

Your Experience Counts



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

Editor's Foreword

It's been a busy time yet again at Experience Counts. We have new staff who will say hello later in the magazine.

Peer Support staff have been delivering MyRAP groups and Community Link Workers have delivered Tools For Living which have all been well attended.

If you are anything like me, you will be glad to see the nights getting a bit lighter which gives us an opportunity to *Get Active* and shake off the cobwebs of the winter.

We have MyRAP and Tools For Living groups running throughout the year—if you are interested in getting involved, please contact the office.

Nothing more to say but to have a lovely Easter and don't eat too many Easter eggs!

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 again in the summer.

The Editor



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My Story

Before SAMH I had a lot of stress and anger. It was destroying my life by pushing everyone I loved away due to all the anger I had. From the 2nd of April I came out of my dream job with an injury and found out that I was also going to be a father. Due to the news of being a father with having no job and no money to support the mother I was stressing out my skull especially having an injury that was affecting me doing anything like going for a walk. Because I was jobless and was being rejected from every job I applied for I was getting more stressed out and angry. Due to the injury I suffered I was unable to train for anything as it was bringing me pain so that was adding to my anger which was taken out on my family and loved ones. This went on for months on end until I decided to go and get help. I went to my local GP and had told them what was going on and why I had come to get help. The doctor knew from what I had told her that it wasn't in my nature to be that person I described to her. The doctor then referred me to a psychologist to see if they would be able to help me.

I went to see the psychologist to see what they would say. They said that due to what I was going through it would be best to get help from SAMH, so I got referred to SAMH within a few weeks.

Once I got referred I got a phone call from a man called Mark. He sounded happy to take me on and help me through my recovery. Once I got that phone call to say that I have a peer support worker to help me it felt like a big weight had been lifted from my shoulders and I could try to relax knowing that there is someone out there who can help me with my stress and anger. When the day came to meet Mark I felt really nervous as I did not know what I was involved in. I was kinda quiet to start with but when Mark introduced himself and gave a bit of an insight to what was going to happen over the next 6 months. I relaxed and opened up to him so I felt a bit more confident to tell him and start to open up. I explained to him why I got referred to SAMH and it turned out we had been through the same thing which made things easier for me to talk to him about. I felt that this was a way forward for me as I can tell him my problems and he could help guide me in the right direction. He gave me a lot of good advice and I had told him some of my coping strategies that I use.

During my time with SAMH I felt that I was getting better and better after each time I met up with Mark. He could see a difference in me as I wasn't stressing out as much or losing the plot with my anger and I started to make a difference in my life. When it was getting closer to my time to leave SAMH Mark was talking to me and was asking if I would be able to become a volunteer with veterans 1st point. I have full respect for Mark and all the volunteers at SAMH as they all do a fantastic job helping people that have mental illness and I wish that they keep up they good work that they are doing for the community.

I can finally say after all the help that I got from Mark I can now move on with my life and have been putting my life into a set structure where I can work things through and continue to keep my life stress/anger free now.

Craig

Veterans' Work

Liam, veteran peer support worker for Experience Counts, left his role in the winter months for pastures new and we wish him all the very best for the future. I have been fully immersing myself in all things veterans these past couple of months including visiting the veterans support group which runs every Tuesday in Bellshill Hunter, Council Offices. Being a Veteran myself I was welcomed in with open arms and thoroughly enjoyed meeting new people and finding out a bit about the activities that they organise for the weekends. I also attended the drop-in café based inside Kings Church, Motherwell which runs every Friday and provides free cakes and drinks for veterans to chill out and catch up with friends in a relaxed setting.

I was successful in my bid to do a 20 minute presentation for the next Veterans 1st Point annual conference which is centred In Edinburgh and includes motivational speakers such as Simon Weston CBE, Falklands War Veteran, and Keith Brown, MSP, Minister for Transport and Veterans. I am thoroughly excited to be working alongside Veterans 1st Point in the near future, meeting my new co-worker and continuing to create bonds with organisations such as Poppy Scotland and Combat Stress.

There are a number of groups and services in the community that support veterans such as:

- **Motherwell Wetherspoon's**—Breakfast club for veterans on the first Sunday of each month starting at 10:00h.
- **Airdrie Wetherspoon's**—Breakfast club for veterans on the 3rd Sunday of each month starting at 10:00h.
- **Kings Church, Motherwell**—Drop-in service for veterans every Friday between 10:00-14:00.
- **Hunter St, Council Offices, Bellshill**—Veterans' support group every Tuesday starting at 17:00h.

Deborah Burns



Community Link Workers

Experience Counts' Community Link Workers have been busy as always. Here is an update on what they have been doing over the past few months:

- **Delivering SafeTalk, Suicide TALK and Mental Health Awareness sessions.**
- **Continuing to fulfil their role at Experience Counts by helping with 1st visits, reviews and exits.**
- **1-2-1 work consisting of linking people into social activities.**
- **Continuing to liaise with all relevant services and agencies.**

Community Link Workers are also facilitating TFL groups that will start on the dates below.

Motherwell, Wishaw & Bellshill:

Held in Motherwell Baptist church

Monday 14th March: 10.30am—3.30pm

Monday 21st March: 10.30am—3.30pm

Airdrie & Coatbridge

Held in Coatbridge ASDA

Monday 28th March: 10.30am—3.30pm

Monday 4th April: 10.30am—3.30pm

Cumbernauld & Northern Corridor

Monday 11th April: 10.30am—3.30pm

Monday 18th April: 10.30am—3.30pm



A light lunch will be provided at all workshops.

Jimmy Mallaghan and David Tough, Community Link Workers

Well-informed Volunteer



Hi all, I'm David. I am a current Well-Informed Volunteer at the Motherwell centre. So, how did I get to volunteering? Well to keep a long story as short as possible, I started off my working life aged 17 and in-between jobs I went to college and various training programs and volunteering.

My last job resulted in doing some damage to my back, the second time was pretty much the end of that line of work and I was made redundant. That same year I suffered virus after virus, which caused stomach problems for some time. During this time, my mood slowly deteriorated and I was taking panic attacks and started to lock myself away. I was always a shy, quiet person, but this was something else!

It took a full year before my GP finally diagnosed me with depression and social anxiety disorder. There didn't really seem to be a major trigger, although losing my job and previous personal experiences may well have been building up for years.

After going through the system of psychologists, psychiatrists, O.T.s, C.P.N.s G.P.s and counsellors and various medications, I finally took a huge breakdown. I realise this is now turning into a life story but bear with me! After seeing a CPN, I self referred myself to Experience Counts which was a huge help seeing a peer-support worker once a week, who fully understood what I had been through and was still going through.

Now to how I got to volunteering! I received an email from Well-Informed about a suicide prevention walk, which I went to. Volunteering was mentioned, and the rest, as they say, is history. I started around October 2015 and I'm currently doing one day a week, which is helping and I feel I am giving something back to the mental health community, which gave so much to myself. I am not going to pretend that my life is now rosy and wonderful, as most people with mental health issues will understand, but my experiences are helping to help others, as being there and still fighting this often debilitating disease, I now understand what people can be going through.

Thanks for reading all this, you deserve a medal!

Peers' Contributions

Consumed

I remember the sleepless nights when the nightmares felt so real,
I can still picture how dark it was and how I couldn't feel.
Lost in a cloud of darkness no idea how to leave,
Panicking, crying unable to even breathe.
The days were no better they intensified the fear knowing no matter
how you pretend that everything's okay?
The darkness & the numbness is only hours away.

- Laura Mc

Sunset at Troon



Peers' Contributions Continued

Peer's Story

When I first met Ann I didn't know what to expect. She told me she'd peer matched me with a Peer Support Worker who had similar interests. I now know how important the first meeting was as me and Tracey clicked right away and our weekly meetings always flew by.

It was a perfect match.

I was really down when I first started and had family issues too. Tracey and I spoke things through and she shared things with me that had happened in her life that was very similar to mine. We spoke about how to cope with things. I was finding it very difficult to say 'no' to my family. We worked on confidence together and talked about focusing on positives rather than negatives.

One of my goals was to be able to read to my grandchildren. We talked about my literacy problems and ways we could work together to get help for this. Tracey helped me get a volunteer tutor through Lead Scotland. Tracey also found out my literacy issue wouldn't be a problem and I could be involved in the Discovery Award too.

Tracey linked me with Neighbourhood Networks. I attend their social groups, have met new people and been to a few different places in Scotland.

When I'm feeling low I think back to my meetings with Tracey and head out to the library but before I would have stayed at home and possibly just went to bed .

I feel sometimes my family try to hold me back and don't seem too happy that I'm moving forward and doing more things now. I've been line dancing, attended different things and have my weekly meetings with my literacy tutor. I also went to Crete on holiday and took a boat trip by myself.

I'm thinking about me now.

I went to Expeerience Counts office and met Marion Fellows the MP and I talked about the help I got from Peer Support.

People have now noticed the positive changes in me. Thanks to Peer Support I'm getting to do things I never knew about and have the confidence to do them now.

I have my own life back now .

Maggie.



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>RUTHERGLEN</u></p> <p>Rutherglen Town Hall 139 Main St Rutherglen G73 2JJ</p> <p>Tues 29th Mar – 3rd May 10:00am – 11:30am</p>	<p><u>CUMBERNAULD</u></p> <p>Town Hall Bron Way Cumbernauld G67 1DZ</p> <p>Wed 20th Apr – 25th May 6:00pm – 7:30pm</p>	<p><u>HAMILTON</u></p> <p>Whitehill Neighbourhood Centre</p> <p>Thurs 21st Apr – 26th May 2:30pm – 4:00pm</p>	<p><u>CLYDESDALE</u></p> <p>Carlisle Leisure Centre</p> <p>Tues 3rd May – 7th June 6:00pm – 7:30pm</p>	<p><u>WISHAW</u></p> <p>Volunteer Centre 9-11 Kenilworth Avenue Wishaw ML2 7LP</p> <p>Tues 3rd May – 7th June 10:00am – 11:30am</p>
<p><u>BELLSHILL</u></p> <p>Bellshill Cultural Centre</p> <p>Wed 11th May 15th June 1:00pm – 2:30pm</p>	<p><u>EAST KILBRIDE</u></p> <p>Lecture Theatre Hairmyres Hospital Eaglesham Road East Kilbride G75 8RG</p> <p>Thurs 12th May – 16th June 6:00pm – 7:30pm</p>	<p><u>COATBRIDGE</u></p> <p>Coatbridge College Kildonan Street Coatbridge ML5 3LS</p> <p>Tues 17th May – 21st June 6:00pm – 7:30pm</p>	<p><u>RUTHERGLEN</u></p> <p>VENUE TO BE CONFIRMED</p> <p>Tues 24th May – 28th June 1:00pm – 2:30pm</p>	

New Staff



Jenna (left) has been working as a peer support worker for SAMH Experience Counts since November 2015. Before this Jenna worked as an Interior Designer after studying in Glasgow from 2005-2008. Jenna suffered poor mental health in her mid-twenties and also had a close friend who sadly took her own life in 2014. Jenna got to know of SAMH whilst raising money in memory of her friend. She believes that these life changing experiences have made her the person she is today and can now help and support others who are going through similar situations.

Kevin (centre) has been working as a peer support worker with SAMH Experience Counts since around Sept 2015. Before this he was living and studying in Manchester, and he left Manchester Metropolitan University with a 1st class BA (Hons) degree in Philosophy in summer 2015. Kevin also plays drums and has played with several bands all over Scotland, other parts of Britain, and even as far as Norway and Poland. Kevin achieved this following, and during, a period of mental ill health in his early 20s. He now enjoys using his experience of mental ill health and recovery to help others in their recovery.

Claire (right) has been with Experience Counts since September last year. She has previously spent time in Germany working in translation and teaching, and over the past few years has been involved in voluntary arts and youth projects as well as managing a charity shop. She also works as a trainee counsellor, and having suffered mental ill-health since her teens she appreciates the importance of non-judgemental, understanding support and hopes to share her experience in a positive way to help peers work towards recovery.

Easter Egg Nest Cake

For the Cake

250 grams dark chocolate (chopped)
125 grams unsalted butter (softened)
6 medium eggs (2 whole, 4 separated)
175 grams caster sugar (75g for yolk mixture, 100g for whites)
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

For the Topping

- 125 grams dark chocolate (chopped)
- 250 millilitres double cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 packet mini chocolate egg (for decorating)



1. Preheat the oven to gas mark 4/180°C.
2. Line the bottom of a 23cm circle cake tin with baking parchment, or better still, Bake-O-Glide. Do not grease the sides of the tin.
3. Melt the 250g chocolate with the butter and then set aside to cool slightly.
4. Whisk the 4 egg whites until firm, then gradually add the 100g of sugar and whisk until the whites are holding their shape and peak gleamingly - but not stiff.
5. Remove this bowl (if you're using a freestanding mixer, as I do, though a handheld job would do fine) and set aside while you whisk, in another bowl, the 2 whole eggs and 4 yolks with the 75g of sugar and the vanilla extract, and then gently fold in the chocolate mixture. Lighten the mixture with some egg whites - just dollop a large spoonful in and stir briskly - and then fold in the rest of the whisked whites gently, in about three goes.
6. Pour into the prepared tin and bake for 35-40 minutes or until the cake is risen and cracked and the centre is no longer wobbly on the surface. Cool the cake in its tin on a wire rack; the middle will sink as it cools and the sides splinter. You want this to look like a cake with a crater in it, so do not panic at the vision of imperfection in front of you.
7. To finish the cake, remove it from the tin and place it on a plate or cake-stand, not worrying if bits fall off here and there. Put them back in a loose fashion. Melt the chocolate for the topping and leave it to cool a little. Whip the cream until it's firming up and aerated but still soft, and then add the vanilla and fold in the melted chocolate. Fill the crater of the cake with the chocolatey cream, easing it out gently towards the edges of the cake with a rubber spatula, and then arrange the little sugar Easter eggs on top.

BBC Scotland 2016



In February BBC ran a 2 week programme on understanding mental health. As part of this programme they visited Experience Counts to find out about the service and Peer Support work.

Mark Docherty, Peer Support Worker talked about his experience of living with his own mental health issues and Deborah Burns, Veteran Peer Support Worker discussed the work that she does with the peers who are part of the service.

Pictured is Eileen Quinn, Service Manager at Experience Counts; Deborah; Sally McNair BBC Scotland and Mark.



Peer Learning Network



Peer Learning Network
Wednesday 1st January 2016
Dalziel Business Centre Motherwell

Back to Basics

The Peer Learning Network held its first meeting of 2016 on Wednesday 1st January at Dalziel Business Centre in Motherwell. A meeting of great importance, it was well attended and gave participants an opportunity to look at the restructuring of future meetings and their content.

The group was split into teams and with the use of Ketso, a hands-on kit for creative engagement, several relevant subjects were discussed. It became very apparent that the whole team agreed that changes would have to be made if the PLN meetings were to be fully successful and of benefit to peer support workers, both present and future.

There was a unanimous vote that shared learning was of key importance and should be re-introduced at all future meetings through the use of case studies. Peer support workers from Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health, Lanarkshire Links and Experience Counts benefit from the knowledge that shared learning can offer, looking at both good and bad experiences. The group also agreed that guest speakers should be relevant to its development and do not necessarily have to attend every meeting.

The PLN is still in its infancy and welcomes new peer support workers as peer working continues to flourish in Lanarkshire. We have reflected on the effectiveness of the Network and established its purpose; future meetings will honour our efforts to make it a productive and educational place to be.

MyRAP Group Feedback



Steven (Left) - Since attending the Group I feel positive in doing things for myself and it has encouraged me to realise my triggers and to help me feel more powerful in myself to do things for myself.

Deanna (Centre) - I found the MyRAP course very helpful and fun. It helped me to recognise my triggers and warning signs of when my mental health is going down hill, now I can take the steps to avoid it and keep myself well.

Margaret (Right) - MyRAP has been an amazing experience. I have really enjoyed my time at the groups. I would encourage anyone who is offered an opportunity to attend this class to do so. It's been what I call an incredible journey.

Motherwell Office
62 Windmillhill Street,
Motherwell
ML1 1TA

Phone: 01698 265659
E-mail:
experience.counts@samh.org
.uk



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.