

Your Experience Counts



Look after your mental health & emotional well-being this summer.

Editor's Foreword

Hello and welcome to the summer edition of Your Experience Counts. The winter is well and truly over and it's lovely to see the sun shining through and the gardens in bloom.

We have been really busy again at the service and have 2 new staff, Lynn and Andrew, and you will hear from them later in the magazine.

The service has also been operating a Test of Change within a GP practice in North Lanarkshire and this has been going very well. This is an early intervention approach and allows patients' access to a Link Worker who can offer various resources to access within the community.

We have been working closely with Veterans First Point to work in partnership and deliver a more holistic service and will be launching this service later in the year.

I hope you all enjoy the longer evenings and are able to take part in some outdoor pursuits.

Enjoy the information and all the articles in the magazine!

If you have anything you want to share or add to the magazine, please contact Nicola, our admin worker on nicola.wilson@samh.org.uk and she will add your article to the first available magazine.

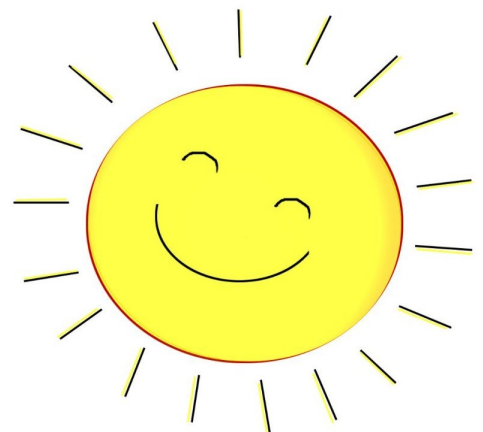
See you all in the next edition.

The Editor



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My Story

My story starts in 2010 when I lived in England with my husband. It was the August and we had been there for a year due to my husband's job but we were soon moving back to Scotland as my husband had been offered a job back home and we decided to go. Just before we moved back home I started taking bad headaches, pains in my chest and stomach pains. I felt lightheaded and dizzy all the time and just generally felt unwell. I thought I was really ill as I felt so bad.

We moved home and we lived with my parents whilst we house hunted. It was 3 long months for me as my husband went back to work and I felt I had no structure in my life. I didn't want to leave the house as I felt panicky. This stopped me from meeting up with my friends or looking for a new job as I didn't think I would be able to cope. I was an interior designer and was used to meeting new people every day. I am a very chatty, friendly and sociable person so this was really unusual and some of my friends didn't know how to react with me. My family and husband were worried about me and I kept visiting doctors as I wanted answers as to why this was happening to me.

The first doctor I saw didn't act like she cared and made me feel worse, she basically said I was a young woman with my whole life ahead of me and to stop worrying and go enjoy myself. Didn't she understand that's what I wanted to do more than anything? This could have put me off going back to see another GP but thankfully it didn't. I heard that another GP was back from maternity leave and so I made an appointment with her. She told me I was very depressed and extremely anxious. I started to cry and she was lovely to me and it felt like she cared and believed me. I told her I didn't understand how I could be like this as I had nothing really to be depressed about; I had a nice family, friends, supportive husband, nice house, car etc. She explained depression was an illness and didn't always happen to people because they were sad or unhappy or didn't have a good life. She explained all the symptoms and even sent me for tests to prove there wasn't anything else wrong with me, as by this point I thought I had heart problems due to the chest pains and light-headedness. The results all came back clear and my doctors went through them with me very patiently to help me believe I wasn't dying. She was brilliant with me and this helped a great deal but the feelings still didn't go away. She offered me anti-depressants, which I said no to as I was worried about becoming addicted; I was only 24 and the thought of having to rely on medication for the rest of my life scared me. She told me of other therapies like CBT but explained I would need to work hard to help myself too as it wasn't going to be easy or a quick fix. I was referred to a CBT therapist and the doctor prescribed me Diazepam to help with my anxiety and panic attacks. I found CBT very helpful and the therapists were very good with me.

My Story Continued

I went back to work for a company who I worked for before and I told them how I was feeling and they were very supportive and I slowly started getting more confident at work. They too had also known the old me and were shocked to know the way I felt. I started going out with friends again and attended stress control classes in Hamilton which I found very helpful. Doing all these things and having support from my husband, family and friends really helped and I eventually started getting a hold on my depression and my life.

Unfortunately as I was getting better my best friend who I had met through work 10 years previous was going through a really difficult and awful time in her life, something she didn't deserve as she was such a wonderful person. In Sept 2014 she took her own life and left so many people devastated. She didn't get anywhere near as much help and support from her doctor as was needed and this still makes me angry. A year after she died I decided to have a charity walk at Lanark Loch in her memory. A day to remember the amazing person she was and raise money but even more importantly raise mental health awareness. I chose SAMH as the charity to receive the money we raised and met up with the fundraisers at the head office in Glasgow. I was talking about how I would love to get involved in more things and would love to work for them helping others who were suffering or dealing with suicide but knew I didn't have the right qualifications. They then told me of Experience Counts in Motherwell and I applied for the job and the rest they say is his history.

I love my Job and find it very rewarding. There's nothing better than knowing you have given someone some hope and encouragement and made their day a little better. I have met some great people and the managers, staff and volunteers are all lovely.

I still have bad days and bad weeks and the occasional set back but then I see how far I've come and how my experiences have got me where I am today. I would never wish how I felt on anyone but I wouldn't be the person I am today if it hadn't happened to me. I'm quite happy not to be the old me now. I will never forget my friend and how much she helped me when I was ill. I hate knowing I couldn't save her but I will continue to help others and raise awareness of mental health and suicide in her honour.



Jenna Harwood – Peer Support Worker

Community Link Workers

What do we do?

A Community Link Worker's role involves community mapping, networking, marketing and liaising with other agencies. We source information and social opportunities in the community and link with Peer Support Workers, providing relevant information required for their peers. CLWs are also involved in the assessment of new referrals which allows the Peer Support Co-ordinator to match the individual with the most suitable Peer Support Worker.

Through Well-Connected, the CLW role offers initial support to link into opportunities in the local and wider community. One of us is trained in delivering SafeTalk (suicide alertness) for various members and agencies within the community. We also liaise with Well-informed to deliver mental health awareness to schools and community groups.

CLWs deliver Tools For Living (TFL), which is a range of half-day workshops designed to help people develop their knowledge, confidence and skills in a variety of areas related to recovery.

TFL Dates & Venues:

Coatbridge TESCO

Day and time TBC

Motherwell Baptist Church

Mon 8th Aug 10.30-15.30

Mon 15th Aug 10.30-15.30

Cumbernauld TESCO

Day and time TBC

For more info on the TFL workshops, call the office on **Tel: 01698 265659**



Well-informed



Well-informed provides a relaxed and informal resource for people enquiring about mental health and well-being issues throughout North Lanarkshire. The resource can be accessed via the freephone information line, face-to-face, e-mail and post. In addition, you can also contact us at one of our outreach stands which are hosted monthly at libraries, health centres and hospitals across North Lanarkshire.

The service enables people to make informed choices in their treatment and care by guiding them to resources that may be relevant to their enquiry as well as the factors influencing positive mental health and well-being.

Well-informed has been very busy recently delivering 20 information stalls throughout North Lanarkshire during the month of June. We have delivered our usual stalls within the libraries, Health Centres etc. and as well as that we have supported VOX with their safety event on 9th June, St Aidan's High School Health Fayre on 10th June and Airdrie Mosque with their Connecting Communities open day on June 4th. There have been many more diverse stalls which are all beneficial to the people who work and live in North Lanarkshire.

As Well-informed is also an information and signposting service, between April and June 2016 we have responded to 86 enquiries. The enquiries have been varied between providing information on where an individual could seek support with their benefits to a mother looking for a Mother and Toddler group. These enquiries are all very relevant and important to the individual and the service.

If you require information on services or how you can get involved in your local community, please call Well-informed freephone 0800 073 0918 or e-mail: well-informed@samh.org.uk

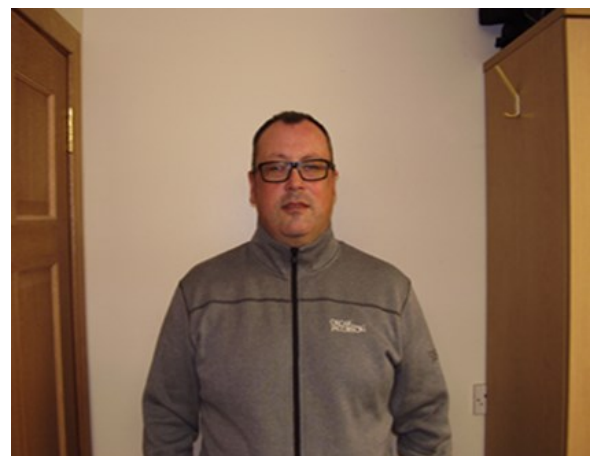
Picture above is Staff & Volunteers quarterly update meeting.

Veterans' Work

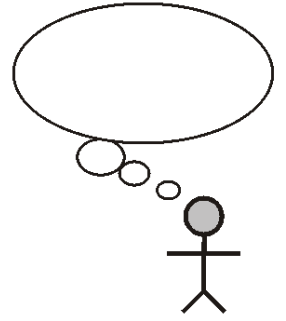
Here Deborah Burns, Veteran Peer Support Worker, introduces our new veteran colleague and gives an update on some of her good work.

The last few months have been non-stop. We successfully recruited our new Veteran Peer Support Worker, Andrew Weir (pictured below), who impressively carved out a 22 year career for himself with the army, working within such areas as the Welfare Office and up until recently he had been working for Scottish Veterans Residences in Cranhill, Glasgow. Andrew has joined just at the right time as we transition to work in Partnership with Veterans 1st point Lanarkshire.

I have been doing my bit to keep in the public eye and secured a radio interview with British Forces Broadcasting Scotland (BFBS) promoting mental health awareness. This was an amazing experience and effective in stimulating interest for veterans suffering with mental health issues to know there are services available to help in Scotland. I also wrote an article for SAMH Mental Health Awareness Week, sharing my own experiences of living with depression and the trials and tribulations that have come with that, but with a positive outcome and hopefully by sharing my personal experience of recovery this will inspire hope for others in similar situations.



Peers' Contributions



ALLERGIC TO THOUGHT

Do you remember when you were six years old
And the world was so wonderful
You done everything you were told
Do you remember hanging onto your daddies hand
Being carried home from the January sales
Cause you couldn't even stand
And your mum didn't like you playing
With other kids on the street
Cause you'd always come home dirty
And she liked to keep you neat
Everything was simple then
All black and white
It was a time of innocence
There was know wrong or right

Do you remember when you were sixteen years old
You done anything you wanted
And not what you were told
You thought that going to school was just a waste of time
If you'd only known what you know right now
You might have seen the lies
But you still loved your parents
Though rarely let it show
Cause you'd always turn your back on them
So how were they to know
A job was all you wanted
And some self respect
But you couldn't do what was half as good
What did you expect

Feel like a stranger in a strange land
What happened to the child
What happened to his innocence
Feel like a stranger in a strange land
What happened to love
What happened to the child with a dream ?

A.S

Stress Control classes will help us develop skills and techniques to manage common issues caused by modern day living such as stress, anxiety or low confidence, which can affect well-being.

The classes are delivered in local community facilities and consist of six sessions lasting 90 minutes each. We will not need to speak about our issues during the class. Just sit back and listen about helpful stress control techniques*. Feel free to bring someone along with you for support.

*** Some of the issues covered during the sessions are:**

- Learning about stress
- Controlling your body
- Controlling your thoughts
- Controlling your actions
- Controlling panic & sleep problems
- Wellbeing & controlling the future

<p><u>CLYDESDALE</u> Carluke Leisure Centre 135 Carnwath Road Carluke ML8 4EA Tues 16th Aug – 20th Sept 6:00pm – 7:30pm</p>	<p><u>HAMILTON</u> Whitehill Neighbourhood Centre 9 Hunter Rd, Whitehill Hamilton ML3 0LH Thurs 18th Aug – 22nd Sept 2:30pm – 4:00pm</p>	<p><u>COATBRIDGE</u> Lecture Theatre Monklands Hospital Monkscourt Avenue Airdrie ML6 OJS Tues 16th Aug – 20th Sept 6:00pm – 7:30pm</p>	<p><u>RUTHERGLEN</u> No 18 Healthy n Happy Farmloan Road Rutherglen G73 1DL Tues 23rd Aug – 27th Sept 2:30pm – 4:00pm</p>
<p><u>MOTHERWELL</u> Hope United Church 98 Orbiston Street Motherwell ML1 1PX Wed 24th Aug – 28th Sept 1:00pm – 2:30pm</p>	<p><u>CUMBERNAULD</u> Town Hall Bron Way Cumbernauld G67 1DZ Wed 7th Sept – 12th Oct 6:00pm – 7:30pm</p>	<p><u>EAST KILBRIDE</u> Lecture Theatre Hairmyres Hospital Eaglesham Road East Kilbride G75 8RG Thurs 15th Sept – 20th Oct 6:00pm – 7:30pm</p>	

New Staff



Lynn McLaughlan is one of our new Peer Support Workers at *Expeerience* Counts. She comes from an admin/accounts background, but is now studying Health & Social Care with the Open University. She has an 8-year-old son and lives locally. Lynn has her own lived experience of mental health issues, but has been in recovery for the past few years and would now like to use her experience to help others who are experiencing mental health issues.

Andrew Weir was born in Motherwell and grew up in Wishaw. He has been married to his wife Anne for 23yrs and has two children. His first job was an apprentice glazier for Motherwell District Council and he did that for three years. Andrew needed something more reliable that would give him some security so he joined the Army in November 1991. His first unit was The Queen's Own Highlanders, where he went to Germany in the 1yr he deployed to Canada and Northern Ireland for 6 months. After going back to Germany he got married and then moved back to Edinburgh where he got his first quarter and had two children. He spent some time there but had to move back to Germany for a better life for his family. He went to Fallingbostal and deployed to Bosnia for 6 months and then transferred to the Royal Highland Fusiliers after the tour. Andrew has also been to Cyprus, Falklands, Jordan, and Iraq. Andrew left the service in Nov 2013, where he completed an HNC in Social Care, then he was employed with Scottish Veterans Housing Association for 18 months, then moved to *Expeerience* Counts for the Veterans role working in partnership with Veterans 1st Point. Andrew is also completing a University degree in Social work at UWS Dumfries. But overall he is looking forward to the new challenges that *Expeerience* Counts will offer him.

Workchoice



I have worked as an advisor in the National Employment Team for nearly 3 years with SAMH, helping to support people to find work through the Work Choice programme. My role is wide and varied and covers a wide geography across the Central Belt of Lanarkshire and the Borders too. Working all around North and South Lanarkshire has been my life for over 25 years now as I previously worked in the Jobcentre as a Disability Employment Advisor. I have employers and contacts that I have worked with for a number of years and I enjoy regularly sending my clients to them for work placements. All employment sectors are covered including hospitality, IT, landscaping, care and retail. I hope to now give a wee snapshot into what Work Choice is and how there are many people declaring health issues who benefit from the support it offers.

Workchoice is a Department for Work and Pensions funded programme which SAMH are paid to deliver in the North Lanarkshire area. This programme is voluntary and open to anyone declaring a health issue, who is of working age, and really keen to get back to work. This programme is aimed at people who want to work 16 hours or more and ultimately come off benefit. The service which I offer includes:-

- Taking the individual from point of referral and build a vocational profile for work.
- Regular weekly meetings.
- Setting of firm job goals focusing on strengths, skills and qualities.
- CV preparation, which is individually tailored to needs.
- Preparing for interview and support in job search activities.
- Sourcing work trials and voluntary placements.
- In work support and helping with arranging adjustments required in workplace.

Referrals are taken from various sources. Primarily the Disability Employment Advisors at the Jobcentres make the referral and I pick this up and get started within a week. Statutory Referring Organisations like Routes to Work, Occupational Therapists and SAMH themselves also refer directly onto Work Choice. Some great good news stories have been told, particularly with some Peer Support Workers coming through the Work Choice route and supported fully within SAMH too!

The great thing about the job is that I get the opportunity to work with people individually and see them grow in confidence and steadily get prepared for the working world again. Sustaining the job they secure and managing their health issues in work becomes a reality and that gives a great sense of job satisfaction when I can offer that support during the first 6 months or so as people settle into work.

Sandra Tallamy, Senior Employability Advisor at SAMH

Volunteer Story



Hi everyone, I'm Kenny. I am a current Well-informed volunteer at the Motherwell office.

I originally became unwell in 2004 and spent sometime in ward 1 in Wishaw General Hospital. At first I kept myself to myself but after some time I began to mix with other patients. I was diagnosed with schizophrenia which didn't really come as a shock as my dad also suffered from the condition. However, I felt alone for the first time in my life as I felt that I couldn't talk to anyone about how I was feeling due to the stigma of mental health. I feel that people with my condition are unfairly portrayed as dangerous by the media. While on the ward I became friendly with one of the nursing staff who I feel saved my life. After spending nine months in the ward I returned to work as a clerical assistant. I coped well back at work and began to build my life up again. I'm very lucky to have a very supportive family and enjoyed holidays and time spent out at concerts where I have a love of music and the arts.

I met a girl and we planned to marry in 2014. However, things took a turn for the worse when the relationship ended and after 18 years with the same company I got made redundant. Everything seemed to be against me and after problems with my medication I ended up back in Ward 1. I was embarrassed to be back on the ward and very quickly my old symptoms came back. Again with the help of family and friends I came through it and after 6 weeks I was released from the hospital. This left me with a dilemma, as I wasn't fit for work but wanted to fill my day with something constructive. I began to volunteer with Barnardo's which was great for me as it meant I could meet new people. Around this time my CPN mentioned the Well-informed service and I popped in to meet them and soon after this I began to volunteer with them also.

On looking back on my life I wish that my dad had received the help that I have received and a big regret is that I never got a chance to speak to him about mental health issues. My family have been very supportive of me and this fills me with hope for the future. My nieces and nephews don't see me as the man with mental health issues. They simply see me as uncle Kenny or as "uncle fatboy" as I am affectionately called.

Since working with Well-informed I have completed a Mindfulness class and the MyRAP course. This has been great for me as it has let me meet people with similar stories. I feel that my life is a work in progress and with every passing day I am getting stronger. I feel that I am now in the position to help others through talking about my mental health story. I hope in even some small way that my story maybe be a help to you.



Peer Learning Network



Peer Learning Network
Wednesday 25th May 2016

Dalziel Business Centre Motherwell

Every two months Peer Support Workers from Experience Counts, Lanarkshire Links and Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health, collectively known as the Peer Learning Network (PLN), meet to share best practice, give and receive invaluable insights about peer working and exchange community resources which could benefit the people they support. The Network also aims to promote peer working in Lanarkshire and welcomes guests, both local and from further afield, who enrich the professional lives of PLN members with the passion and enthusiasm they bring to meetings.

May's gathering included visitors from Finland who spoke about their *Experts by Experience* programme, comprehensive training designed to prepare people with lived experience to support others in their recovery from mental ill health and/or addictions. An expert by experience is described as:

'...a person who has passed the studies of special expert by experience training, with their own experience of mental health and/or substance abuse problems. He/she is either just now suffering from those problems or has recovered from them and sees himself/herself as an ex-user of services or as a carer or close to somebody suffering just now. He/she is involved in the planning, development and evaluation of services or acts as a peer counsellor or a trainer with their own experience.'

The content of the training not only covers mental health and recovery but necessary professional skills and, poignantly, being human. It reflects aspects of the Scottish Professional Development Award (PDA) in Mental Health Peer Support, adding *IT skills, performing in mass media, organising events and seminars and mental development and lifespan of a human being* to its list of modules.

The PLN was treated to a presentation by a graduate of the programme and to an impressive level of openness about mental health – the Finns are refreshingly expressive! Each of the PLN services then spoke about the various ways in which they deliver peer support, followed by a peer who shared his experience of receiving support and the powerful difference it has made to his life.

Peer support is a global phenomenon and will continue to develop, which highlights the strength of its influence on individual and organisational levels. It was a joy and an inspiration to receive knowledge and wisdom from a country known poetically as *the land of the midnight sun...* and a nation that gave birth to Moomins!

The Peer Learning Network is currently producing a short film to promote and celebrate peer working in Lanarkshire. It will be released in October to coincide with the annual Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival and will include footage of May's PLN meeting.

Find out more about peer support in Scotland at www.scottishrecovery.net

And if you want to know more about some of the work being done in Finland, go to www.olkkari.net (you'll have to use Google and translate the site).

Lanarkshire Scottish Mental Health Arts & Film Festival 2016

After the success of previous festival campaigns, Lanarkshire is delighted to announce their participation in the 10th Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival. This year's theme is 'TIME' & will be running from 10th-31st October. The aim of the festival is to promote positive attitudes towards mental health, mental illness, support and recovery, and to effect significant cultural change amongst opinion through the insights and influences of the creative arts. The festival fundamentally seeks to strengthen the links between arts, community and public organisations.

Festival Aims

The festival is part of a wider programme of mental health improvement, which aims to:

- Promote positive attitudes around mental health problems.
- Increase understanding of mental health and well-being – and how we can promote and support our own and others mental health and well-being.
- Increase awareness of what help and support is available.

As well as the above objectives the festival also wishes to:

- Increase awareness of the important part that the arts can play in supporting and promoting mental health and well-being.
- To engage with the local media to support mental health awareness.
- To increase participation by varying the opportunities to engage by using different mediums, targeting different age spans, spreading across Lanarkshire and creatively promoting the events.
- To link with existing arts and cultural programmes to showcase sustainable projects and build mental health awareness into existing projects and programmes.
- To strengthen the links between arts, community, academic, voluntary and public organisations.
- To challenge and engage on the topics of stigma, recovery and mental health inequalities.

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Useful Telephone Numbers

- Contact Well-informed on 0800 073 0918 for general enquiries relating to mental well-being.
- Breathing Space: 0800 838 587
- The Samaritans: 116 123
- Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0800 0271234
- NHS 24: 111
- Lanarkshire Links: (01698) 265254

About Experience Counts

Experience Counts supports the mental well-being of the people of North Lanarkshire. It benefits people who are over 16, living in North Lanarkshire, experiencing or recovering from a mental health problem and facing challenges or struggling to achieve personal outcomes.

Peer Support Workers create an environment which empowers people and supports them to take control of their recovery. Through their work with individuals, Peer Support Workers help people to identify their strengths, understand their challenges and explore what they find useful and what causes them difficulty.

Peer Support Workers support people to develop their own, individualized, Recovery Action Plans and work towards personal goals over a period of around 6 months.