

Pastoral Care for Mental Health Newsletter

No 1: January 2007



Mental Health Support Project

Newsletter launch



Dear friends,

It is just a year since the *Making Everybody Welcome* conference took place at High Leigh in Hertfordshire, at which a small group of us, with experience of mental health issues, proposed that a national mental health support project be established. Our hope was that such a project could help our Catholic community to become more aware of mental health issues and more effective in pastorally supporting people with mental health issues and their families. So it seems a good time to send an update to all of you who have expressed the wish to be kept informed of our progress. We hope you find the contents of this newsletter of interest. We would love to hear from you if you have any comments or suggestions or would like to get involved in any way with this vital work.

Roberta Canning

(Volunteer Mental Health Support Development Worker)

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Background to the Mental Health Support Project

The project originated in the evidence of Listening 2004: My Family My Church. The group that gathered at High Leigh, to consider how best to address the needs identified, had personal experience of ways in which the suffering of people with mental health problems (and their families) is made worse by stigma, isolation and fear of rejection. Some had personally experienced rejection and refusal of help from the Catholic community; others had been greatly helped by friendship, listening and undemanding acceptance. The example of church-based support groups for people with mental health problems and their carers (such as that started by Edna Hunneysett in the Diocese of Middlesbrough, which involves scriptural reflection, prayer and the sharing of experience) seemed to offer a way forward. We wanted to explore ways of supporting the development of such groups.

Project

With the approval of the Department of Christian Responsibility and Citizenship, Elizabeth Davies, the Project Officer for Marriage and Family Life, convened a small group to explore the proposal. Members include Paul Farmer, Director of MIND, Julia Head, mental health chaplain at South London and Maudsley NHS Trust, Peter McHale from Catholic Care in Leeds and Dilys Barrel who is a pastoral worker in the Diocese of Clifton.

We have met four times since Spring 2006 and made contact with a number of others professionally or personally concerned in fostering awareness of mental health issues and developing more effective pastoral support. We are fortunate that Paul Farmer remains so committed to the group in spite of his increased responsibilities as Director of MIND and in the wisdom and experience of Julia, Peter and Dilys.

"We aim to hold a one day national event in October 2007 to raise awareness and introduce useful resources for mental health support."



The High Leigh group at work drafting the leaflet: What is Life Like if You or Someone in Your Family has Mental Health Needs?

Working Group Objectives for 2007

- To hold a one day national event in October, combining awareness raising, introduction to the use of helpful resources and with input from key speakers including people with direct personal and professional experience.
- To start up and run 3 or more pilot projects at parish/deanery level using existing material
- To continue to raise awareness of mental health.
- To develop our network of people and groups concerned about mental health within the Catholic Church.

Beginnings

At our first meeting we identified three objectives:

1. To create a network of people within the Catholic Church with an interest in mental health.
2. To raise awareness at different levels, nationally and locally
3. To explore the feasibility of using existing materials, especially *Promoting Mental Health. A Resource for Pastoral and Spiritual Care*.

Over the summer and autumn we have made several calls for information to create a network of interested people. This has brought a good response; many are from service users past and present. Most say how encouraged they are that we are trying to raise awareness and have made very helpful and constructive suggestions and comments. Others make it clear how much they would value greater support and understanding within our Catholic communities and stressed the problems of isolation and stigma. Some contacts to the group have come from clergy and pastoral workers seeking advice and a few have pointed to examples of good practice, for instance the work of the Association for Pastoral Care in Mental Health.

Resources and Contacts

Promoting Mental Health is a flexible tool for use in parishes, in a range of different groups and situations, to trigger discussion and debate. It provides information on mental health and its promotion and protection within congregations and the wider community. The resource focuses on how faith communities can be welcoming to people with mental or emotional distress, as well as learning from their experiences and benefiting from their contributions. Developed by *mentality* in conjunction with the Church of England and the National Institute for Mental Health in England you can download a free copy from the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health website. www.scmh.org.uk (Click on previous work and then *mentality*)

Association for Pastoral Care in Mental Health is primarily concerned with the spiritual needs of people with mental health problems. They hope to encourage local initiatives in faith communities in order to support and empower mental health service users. Several befriending schemes and drop-in centres have been set up by APCMH members and the experience gained from them can be shared. They may also be able to suggest speakers or help arrange conferences to raise awareness in the faith communities and amongst mental health professionals www.pastoral.org.uk

Christian Congregations and Mental Illness is the latest title from Edna Hunneysett and includes a good discussion of Christian pastoral care projects. Available from Edna at edna.hunneysett@talk21.com Also visit Edna's website www.carersinthecommunity.org.uk

Rethink Local networks poster – available from Rethink on 0845 456 0455 or www.rethink.org/dualdiagnosis/network.htm. The poster provides a template which can be filled in by the parish office for easy reference for help when individuals come with serious mental health needs. Rethink are currently developing a siblings network for brothers and sisters of people with serious mental health difficulties.

The *What is Life Like* leaflet on mental health is available from www.everybodyswelcome.org.uk/mentalhealth and has useful contacts, among them **MIND** who have a good general helpline and can be e-mailed at info@mind.org.uk

“They would value greater support and understanding from within our Catholic community.”



Mental Health Support Project

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The Mental Health Support Project is part of the Everybody's Welcome initiative of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. It aims to create a network of people within the Catholic Church with an interest in mental health; to raise awareness at different levels, nationally and locally; to explore the feasibility of using existing materials, especially *Promoting Mental Health. A Resource for Pastoral and Spiritual Care.*

Everybody's Welcome 2006

[www.everybodyswelcome.org.uk/
mentalhealth.html](http://www.everybodyswelcome.org.uk/mentalhealth.html)

Everybody's Welcome

Everybody's Welcome is the first stage in a three phase campaign within the Catholic community of England and Wales to support marriage and family life, established in response to families' expressed needs during Listening 2004.

Everyone's Welcome is supporting parish communities to become more friendly, more family-sensitive, and more welcoming of all, including those at their heart as well as on the margins.

Family-sensitive, welcoming and friendly parishes are the foundation of the Church's care for marriage and family life as well as for the next two stages of the Celebrating Family initiative: Home is a Holy Place (2007) and Passing on the Faith (2008)

Pastors, parish groups, organisations, families and individuals are invited to use any of the resources on the Everybody's Welcome website, to adapt them to local situations and to share their experiences.



www.everybodyswelcome.org.uk