

ADDACTION - THANK YOU

Last March Patti and Colin from South Cumbria attended Addaction's Annual General Meeting in Penrith. They spoke movingly about the excellent work Addaction staff had done with them over recent years and the huge difference that work had made in their lives.

It therefore seems a good time to print the following poem that Patti wrote in 2006, so here it is:

THE ADDACTION

A is for always... always there...

D is for demonstratin' that y'care

D is for decisions that y'help make

A is for acting on behalf of addict's sake

C is for creatin' ... lettin' our juices flow

T is for timing... when it's time to let go

I is for I and for you and for me...

O is for ongoing and the places we'll see

N is for never, never givin' up

**“AS LONG AS WE’VE GOT ADDACTION,
WE WILL RISE UP...”**

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Cumbria Users Project

Drug users have rights too...

SPRING NEWSLETTER

MAY 2007

**Edited by Jon Hemelryk
and Colin McDowell**

DON'T TRY READING THIS NEWSLETTER

ALL IN ONE GO! There's a fair bit to read in this, our second newsletter of 2007. Much of it is serious stuff too. We reproduce in full the response from the staff of Cumbria Community Drug and Alcohol Service to criticism regarding the provision of aftercare. There is a personal account of experiences for one of our Service Users in the west and we hear from Seth our new Development Worker in the north, whilst Patti from the south waxes lyrical on the merits of Addaction.

This newsletter has, at last, become a forum for dialogue between Service Users and Service Providers in Cumbria.

That must certainly be a good thing...



NUN:

National User Network

Jon Hemelryk, stalwart of our Project in South Cumbria, brings the following to our attention from Drink and Drug News:

The National User Network, also known as NUN, has been formed by a handful of service users who wanted to take over a flagging programme of user involvement and inject some grass roots autonomy. With more than a handful of the “usual suspects” on board: people who had previously voiced frustration at the way things were, (including some who have become part of the backbone of the harm reduction movement), feelings were running high that there should be stronger user representation coming up to the end of the ten year drug strategy. Grant McNally, founder of the UK Assembly on Hepatitis C; Andrea Ethimou-Mourdant of the Mourdant Trust; and Elliot Albert of UKHRA identified the need for NUN and orchestrated its “call to arms” according to current chair Jimi Grieve.

With John Howard of Reading User Forum and Simon Parry of Southampton based user group Morph as its first (joint) chair, NUN set about drawing up a detailed plan for a national movement that would survive beyond any changes to the NTA.

With “robust debate” NUN agreed on a mission statement: “To promote and support user involvement in all aspects of care, treatment and service development.” Their remit covered drug use in its widest sense, whether licit or illicit, alcohol, volatile substances or prescription medication.

They made a commitment to sharing safer practice, support anyone who needed it, challenge prejudice and discrimination - and make sure they had an active dialogue with policymakers that would ensure their views counted.

As an umbrella body for other user involvement groups, NUN was determined from the outset to nurture a supportive network. The agenda would come from challenging bad practice countrywide.

To find out more contact <http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/nationalusernet> CUP intends to get in touch with this organisation, we'll let you know how it goes.



BITS & BOBS

“Snorting cocaine powder has become an increasingly unremarkable part of a night out for many ordinary people who frequent pubs and clubs.

Harry Shapiro in Druglink magazine

“This new strain of cannabis is so incredibly strong it can bring on the early signs of schizophrenia from a single puff.”

The Liverpool Echo –telling it like it isn’t

“Criminal law as the only means of defence (against drugs) is a flawed approach. We are not winning so we must try something else.”

Sir Stephen Lander, chairman of the Serious and Organised Crime Agency (SOCA)

“I can’t believe that I’m helping raise money to get people off drugs. For most of my life I’ve been raising money to get drugs off people.”

Russell Brand, during Comic Relief

Put the bins out

Setting wheelie bins on fire and sniffing the fumes is the new “drug of choice” for some young people, according to police in South Yorkshire. “Inhaling the bin fumes could be more dangerous than sniffing glue or petrol,” warned Warren Hawksley, director of anti-solvent abuse charity ReSolv.

Harmless Farmers

Hydroponic systems confiscated during cannabis factory raids are being used to grow fruit and vegetables. The equipment has been set up to help youngsters in Wirral cultivate a market garden. “It is all carefully supervised” said a policeman “they don’t grow anything more dangerous than chillies.”

Worming its way

The Home Office is reviewing the legal status of BZP, a dance drug and anti-worming agent after a report in The Lancet connected it with a series of deaths and collapses. It is not illegal to take but sales to the public are banned.

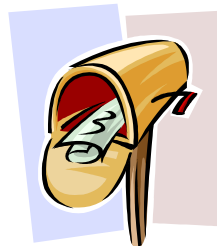
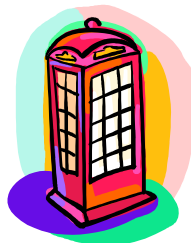
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GETTING IN TOUCH



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WHAT WE'RE ABOUT

The Cumbria Users' Project encourages and supports drug users to speak up and have a say about the delivery of drug services.

The project is confidential, independent, free and is based at three Cumbria Citizens Advice Bureaux : Ulverston, Penrith and Workington.

The knowledge and skills of service users and their families can help influence and improve the way that future services are planned and provided.

PLEASE GET IN TOUCH AND GET INVOLVED!

We have meetings every six weeks in Penrith, plus local mini-forum meetings every month. Lunch is provided and service users attending these meetings will each receive a High Street voucher for their time.

We arrange for service users to attend conferences and training around the country.

We are currently organising training on Service User advocacy for Cumbria via The Alliance organisation—watch this space for more news

Reply to "Aftercare" article by Gareth in October's C.U.P Newsletter

We have received the following reply from the staff of Cumbria Community Drug and Alcohol Service following Gareth's article, it is reproduced here in full:

Having read the above article on after care provision for Service Users in West Cumbria, we feel it is important to give some response to what has been written. Whilst we understand that the newsletter provides Service Users with the opportunity to express opinions about service provision, it is not in the best interests of anyone to malign the dedication, sincerity and the sheer hard work of those men and women employed in the substance misuse services. Cumbria Community Drug & Alcohol Service (CCDAS) staff, as a matter of course often work with heavy and complex caseloads and over their stated hours (work into their own time), to provide a service for their clients.

CCDAS strive to develop and improve services with the aim of being ever more effective in helping clients achieve those goals that they set themselves, even if this is not an abstinence goal. Not all clients wish to work on an abstinence based model but rather a reduction regime or maintenance. As a service we prefer to be flexible and work towards the goals that individuals feel are most achievable. We are a treatment service not an "aftercare" service. In fact, none of the providers are commissioned to provide aftercare, though inevitably, because staff care, they frequently provide what is above and beyond the core business of the service.

The article made the point that all agencies are vying for government funding. This is true at a strategic level, however, it rarely impacts on the clinical interventions. CCDAS are commissioned to deliver specific services and are accountable to commissioners for the delivery of those services. It would be very nice if agencies providing services

HELLO FROM SETH - OUR MAN IN THE NORTH

At long last we have a new Development Worker in Penrith. His name is Seth Gibson. We do not have a photo of the man to hand, hence the illustration to your right. We would like to welcome Seth to our project and thank him for sticking around - 3 months already!!! Here's Seth in his own words:



Hello, my name is Seth and I am the new(ish) User Development Worker for the North of Cumbria. This includes Penrith and Carlisle but I will pretty much go anywhere. Before working with service users, I worked with rough sleepers for two years as an outreach worker, which often involved making coffee in a multi-storey car park at six o'clock in the morning and rolling (very poor) fags in between housing people.

When not working, I like to listen to music (most kinds, the last two albums I bought were Amy Winehouse and Kings of Leon) and I'm currently learning to play the guitar with some friendly blokes at Addaction, who've taught me all the chords to Hotel California and Wonderwall. I'm quite into watching films, too many to have favourites, but I also like hill walking/running (am training for my first marathon: it's grim) and sleeping.



Cumbria Drug and Alcohol Action Team Review

The DAAT has agreed a new partnership structure to enable a full range of stakeholders to effectively engage in the partnership. And as they are committed to service user participation, they have asked for a service users representative to become a member of the new DAAT partnership. **This is an important step for service user involvement** as the DAAT are responsible for setting overall strategic direction in responding to substance misuse.

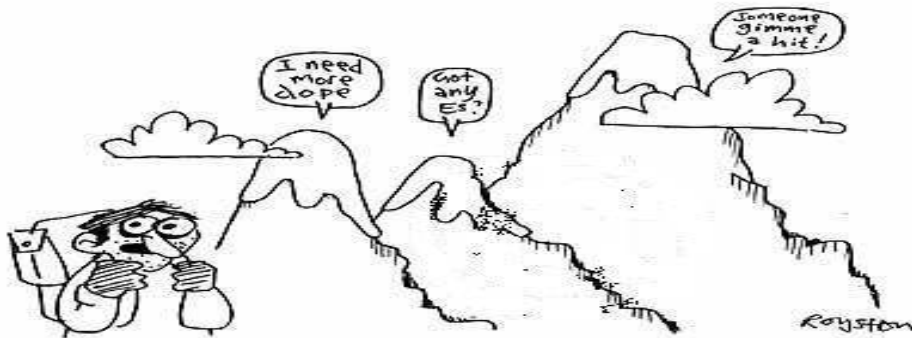
The first meeting took place on April 16th.

We will keep readers informed of this venture.

The Cumbria Users project was also approached by the audit commission to involve service users in reviewing the performance of the DAAT. The audit took place in 2004 and the focus of this review was to see if services have improved since then. Workers got together with Service Users to collate the views of Users county-wide and feed them back to the audit commission.

When the report is finished we will make sure Users have a copy.

Maggie Messenger



"Ain't no mountain high enough?"

within their present financial limits had the luxury of tapping into an unlimited supply of funding to be used to develop the range of services in any way they felt would cover all the varied interests of particular clients, but in the real world agencies have to provide within budget or risk the consequences of not existing at all.

What has been demonstrated to actually work for clients is to operate a Shared Care system of partnership working with GP's, Statutory Services and non Statutory services all working in a partnership of co-operation in which each service is providing their particular specialist input, which wraps care around a client and provide a pathway of care at different stages of their individual recovery.

We are extremely disappointed that this article made such sweeping statements about services as a whole. Service providers have complaint mechanisms in place so that dissatisfied customers can air their grievances in a meaningful way. Through this process, service providers can investigate and learn lessons as a means of improving treatment journeys.

We found the final paragraph highly insulting. CCDAS staff operate over and above their duty remit. As individuals, we have the responsibility to embrace change and all that goes with it. Change is not an easy journey and the solutions do not sit with services alone. If service users are prepared to engage in the therapeutic partnership, this can aid the solution. Meet us halfway.

Yours sincerely

The Staff, Cumbria Community Drug & Alcohol Service.

If you have any thoughts on the points raised in this article we would like to hear from you.

AFTER CARE VERSUS PROGRESSIVE CARE by R D OLIVER - West Cumbria

As a service user who attends meetings with both service providers and service users along with Maggie Messenger (service user co-ordinator), I feel the BUZZ word for this year is “Aftercare”, be it a lack of or misdirection. I have experienced this first hand, plus have heard lots of other stories from service users.

The question I find myself asking is: do I require “aftercare” or progressive care, where I see myself moving forward?

This I can say from experience. When I lived in a different area, I used after-care services and found myself using them on a weekly basis for near on six years. I became reliant on my weekly appointments for acupuncture, relaxation or chats with the workers. This became my comfort zone! Looking back I could say that it became a rut that I didn't wish to leave, there is no right or wrong either way. Since I have lived in Cumbria I have been through rehabilitation and come out the other side feeling much better in myself. However, when I was referred to Day Services/Aftercare I chose not to accept this because of my past experience. This may have been my downfall as a relapse occurred. Now this could have been six months or six years down the line. The point is, I was in a vulnerable situation and still had to go back to the beginning of my previous journey and wait. Should this gap have occurred with the cycle that everyone seems to be aware of happening? I don't know? Going out on a limb here... when you perceive the world with new eyes it's a scary place. (I hope most users would empathise with this fact). It's like waking from a nightmare you've been stuck in for years, cut off from everything you've known for years and IS scary. The challenges that life brings can be scary also, be it joining a new club, taking up new interests, even basic living is a challenge.

This brings me back to Aftercare or Progressive care. I know what “Aftercare” is, but how long would you want to stay in this safe zone for? After waking from a life-long nightmare, I for myself want to see that I'm getting on with my life and moving forward. Sometimes it feels huge and too much, which makes you yearn for the life that you left behind. At other times I want life “full on” but not on my own (with support). If I was given the choice I would choose progressive care. I would like to see myself being integrated back into the community and out of (continues overleaf.....)

AFTER CARE VERSUS PROGRESSIVE CARE continued....

... the arena of the drug and alcohol treatment services. The dilemma is how to move service users forward into a productive life and encourage them forward into a life without service user involvement.

The simplest of things can make a difference: Going to the cinema, going out for a days walk, going for a coffee (no-one likes to sit in a café on their own), accompanying someone to a college or group. Basically, allowing the person to experience the basics of living in the real world in a reassuring way.

This is only *my* experience and perception of things. I am not saying any one service or person is lacking in any way. Maybe just a misunderstanding, of what we mean by “Aftercare”.

R D Oliver

If any person has an opinion or experience of this, please feel free to contact me on my e mail address forward-motion@hotmail.co.uk

NEWSLETTER GOES ONLINE!

You may already know that our Project is based at three of Cumbria's Citizens advice Bureaux :

Workington, Penrith and Ulverston.

The Ulverston bureau is connected to its neighbouring bureau in Kendal to form Citizens Advice South Lakeland and they have recently set up a website;

www.cabsouthlakeland.org.uk

And we're on it! Have a look, it's full of useful information and links about all kinds of things: housing issues, debt problems, benefits advice, health and community issues, McMillan Cancer Care and lots more.

If you have access to the internet (if not your local library should) give it a click. Or something! Thanks.