip shop in Weymouth, something we hope to repeat this year.

The experience of playing music with a group of like-minded but still individual people is a joyful one. It brings confidence, satisfaction and a great sense of achievement.

We have over half a dozen future gigs and the group is thriving. New members are very welcome – members don’t have to take part in performances if they don’t want to – just come along and join in the fun. If you would like to join us, see the group in action, invite us for a performance, or for further information, please contact Caroline or Julie at the Resource Centre at 5 Carlton Road North, Weymouth on 01305 766237.

Casterbridge Friends of Mental Health Services — were formed in 2000 after the dissolution of the Herrison Hospital League of Friends near Dorchester. They support people who use mental health services in the Dorchester area, carers and staff. Chris Jones, Secretary and Sally Childs, Treasurer, who work full time as secretaries for Dorset Primary Care Trust, give a great deal of time and effort to the Friends, helping to organise fund raising events, such as quizzes and skittles, and producing publicity material.

They also put forward for consideration applications for financial help from individuals, mental health units and teams in the Dorchester area. The Friends have been able to assist everyone who has put in an application in the past year.

Said Sally: “We would like to hear from anyone who would like to become a member or to volunteer for membership of the committee, which meets bi-monthly at the Colliton Club in Dorchester.”

Contact Casterbridge Friends via Chris Jones on 01305 368959

BLOOMING LOVELY: Casterbridge Friends have bought new garden furniture for clients and staff at 20 Cornwall Road, Dorchester. Pictured are, from left, back row: Chris Jones and Sally Childs from the Friends, Paul Simpson and Jonai Da Silva; front: Sandra King, team leader Carolyn Biggs and Mary Lynn.
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<tr>
<th><strong>SELF-HELP GROUPS, SOCIAL CLUBS + DROP-INS</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Saturday Social Group</strong> 5 Carlton Road North, Weymouth. Open each Saturday 7pm to 9.30pm. Contact any member of staff, on 01305 766237</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Green Art Group</strong> The Library, Weymouth. Meets weekly, Thurs. 1pm to 4pm. Contact Ros Copson on 01305 257172</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Weymouth Carers Group</strong> Castleman Bungalow, Blandford. Meets Wed. 10am to 2pm (includes lunch). Contact Florence Spencer on 01747 825400. Mob. 07979 437076</td>
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<td><strong>Bridport RETHINK Relatives and Carers Support Group</strong> 5 Downes St. Bridport. Meets on 4th Mondays of the month (except Bank Holidays), 3 pm. Contact Sally Montague-Johnstone on 01308 485316</td>
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<td><strong>The Lantern,</strong> 2 Ranelagh Rd, Weymouth. Open Monday – Friday. Support Centre offering advice on Benefits, Housing, Advocacy and Counselling. Contact Mick Bramham on 01305 787940</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Four Leaf Clover Club</strong> 1 Abbey Road, Sherborne Open Mon. to Sat 10 am to 4.00 pm. Contact Liz McGaw on 01935 389192</td>
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<td><strong>Club 57. RETHINK Drop-in Group</strong> Quaker Meeting House, Holloway Road, Dorchester. Meets Monday to Thursday, 10am to 2pm. (Tuesdays Art Sessions; Thursdays Lunch Club at £1, members take turns to cook) Contact Rose Verney on 01305 267851</td>
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<td><strong>North and West Dorset Carers Forum</strong> Meets last Thursday in the month, 6pm to 8 pm, at Forum offices: 29—29A Durngate St, Dorchester. Contact Richard Peacocke or Paddy Radford through Forum office on 01305 257172</td>
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**CARERS + RELATIVES GROUPS**

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