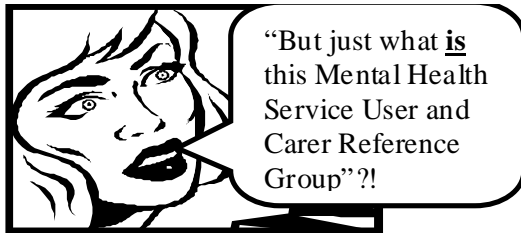


Mental Health Service User and Carer Reference Group

Welcome to this newsletter of the Mental Health Service User and Carer Reference Group – **MHRG** for short! We hope that it will help people who use mental health services and their carers know about what's happening with developments in Leeds.



“But just what **is** this Mental Health Service User and Carer Reference Group”?!

May 2005

Although the MHRG has been running for over four years many people might not know what it is and so this issue will cover some of the background to the group and the work it is involved with.

The MHRG is one of several groups supported by Leeds Involvement Project (see below). Its members are all people who receive mental health support from services, either for themselves or for someone they care for. The group is part of the Mental Health Modernisation Team - more about them on page 2. The MHRG

meet twice a month to talk about developments in services and they take forward issues from the group to the Modernisation Team and to other people involved in mental health services. Members also represent the MHRG on various working groups and this newsletter will give some background information about what people are doing in those groups. If you would like more detailed information you can contact the group's worker Jenny Savage at Leeds Involvement Project (LIP).

LEEDS INVOLVEMENT PROJECT

LIP is an organisation that aims to enable people who use services, and their carers, to get involved in the planning and development of health and social care services. As well as the MHRG, it also supports other involvement groups for disabled people and older people. There's much more information available on the website www.leedsinvolvement.org.uk or you can sign up for LIP's newsletter (in different formats). Ring us on 0113 307 3280 or fax 0113 307 3281

The Mental Health Modernisation Team (MHMT)

Members of this partnership come from Primary Care Trusts, Social Services, Leeds Mental Health Trust and the Voluntary Sector. There are also representatives from the Mental Health Reference Group (service users and carers), the University of Leeds' Reference group and the Black and Minority Ethnic Advisory Group.

The MHMT's role is to lead and co-ordinate the planning and delivery of mental health services in Leeds in line with national guidance and local needs. There is a monthly meeting of the MHMT where service users and carers have a space on the agenda.

There are various working groups of the MHMT which look at specific areas of mental health. These are either on-going groups linking with the strategies from the National Service Framework for Mental Health e.g. Health Promotion, Caring for Carers and Suicide Prevention, or they are shorter term with a specific task such as collecting information about psychological therapy services - as described later.

The rest of the newsletter is about some of the working groups that people from the MHRG are involved in. Usually two members go as service user and carer representatives and then update the rest of the group at meetings. If you would like them to pass on any comments relating to the groups please contact Jenny Savage at LIP (details overleaf)

We'd like as many people to know about the group, and what we do, as possible. It would be great if you could help us spread the word about it.

Psychological Therapies

A group has recently been set up to gather details of all the different services providing psychological therapies across Leeds, these could be anything from self-help groups through to psychotherapy. This will aim to show what is currently provided and who can get these services. This will help to highlight common themes and issues and show where extra development is needed. The results will be taken back to the Modernisation Team with recommendations for developing therapy services in Leeds. The MHRG has asked that this work include information covering whether there is help with transport or childcare with these services, or whether the building is accessible for people with disabilities. Matters such as these can make a difference to whether everyone can use them or not.

Mental Health and Social Exclusion

The Government has defined social exclusion as “what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low income, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown” . People with mental health problems are more likely to experience these problems and can feel further excluded from their communities due to the stigma and discrimination they may face.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has written a report to look at this it covers 5 key areas:

1. Stigma and Discrimination
2. The Role of Health and social care services in social exclusion
3. Employment and educational barriers
4. Supporting families and community participation, and
5. Getting the basics right such as housing, benefits, transport, finance, and legal advice.

A workshop was held in March to look at how each part of the report is being addressed in Leeds. We looked at what gaps there are, how we could meet them and what we are doing right that we should build on. Each group leader is writing a report from the day and these will be used to direct how Leeds addresses the issues.

Work on making services more socially inclusive will guide a lot of developments in Leeds including changes to day services, hostels and job opportunities (see Mental Wealth later).

Expect to hear a lot more about social “inclusion” and “exclusion”!

You can get copies of the reports mentioned from Leeds Involvement Project

The Mental Health Reference Group (MHRG) is aiming to involve as many service users and carers as possible in its work. Keeping people up-to-date using this newsletter is one way but we'd also like to hear from you. Would you like to pass on issues you think relate to some of the groups mentioned? The group can't deal with individual complaints about services but if you're not sure please contact us anyway and we can try to direct you to the right place.

Personality Disorder Clinical Network

This service is part of a national development programme to improve services to those with a personality disorder diagnosis. The service will work with 50 clients and will coordinate packages of care for them (like CPA). People with this diagnosis often face stigma and discrimination from services as well as from other service users. The network aims to change this by advising other mental health services how to work with clients they can't take on, and provide support and training to staff from other agencies.

How are people involved in the PD Clinical Network?

The Management Board has two members from the MHRG (contact via 0113 307 3280).

There are also two service user posts – one self-help group facilitator Tamsin Walker based at SHIP 0113 245 5151 and one advocate – Peter Phillips based at Leeds Mental Health Advocacy Group 0113 247 0452

Did you know that you can speak to the Pharmacist at The Mount if you have questions about medication? Call Justine Raynsford on 0113 305 5530.

Health Check Register for People with a Serious Mental Illness (SMI) diagnosis

This was a recent working group of the Mental Health Modernisation Team developing a trial scheme with GPs where people with a diagnosis of bipolar, psychosis, or schizophrenia will get an annual invitation to have physical health checks. Research shows that people with schizophrenia are more likely to have certain health problems such as diabetes or heart disease. These are thought to be due to long-term effects of medication, or factors such as diet, exercise and low incomes. Being on the register will be optional and confidential. This scheme is a trial one with a small number of GPs. Members of the MHRG thought it would be good if people with other diagnoses could ask to be on the register as they may also have physical health problems relating to their medication and/or lifestyles.

The Disability Rights Commission is currently investigating health inequalities for people with mental health problems and learning disabilities.

Day Services Modernisation Project Group

In early 2004 a review of mental health day services was done by a group of people from different mental health agencies in Leeds including users of day services.

The review found that although most people are happy with day services, and there are lots of examples of good services in Leeds, some people could become stuck in services rather than moving through them. The review also found that there were groups of people who don't use day services very much. For example parents (due to lack of childcare), people from an ethnic minority background, and also young people.

A project group has been set up to look at how to improve the day service system in Leeds. Various workshops took place last year to get the views of people currently using day services. Questionnaires have also been sent out to try to reach people mentioned above who don't use services as they are. The project aims to create a more socially inclusive day service system in Leeds so that the emphasis changes onto people using services in their own communities. It is hoped that this will also help to reduce some of the stigma associated with mental health day centres.

There is going to be a stakeholder event on June 15th (venue to be confirmed) which will be a chance for people to have their say. You can find out more from the project managers Ursula Klingel and Helen Gee based at Social Services 0113 247 8690.

! Remember!

Let us know if you want to pass on your views about any of the groups mentioned. Contact the Mental Health Reference Group (MHRG) at Leeds Involvement Project by phone 0113 307 3280 or email: info@leedsinvolvement.org.uk (put Mental Health in the subject bar). You can also write to:

Leeds Involvement Project, Block D Grove House
Mansion Gate Drive, Leeds LS7 4SU

Thanks!

Mental Wealth

Mental Wealth aims to set up Social Firms, which are companies that create employment opportunities for people with experience of mental ill health. The firms include Stocks Hill Catering, Chris Ring's recycling business and Rinkidinc (Rink Information Design Incorporated). Paul Frazer (MHRG member) is hoping to set up a printing firm called Out of Print. If people are interested in working with Paul or finding out more about other social firms please contact Adrian Patton on 0113 279 3836 or email adrian.patton@leeds.gov.uk.

Mental Wealth has a website www.mentalwealth.org.uk

The Mental Wealth Project is supported by Leeds Mental Health Employment Consortium; one of their projects is to set up a website for employers, service providers and people with mental health problems. It will be a resource for people all about issues relating to mental health and employment.

The address will be www.employmentleeds.org.uk

What do you think about this newsletter? Do you want any more information about the issues discussed? Would you prefer the newsletter in different formats? Please contact Jenny at Leeds Involvement Project – your feedback is very welcome.

Here are just a couple of other ways you can get involved in groups:

Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) forums – there are forums for each PCT area and ones for the Mental Health Trust and Teaching Hospitals Trust – contact Ann Crossland on 0113 297 7920. You can raise issues via the forums and they are looking for new members.

Locality Development Scheme – area based involvement groups for disabled people and carers supported by Leeds Involvement Project – contact Emily or Tanveer at LIP (see page 5 for contact details).