



Newsletter

September 1994

Editorial

Welcome to our September newsletter. Hopefully all computers, printers, and distributors will work in a co-ordinated fashion this time and all will be well!

I am sorry some of you received your last edition a little late. This was due to a hold up in distribution when it was intended you should receive other material relevant to the Annual Meeting in one posting.

CONSULTING ME, CONSULTING YOU

I was invited as a representative of APCMI to the recent launch by our local NHS trusts of the bold new plan for hospital and community care in our local area.

It was an impressive public relations exercise when a 'Period of Public Consultation' was launched. But with three months for all public objections and queries to be addressed to the relevant bodies on the one hand and the promise that some £50m. will be spent in the next three years on the other, one can be excused for being a little sceptical.

Surely all those important people aren't going to wait three months before they place any orders or make any moves just to see if I think they've got it right!

This kind of exercise has dogged the political world for a few years now; departments set aside the blame for mistakes or whatever by claiming to have introduced policy change 'after public consultation'.

I was actually encouraged to hear that Hospital facilities for the mentally ill are to be rationalised on one site into a new mental health unit within the

district hospital. I was also glad to hear and to read that a considerable turn to 'community based service' is planned and resources will be re-directed to support such community based work.

But then my difficulties begin; I read that community services will attract 41% instead of 27% of the mental health budget for the Trust.

Surely that is good news? But 41% of what? Of the future total budget, or of the present total figure?

And is 41% of either figure actually enough to fund the appropriate level of service which the community in the Trust's area actually needs?

The Ambulance Officer and the ENT nurse I shared a seat with weren't quite convinced either.

Is this new Hospital and its associated services going to be more effective, more caring and more helpful to patients and service users - or is it going to be more economic, more efficient and more in line with someone's budget figures?

I want to be an enthusiast, I want to support a new hospital and a re-aligned mental health provision within and beyond that hospital which does not segregate and isolate mental health.....BUT....beyond the glossy pamphlet (at what expense?), after the erection of the marquee on the virgin site where the new facilities may be built, and when all the corporate catering facilities have gone I still want to know whether 41% of a figure I can not discover in the publicity material is enough.

And is it enough by the standards of the accountants and the men in suits who run the Trusts, or is it enough measured by the need of the confused elderly lady I try to visit who doesn't remember who I am?

Douglas Stevens.

Association for the Pastoral Care of the Mentally Ill

An association which supports the mentally ill and their relatives

Registered Charity No. 327532

The Annual General Meeting

Hastings 1994

The Annual General Meeting drew a reasonable gathering of folk, especially as we were at the very extremity of the country in a southerly direction.

The morning presentation by the Hastings branch was impressive, and thought provoking; we really need to be able to spread the things we have learnt in one place so that those in another can use them and develop them in their own way.

Perhaps the most important thing said though was the remark by the chair of Hastings, Barry Till, that what now seems like a very successful and well managed scheme has taken blood sweat and tears to reach this level. It has also taken eight years.

So there is no easy road to instant glory, and the end result may seem small beer compared to the need, but well ordered small pieces of work are of benefit to people, and that makes them and the effort required worthwhile.

The ANNUAL MEETING proper took up the afternoon slot, and was notable for a general lack of controversy or strife.

Only some difficulties with changes in the rules with regard to branches raised the level of excitement and the Committee agreed to go away and think again about these particular proposals.

The Chairman's Report summed up the year for APCMI:

"The strength of the Association lies in the local branches. It has been very encouraging to visit the Rainbow Club in Croydon and the Foret Hill drop-in, and to realise the degree of commitment that all the volunteers give week in, week out and to feel that the sufferers are genuinely valued as important members of the community. It is good to hear from Bexley and Merton, where progress continues in the friendships developed; around Claybury hospital the Chaplain, a member of our national committee, with the help of a religious sister, has an informal band of people who give their friendship to those resettled from hospital. In Guildford local seminars help to raise awareness of mental health issues amongst all the churches, whilst a drop-in in Haslemere has celebrated its first birthday, and a regular prayer fellowship allows sufferers to share their own spiritual journey together.

The report from grampian in the last newsletter is a sign that the mission of the Association is spreading far beyond the Home counties. In May APCMI had a presence at an exciting exploratory meeting in Newcastle. In York the branch quietly provides opportunities for people with mental health problems to enjoy ordinary social contact in pleasant surroundings. And of course our hosts for the AGM, the Hastings branch are well advanced in the setting up of a befriending scheme, so necessary in a town well-documented for the loneliness of those who have resettled out of long stay institutions.

The National Committee enjoys regular hospitality at the Holy Cross centre in Kings Cross for its meetings, and this provides a very immediate background to our thinking; the crypt there is an excellent example of good practice in terms of a local church's response to the community care needs of homeless and mentally ill people. Julian Hopwood, the director there, and previously a Development Officer for our Association is a good friend in offering an administrative address.

There was a very successful conference in Battersea in March: the theme of "A friend in need" offered a very apposite demonstration of the prime value of our Association - support and friendship. News of the Fellowship of Hope and of Dochas, an Irish mental health initiative, broadened our vision. The National Schizophrenia Fellowship held an important day on "Religion and Severe Mental Illness", and it was good to hear the Chair of Guildford branch giving a very personal witness to the aims and ethos of the Association. Members of the National Committee are in the process of updating our publicity material and finalising a business plan.

As Chairman it is a privilege to be alongside so many people whose efforts may be little recognised by a wide public, but who persevere in this vital aspect of community care - all the officers and workers in the local branches; the members of the National Committee who have put our secretarial and financial situation in good shape; friend and colleagues from other organisations who want to share in our objectives, and especially all those who have suffered mental illness. We may still be a fragile thing but like precious china such things have a beauty that may be the essence of their strength - genuine empathy with those whose lives are vulnerable."

Jeremy Boutwood.

BRANCH NEWS - Hastings

Befriending Scheme in Operation

During the past year the Befriending Scheme has continued to flourish, and many vulnerable people are receiving a personal befriending service that would not otherwise be available to them. Inevitably during the course of the year there has been a turnover in both befrienders and people visited under the scheme.

The majority of referrals continue to be received from mental health professionals, but as the scheme becomes wider known, referrals from other sources (including self-referrals) have been received.

There are currently sixteen trained befrienders available to the scheme, of which fifteen have been matched and are visiting a total of eighteen people. Five people are currently awaiting a befriender.

The majority of contact takes place within a person's home, although visits and activities outside the home have also been undertaken. One visit this year included a day trip to France! Through the development of a separate fund for social activities, it is intended that the opportunity for outside visits and activities will increase.

In addition to social contact and friendship, the scheme has also enabled a close awareness of changes in a person's mental condition, which may require accessing professional advice and possibly treatment. The involvement of the scheme under these circumstances does require sensitivity and discretion on the part of the befriender, if the delicate befriending relationship is not to be compromised. To date this sensitivity and discretion has not been found wanting!

The absence of a paid co-ordinator has continued to disadvantage the scheme and has unfortunately resulted in delays in matching. It is to be hoped that the current outstanding request for funding for a part-time co-ordinator will be successful. Without this post it is envisaged that the scheme has reached a saturation point, and that further expansion will be difficult to sustain.

A special word of thanks is extended to all the befrienders over the past year, who have made such a valuable contribution to improving the quality of lives of people who otherwise would have very impoverished social contacts. In the words of one of those currently receiving visits:-

"I do not know what, what I would do without her".

Simon Male

So, what's in a name?

Well quite a lot actually. What's more worriesome is what's not in ours!

The fact is, "A.P.C.M.I." is **five** syllables long - but tells the listener not **one** thing about us or what we do.

Even worse, "The Association for the Pastoral Care of the Mentally Ill" is EIGHTEEN syllables long and doesn't tell ordinary people very much about us.

It has that awful term "the mentally ill" in it. (Really, what are we about here - aren't we trying to work against labelling, stereotyping and assumptions and the social marginalisation and stigmatisation that goes with them?)

It also has that silly phrase, "pastoral care". (O.K. it's not silly if you've been to seminary or theological college, but I'm talking 'man-in-the-street' here.) This varies from being very ambiguous to just plain meaningless - and probably means something different to each person who hears it, anyhow!

All in all this adds up to one thing. The name is pretty useless. It is **particularly unhelpful** when trying to "sell" interest in the organisation to others, or grab their attention about the current issues, or "up" our profile either nationally or locally. It really is just too darn long-winded. Attention spans don't last that long these days. You need something short and snappy, maybe three or four syllables at the most, eg SANE, Comic Relief, Shelter, MIND, Mencap, CRUSE, Live-Aid, etc.

So, at the last National Committee Meeting a very different proposal was made.

The idea came from trying to say something about what we do and / or what we're about. Basically, nationally speaking, APCMI is an Association of 'Projects'. Each Project - be it a Drop-in, a Befriending Scheme, or a small group working to develop community awareness - has three key qualities. The Project is Local, Ecumenical (i.e. inter-denominational) and is involved in Mental Health issues. Additionally, we are a Christian based organisation. Put that all together and you get:-

"Christian Association of Mental Health Ecumenical Local Projects".

(I know, even more syllables than before; I make it 20 - though I'm not very good with big numbers!)

But, look again, and you've actually got something short and snappy and highly usable:-

CAMHELP - Campaigning to help people with mental health problems.

The National Committee unanimously agreed this as being a vast improvement on our current name and is proposing to put this to the next A.G.M. or an E.G.M once a little research has gone into the legal technicalities of changing our name. So they asked me to try to design some sort of logo / image to go with it.

So far, I've got this:-



BUT, what do you say of all this? Can "camHelp" help this organisation go forward?

Don't be shy! Comments to Jeremy or myself, please, at your earliest convenience.

Pat O'Sullivan, Chair, Forest Hill Drop-In.

% Flat 2, London Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 3TW (or 081 699 6143).

ACTION — PUBLICITY — RESEARCH

APCMI is about helping people. So I suppose you would look for examples of good projects and good care and see them as the sign that APCMI is working.

APCMI is also about helping new groups to form and grow. So knowing about good projects and spreading the word is important. Telling people what has worked for you is a necessary part of the encouragement they will need.

But what do we do to influence the bigger decisions, or to ask for really substantial sums of money to further the work of our group or project?

The Health Trusts and Private Charities have accountants on their side; they probably have a mass of statistics to back up their responses or refusals. They will have some kind of crude 'cost-effectiveness' guide to what will and won't attract their funding.

All the tools of business and professional results measurement will be lined up on one side; on the other?

Well, I hope we will have properly drawn up plans and costings and sensible business plan type presentations.

But can we show that our kind of caring has any effect? Can we demonstrate that we actually improve the lot of our friends who have suffered from various problems? Or are we just a group of optimists, hoping for the best?

At a very professional presentation on local mental health service reorganisation I was amazed at the very thin level of evidence on which policy changes were being based. (Well, yes, I am cynical about the Government's commitment to Community Care; I suspect it is to save money!)

If we are to argue for appropriate resources and appropriate responses from those we need to influence and persuade, we must have good arguments and evidence on our side.

Perhaps the most persuasive thing is that we provide what people actually need and value, not what someone or some policy thinks they need or should value.

Two universities that I know of now run part time M.A. courses in Mental Health which are open to involved 'lay' people. Both require the writing of a dissertation as part of the degree process.

It might be good if some people with APCMI interests could take the degrees, and if we could interest some students in the work of APCMI involved projects as an area for their research.

Anyone out there who is interested might like to contact either Portsmouth University or Anglia Polytechnic University in Cambridge.

BRANCH NEWS - Bexley

Bexley remains a small branch and we have to re-appraise what we can realistically commit ourselves to when so many opportunities present themselves, but we have been encouraged by the positive links made with local statutory and voluntary organisations.

Our chairman, Alistair Ross, has been commissioned to produce a 40 page booklet on Mental Health as part of the local community care provisions, and at present we are involved in discussions with Bexley Community Health over a joint initiative with NSF and Mind to provide a Befriending and Community Placement Scheme.

The direction of the branch's activities in the coming year hinges upon the viability of this project.

BRANCH NEWS - GUILDFORD

Over the last year the Guildford branch has made a conscious effort to concentrate on the task of RAISING AWARENESS amongst church communities of the importance of supporting people who suffer from mental illness and live in the community.

In May there was a very successful afternoon seminar mid-week when a panel of six - Anglican minister/psychologist, mental health manager, community nursing manager, G>P>, Catholic priest, and mental health case manager- answered questions from the floor. The title "Church - Help or Hindrance?" gave the opening for a very frank exploration of many of the difficulties from a professional point of view; confidentiality, religious obsessions, scruples etc. whilst at the same time highlighting a clear recognition that the churches are well equipped to act as a complementary support service, as long as they are properly financed and supported.

Following this funding has been obtained for a regular Newsletter which will be the means of keeping local doctors and mental health professionals in dialogue with representatives of the churches.

In September on a more personal note there is to be a Conference in which local Christian mental health workers can reveal their own experiences of faith which underpin their professional activities. In the afternoon a group of sufferers will demonstrate how the creative arts - music, poetry, painting - can be a

means of "Speaking with God", the theme for the day.

In October there is to be the second Lunchtime Seminar as a memorial to Derek Parsons, the local chairman of APCMI, who died two years ago.

On another note, one of our members, Ken Baker, an experienced musician and someone who has suffered himself, organised a very enjoyable afternoon of live music at the St. Saviour's Church Centre, when 50 people came along to share with him and his co-singer Pete, the importance of music in the recovery of a sense of balance to life. This happy event is to be repeated in the new year.

The Rainbow fellowship continues fortnightly on Sunday afternoons, when people can pray together and reflect on Bible passages in the light of their shared experiences.

Also Michele Gibbs, one of the Committee and the long-standing organiser of the Canterbury day centre continues to arrange one-to-one friendships; there are great advantages in being able to link this to the on-going meetings at the centre.

The Guildford branch is not wealthy, but it is full of hope and realises that there are many advantages in riding light on buildings and APCMI-owned activities; members can be free to influence all the local services on their own terms.

BRANCH NEWS

CROYDON

Croydon Branch continue to run two Drop-ins, one on a Monday evening which is very well attended and has sometimes as many as thirty people there during the evening. Recent outings have included a visit to 'Fiddler on the Roof' at the Ashcroft theatre, and Eastbourne. We have been greatly heartened by new young volunteers who have joined us recently.

The other Drop-in run jointly with MIND, has members of a rehabilitation unit and staff. Outings in the new MIND minibus have been very successful.

We are having another training course in the Autumn, facilitated by the Community Mental Health Chaplain, Andrew Wilson.

A point from Pam

As the secretary of APCMI, I thought that members would like to know that from the beginning of September 1994 I will be able to devote more time to the Association. I am obtaining early retirement from my teaching job.

If any branch or group would like me to come to visit them, or attend a special meeting, don't hesitate to let me know at the Holy Cross address.

Obviously the more notice I have the better as it will mean booking an overnight stay in some cases.

Best wishes for all your work.

Pam Freeman.

National Secretary.

STOP PRESS!

Croydon Branch have received funding from joint finance for a part time development officer starting in January 1995.

This is really great news!

Keep up the good work Croydon!

Keep on applying, all other branches!

Editorial Address;

Please send your contributions to;

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EDITOR'S P.S.

I have edited three editions of the Newsletter now. This one has perhaps had least hassle - no computer chaos, no wrong printing, not too much slippage in the deadlines.....BUT..... I have been designated to take another extra parish where a lot of work needs to be done, starting November 94.

If you have time and some typing ability would you like to be Editor? Please let the Chairman know. I won't let the newsletter down, but my resources are limited, and stretched!

DON'T FORGET

Your next Branch News - by December 9th, please
Your Letters, Articles, Comments, and Features for our future issues

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