

# CAUSE for Mental Health newsletter

Winter 2006/7 Edition



**CAUSE for Mental Health provide peer-led emotional and practical support to carers and families of people with mental illness.**

## Tribute to John

October saw the sad passing of Dr. John Darbyshire. John was a co-founder of **CAUSE** in 1995, and worked as the Charity's Chief Officer until 2000, then as a Consultant and latterly as a **CAUSE** Board member and volunteer.



a shock to everyone. Paying tribute to John, **CAUSE** Chief Executive Marie Crossin said:

*"What John meant to CAUSE is simply stated - without him there would be no CAUSE. He co-founded the organisation and continued, to the end of his life, to contribute enormously*

For many years, until ill health forced him to step down, John also facilitated the Alexandra Gardens support group. Up until his death, John was also the mainstay of the **CAUSE** helpline after hours, answering the service and supporting callers, particularly at weekends and holiday periods.

*to our work. His loss has deeply affected us on a personal level as well. His generosity, good humour and friendship are irreplaceable and leave a gap that can not be filled. He was unique".*

John's health had not been good over the last few years but his death was still

We miss John very much, both personally and as a **CAUSE** colleague. John is survived by his son and daughter-in-law and two grand children.

## Bamford Review of Mental Health Concludes

The Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability is the most comprehensive review of policy, services and law for people with mental health needs or learning disability in Northern Ireland. It is also the biggest review of its type to have taken place in the UK. The Review's concluding Conference took place in Belfast in Autumn 2006.

The Review is pivotal for the future of local mental health services, and the Conference represented a handover of recommendations from the Review to Government for implementation. The Review has provided compelling evidence of the need for comprehensive reform and modernisation.

Compared to other parts of the UK levels of mental ill-health are higher in Northern Ireland. Despite this, investment in services is lower.

The conference was addressed by Health Minister, Paul Goggins MP, who outlined the Government's response to the Review.

Professor Roy McClelland, Chair of the Bamford Review stated that major changes must happen:

*"People who use services and their carers have had a major say and we've faced up to the practicalities and realities – costs, implementation plans and timescales all form part of this Review".*

At the Conference organisations and individuals representing service users and carers explained why the Review was so important. Marie Crossin, **CAUSE** Chief Executive and Chair of the Review's Carers Reference Group, was amongst those who made presentations at the Conference. Marie was also amongst a limited number of delegates interviewed about the Review by the local media.



Marie Crossin, during an interview with BBC NI's Dot Kirby

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## CAUSE Embarks On Pioneering Partnership

The new academic year marked the start of a pioneering partnership between **CAUSE** and the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Queen's University Belfast with the start of a ground-breaking Certificate in Carer Advocacy. With funding from the Tughan Trust, 10 members of **CAUSE** staff will undertake a series of 'Thorn' accredited modules leading to a Certificate in Carer Advocacy.

Professor Jean Orr CBE, Head of the Nursing and Midwifery School at Queen's commented:

*"Queen's is delighted to offer this unique course to **CAUSE** staff. Completion of the course will further enhance their skills and expertise supporting carers and families of people with mental illness".*

Marie Crossin, **CAUSE** Chief Executive, said:

*"We are delighted to receive funding for the course from the Tughan Trust which will also benefit local carers who complete the course in future years. The expertise of the University's School of Nursing and Midwifery has proven invaluable during the course, and we hope that the Certificate in Carer Advocacy will go from strength to strength".*

### Carer's Story

*"When something as devastating as mental illness happens, everything else seems less by comparison. When I hear of someone getting het up about some minuscule thing, I feel like saying 'For goodness sake, stop bothering about something that in essence could be fixed so easily.'"*



## CENI Report Commends CAUSE's Work

CENI (Community Evaluation Northern Ireland) recently completed an evaluation report on the work of **CAUSE**. The report focused primarily on the work supported by the Big Lottery Fund in the North & West Belfast and North Down & Ards (Ulster, Community and Hospitals Trust) areas.

The evaluation found that the 'Relative Reach' programme had been "very effective in delivering its stated aims and objectives". The report shows overwhelmingly positive feedback from those interviewed on the progress the Programme has made in terms of providing information, practical and emotional support and advocacy to carers of people with severe mental illness, both on a one to one and group basis. **CAUSE's** work with mental health professionals was also recognised in the report.

The report stated that 'Relative Reach' "far exceeded its original intended outputs and outcomes, in terms of increasing the knowledge and skills of carers in supporting their relatives, and in enabling carers to improve the quality of their own lives".

CENI concluded that **CAUSE** also demonstrated capacity to deliver 'Relative Reach' "with efficiency and effectiveness, responding to a high level of need and providing a complex range of services within a relatively modest budget". Key stakeholder groups - carers, mental health professionals and clinical staff - also expressed "a very high level of satisfaction with 'Relative Reach', not only in supporting carers and their families but of raising the profile and the voice of carers".

A copy of the report is available from **CAUSE** Head Office on 028 9023 8284.

## Mental Health Wards 'Unpleasant'

More than half (56%) of recent mental health inpatients in England and Wales rated their ward as unpleasant or very unpleasant, a survey has found. The survey undertaken for the charity MIND also found 29% were dissatisfied with the state of repair of their ward, and 28% with standards of cleanliness.

The report showed that the average mental health inpatient stay is 58 days - nearly 12 times longer than the average for patients with physical problems.

A report by the Healthcare Commission also found that standards of cleanliness were poorer in mental health hospitals than in general acute units.

MIND is calling for service users to be involved in the design of new hospitals, and for all wards to be maintained to the highest levels of cleanliness. The charity also said that all patients should have access to green spaces and single sex sleeping accommodation.

MIND Chief Executive Paul Farmer said: *"Going into hospital with mental health problems can be very traumatic. We rely on hospitals to help us get well, but at the moment many are not providing a therapeutic environment. On many wards there's simply no alternative to, at best, boredom, at worst, fear. This can and must be addressed as a matter of urgency."*

## HandyVan Provides Support To Older People

Help the Aged, in partnership with the Community Safety Unit and Age Concern has launched HandyVan. This partnership project was designed as a step towards reducing fear and giving older people the confidence to enjoy independent and active lives in their own homes for longer.

HandyVan is a practical service which aims to make the homes of older people safer and more secure by fitting a range of security and safety products. This is a free service aimed at those on low incomes aged 60 and over living in the Greater Belfast and Lisburn area.

If you or someone you know meets the above criteria then contact the HandyVan Administrator. A date will then be arranged for the local HandyVan fitter, Peter, to visit to assess and install the safety equipment recommended.

For further information e-mail [handyvan@helptheaged.org.uk](mailto:handyvan@helptheaged.org.uk) or telephone 01255 473 999.



## Research Highlights Attitudes To Mental Health

Research from the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland (HPA) has highlighted conflicting public attitudes to mental health. The research found that, while the majority of people believe that anyone can experience mental health problems and those who do should have the same rights as everyone else, just under half said that people with mental health problems should not be allowed to carry out important jobs and two in five felt the public should be better protected from people with mental health problems.

Previous research shows that as many as one in four people experience mental health problems, yet in this study far fewer admitted it. This is reinforced by the fact that just under half of those surveyed said they would be afraid of experiencing mental health problems and more than half said, if they did, they wouldn't want people knowing about it.

Dr Brian Gaffney, Chief Executive of the HPA, said: *"These findings illustrate the complexity of attitudes towards mental health in Northern Ireland. Stigma can lead to people being labelled, devalued or set apart from others, preventing them from seeking help and inhibiting their recovery. A new HPA public information campaign using this and other research is due to be launched early in 2007."*

Other key findings from the research included:

- 18% stated that they "cared for someone who had or has mental health problems"
- 67% would first turn to their GP if experiencing a mental health problem
- Respondents were more likely to try prevention or 'do-it-yourself' activities, rather than 'treatments' or medical interventions for a mental health problem
- Surprisingly the most 'privileged' group of respondents (the ABC1 socio-economic group) held the stronger stigmatising attitudes.
- 52% had no awareness of any local mental health organisations

Further information on the report is available from the HPA website, [www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk](http://www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk)

## Work in Progress

Over the last few months, **CAUSE** staff have been continuing to work hard representing and supporting carers. The following are some of the initiatives which staff have been involved in, or will be involved in, within the near future:

**Carers Rights Day** - The seventh annual Carers Rights Day took place in early December. The aim of the Day is to increase take up of benefits available to carers, ensure that carers access their rights, to help people recognise themselves as carers and raise awareness of the needs of carers. As well as distributing a press release to increase awareness of the Charity's work, **CAUSE** was also part of a group who met a number of politicians at Parliament Buildings, Stormont.

**Mental Health Expert Makes Welcome Return** - Dr Daniel B. Fisher - an American psychiatrist who has had a diagnosis of schizophrenia - made a welcome return to Northern Ireland primarily to address a Conference entitled 'Investing in Young People: Positive Interventions to promote Mental Health'. During his visit, Dr Fisher - Co-Director of the National Empowerment Center - took the opportunity to meet a number of service users and carers, including members of **CAUSE** staff.

**Suicide Prevention Strategy** - The "Protect Life – A Shared Vision" Suicide Prevention Strategy for Northern Ireland was recently launched in Belfast. The Strategy, which involves partnerships between a number of voluntary and statutory agencies, includes a special '24/7' Freephone service - 0808 808 8000 - and website, [www.heads-away-just-say.com](http://www.heads-away-just-say.com)

## New Mental Health Legal Service

The Law Centre (NI) has launched a much-needed mental health legal advice and representation service. Two new lawyers, based in the Centre's Belfast and Derry offices, will be providing advice to mental health service users, representation at mental health tribunals, training and information support for advisers, carers, advocates and others working with mental health service users.

The new staff - Louise Arthurs and Mary Traynor - will also be working to promote the rights of people with mental health difficulties. Louise can be contacted at The Law Centre's Belfast Telephone Advice Line on 9024 4401, whilst Mary is available on 7126 2433. Both lines operate from 9.30am - 1 pm - Monday to Friday

## Schizophrenia Term Use 'Invalid'

The term schizophrenia should be abolished, some experts have said claiming that the category falsely groups a wide range of symptoms and encourages over-reliance on anti-psychotic drugs rather than psychological intervention. It was also claimed that the label of schizophrenia stigmatised people as being violent, dangerous and untreatable.

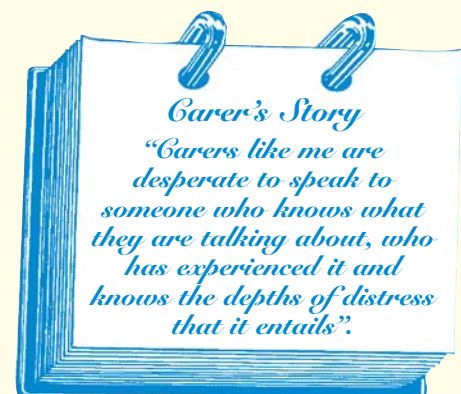
Professor Richard Bentall from the University of Manchester, said: *"The concept of schizophrenia is scientifically meaningless. It groups together a whole range of different problems under one label - the assumption is that all of these people with all of these different problems have the same brain disease."* Professor Bentall added that this approach can misinform treatment and it has encouraged the widespread use of 'drastic biomedical interventions' as the first-line of treatment, rather than psychological help. Although drugs were useful for some patients, too often they were given at extremely high doses and had some dangerous side-effects.

Paul Hammersley, also of the University of Manchester, also wants the term dropped and said: *"It is associated with violence, dangerousness, unpredictability, inability to recover, constant illness, constant need for medication and an inability to work. I cannot emphasise enough how stigmatising this label is."*

However the academics could not give a definitive answer to what should replace the term schizophrenia if it was eliminated. They pointed to Japan, where the category schizophrenia was replaced with 'integrated disorder' in 2004, as a possible model.

Professor Bentall also suggested patients should be treated on the basis of individual symptoms, as opposed to an overarching category.

Til Wykes, from the Institute of Psychiatry, concluded by saying: *"Despite its limitations, a diagnosis can help people access much needed services. What all of us have to remember is that these are people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia, not 'the schizophrenic'."*





## Book Review

In **CAUSE** Head Office is a library of interesting books, focussing particularly on the areas of mental health and caring. The following is a selection of books currently available to buy or loan:

- **'Living with Depression – and Winning'**,  
Sarah Fraser  
ISBN 8423-3680-X (for loan)
- **'Phone At Nine Just To Say You're Alive'**,  
Linda Hart  
ISBN 0-9525186-0-0 (for sale)
- **'A Carer's Guide to Schizophrenia'**,  
Greg Wilkinson and Tony Kendrick  
ISBN 1-85315-298-6 (for loan)

Lu Duhig, is the 'Carer Lead' at the University of Bath's Research and Development Unit, and provided the template for the **CAUSE** Carer's Information Guide.

Below Lu reviews 'Changing Outcomes in Psychosis', a recently-published book about collaborative working between practitioners, service users and carers.

"This book presents an exciting and refreshing approach to supporting people with severe mental distress, giving a message of hope and encouragement to all.

Rather than being a dry manual for practitioners, the book combines living testimony underpinned by theory, in an easy to read and engaging style making it accessible for everyone with an interest

in changing outcomes in psychosis.

It is compelling and dynamic in its ability to draw us in to the personal journeys but is always validated by the theory and research that we know is effective, but which is yet to be put fully into routine practice.

The book has been written in a collaborative style mirroring the style of working between the service users, carers and practitioners. By fully valuing and respecting each person's contribution to the journey, it endorses this partnership working, which can bring about such surprising and positive outcomes. Helping people to focus on every aspect of their lives, in an holistic way, must surely be the way to bring about the biggest improvements.

The overall theme is that the practitioners were able to convey an expectation that, even for people experiencing severe distress, recovery is possible. They held the belief that even in seemingly hopeless situations people could change outcomes and improve the quality of their lives.

I commend the book as a 'must read' for anyone who wishes to develop recovery in the life of someone experiencing severe mental distress, in promoting hope and building a satisfying and meaningful life".

Copies of the book and the Carer's Information Guide are available from **CAUSE** Head Office.

## 'PREP' Course Comments

**CAUSE** 'PREP' Courses continue to be delivered in many different areas of Northern Ireland, subject to funding. Enclosed below are a selection of carers comments from a recent PREP course:

*"I now feel that I understand mental illness much better than before, and how you have to accept that there are no quick fixes."*

*"It has given me a better understanding of my daughter's illness, and with this understanding I have more patience. It also made me realise how important it is to give encouragement even for small tasks accomplished."*

*"The course has given me hope for the future. We had two people who have suffered mental illness for a long time come in and share their experiences with the group, and they were very inspiring."*

*"It has helped me feel more optimistic about my future and my children's"*

## Thank You!

Over the last few months, the following have been kind enough to donate towards **CAUSE's** work with carers and families:

- Down and Lisburn Health & Social Care Group
- Northern Bank
- Regent House School
- Katharine Howard Foundation
- The Viridian Group

As well as established regular supporters of our work, we appreciate the generosity of these supporters. If you know of a local company, school, individual or group who would be interested in making a donation towards the work of the Charity, please let us know.

A number of carers also support **CAUSE** by making monthly donations via a standing order. Further details on how to donate to **CAUSE** by this method are available from Peter at the **CAUSE** Office.

## And Finally....

The following is an excerpt from a card sent by a local carer thanking **CAUSE** and the local Carer Advocate for their support:

*"Thoughts are filled with gratitude when they turn to you,  
For all the kind unselfish things you find the time to do.*

*So special thanks are sent today and they're coming for a reason,  
To return caring thoughts your way, that last through every season.*

*Thank you so much for all you have done for my family".*

## Give A Little Online

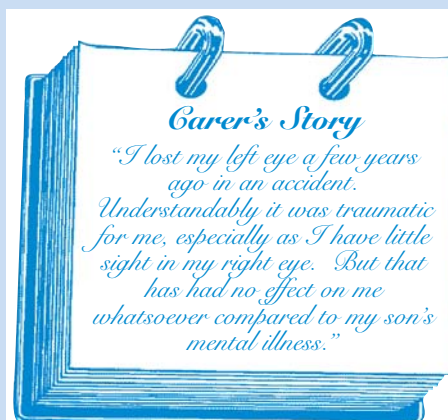
**CAUSE** is the first agency to sign up to a new Online Donation Service facilitated by the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA).

Through their [www.CommunityNI.org](http://www.CommunityNI.org) website, NICVA is now capable of handling online donations, and has launched the service with a campaign for **CAUSE**.

With the opportunity for tax-payers to easily gift aid donations, **CAUSE** is keen to encourage as many donors as possible to avail of the service.

To donate online to **CAUSE** through this new service, click on [www.communityni.org/index.cfm/section/donate/key/1850](http://www.communityni.org/index.cfm/section/donate/key/1850)

Further information on the scheme is also available from the **CAUSE** website [www.cause.org.uk](http://www.cause.org.uk) or from Peter at **CAUSE** Head Office.



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