

THE SUPPORTING PEOPLE SERVICES

**G.A.M.H. (Glasgow Association for
Mental Health)**

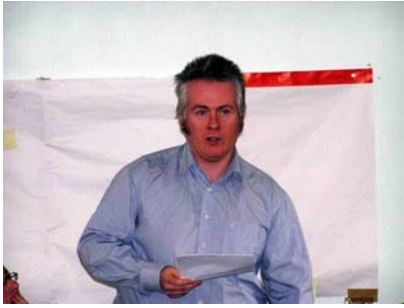
HEAR ME

Thur. 23rd March 2006

Interim report of 'Hear Me' taken directly from materials, photographs gathered on the day.



Jacqueline opened the day with a short speech of welcome and introduction to the day's purpose and summary of events, beginning with a speech by James, followed by a speech from Vince, before opening the different discussion groups to the floor.



Next a keynote speech by James....Reported verbatim as Appendix 'A'



Next a keynote speech by Vince....Reported verbatim as Appendix 'B'

Personal experiences are very important, both of the speeches were extremely well received and encouraged others to talk about their own stories with confidence.

OPEN TABLE

At the Open table people were asked to bring their own ideas, concerns, topics for discussion, of which there were many, including....



Isolation, Social activities, Welfare / Benefits

**Representation
Advocacy
Debt advice**

**GAMH as a pressure group,
Lobby MP's**

TALKING WALL....



'Talking Wall'....An adjunct to the Open table where people could post their personal views on any aspect of the service



Get good Support with my own issues and my family

Premises a south are not big enough.

Made friends, easy to get on with.

Speakers very good expresses thoughts and feelings of the majority.

RESPECT TABLE....



At the Respect table people were talking about the key requirements needed by the service and the staff.

Chance to meet others
No time limit important

Staff - Friendly, treat you as an individual, non-judgemental, willing to help, understanding

Flexible Service Good Responds quickly

Advocacy role important

Reassurance

Praise about staff sorting out benefits

CHOICES TABLE



At the Choices table people were discussing the choices they have within the service



GP's didn't tell me about GAMH – they should know more.

I choose to have phone contact, rather than groups.

Scottish Office should fund more publicity / awareness so we know where to go and get in touch with various services, more choice.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES TABLE



Social Activities At the Social Activities table people were expressing their views about building networks and frameworks of support, and how connecting with people brings power.

Getting out once a month, coffee etc. Helps get social life back on track – enjoyable for staff as well.

Physical activities help with depression, feel better, stimulating.

Need company, big need in everyone's life, isolation leads to depressing outlook.

FUTURES TABLE....



Futures At... the Futures table people were thinking and talking about their hopes, aspirations and expectations for the future
Planning ahead.



I feel I am getting good positive help to look forward to my future.

Put at ease by GAMH feel comfortable.

It helps to know and plan for the future when you know you are well supported.

It is hard to be positive about the future when you feel you may be forced into a job you cannot cope with.

The "Hear Me" Event was very successful with over 60 People coming along to contribute their views, Thoughts and aspirations for GAMH's Supporting People Services.

The event generated a vast amount of information about the service and we promise to feedback this in the Form of a fuller report.

In addition we are awaiting the development of a questionnaire which will be used to gather the contributions of those service users who could not make it on the day.

We would like to use this interim report to thank everyone who actively participated to make the event both worthwhile and enjoyable.

THANK YOU ALL.



Appendix 'A'

A keynote speech by JamesGAMH can't cure my problems but they do make me feel as though I'm not having to deal with them on my own and have given me new confidence and security which I didn't have previously. Through GAMH I have also met a wide variety of people with a wide variety of problems and life experiences. We're all different but are united through our friendships and how comfortable we are together. Through GAMH bringing us together we don't have to suffer on our own and all know we have the backup of people who are concerned about our welfare, this backup comes from both the service users and the staff.

I have spoken to service users on both the south and north sides of Glasgow and the answers were the same with almost everyone I spoke to. Everyone was happy with the service they received. Everyone had their own personal story of how GAMH had helped them. This was in lots of different forms. Recurring themes though were help with housing, help with benefits, and help with dealing with agencies. For me, this is very important because I hate being put under the spotlight and having to make decisions. A lot of people mentioned how they felt that there was always someone there for them at the other end of the phone if not in person. The only negatives were people wishing there were more staff, that the service was 24/7 for help and encouragement in things like social activities visits to the pub etc. Some expressed a desire for more social outings and to broaden the field of places we visit. The only other negatives I got were that the room we have is too small and can induce feelings of panic or anxiety. Also that contacting the staff out with the regimented times can induce feelings of guilt.

I've only been using the service for two and a half years but it doesn't feel that long. I've had nothing but good experiences through my involvement with GAMH. I really enjoy our group, I enjoy the friendliness, every one gets on with each other, we all seem to be comfortable in the environment, apart from other staff in the building whose staff room we've been relegated to, making the coffee trips a little bit different for them, a room full of people. I really like the informal attitudes of the staff. They are the staff and we are the service users but there is certainly no feeling of 'us and tem'. We are treated with respect and friendship and I have to say that everyone I've met on the staff in both the north and the south seem like absolute naturals for their chosen careers.

Through my involvement with GAMH I feel a bit stronger. I don't feel I'm on my own with no allies. This goes all the way from dealing with relevant agencies and authorities to not feeling isolated socially. Due to changes in my lifestyle over the years I see less of my friends from the past. I actually see my GAMH group more often than I see my other friends and even my family. This is obviously important.

As I said earlier about using a staff room, housing support obviously has limitations to the extent of services it can provide. They do, however, make the best of what they do have and go above and beyond the call of duty to help the people they work with. I have never once felt that the staffs were merely going through the motions when I've approached them about something.

I've found that the title Housing Support is very misleading. Important as these aspects are, there is a lot more available from the staff than just these. Although everyone's needs are different, most people, staff and service users are in this for the long haul. The emotional support has to be measured in months / years rather than days / weeks. We the service users are encouraged to be involved, and have a say, me being here representing Glasgow North and South is testament to that. I'm sure I'm not the only one

who feels safer and more comfortable when dealing with my issues in a non-judgemental environment of similar people.

Like many others, I'm affected by Seasonal Affectation Disorder. GAMH seem to be prepared for this with seasonal logistical forward thinking and provide the necessary encouragement to promote self belief at this time of year. For me, one of the best aspects of GAMH is how, if I'm looking for something in particular which they feel unable to provide, they liaise with the appropriate agencies to help me achieve this. This hasn't been just once but several occasions and I feel I can't be the only one to have found this. I sometimes have difficulties expressing myself to my doctor which means I have problems in achieving the results I'm looking for with him. I don't find this to be the case with GAMH which is a great relief.

One of the service users I was speaking to said two very important things about their experience with GAMH. One was that it had probably saved their life, the other, that their involvement had made them feel a valid person. For me it is this feeling of them seeing the person rather than just the problem which makes all the difference.

Appendix 'B'

A keynote speech by Vince I became involved with GAMH following a nervous breakdown in 1980. I had temporary jobs with GAMH in the 1980's and became involved in the Housing Support Project in the 1990's. Following the sale of a bed-sit I rented I became homeless and the Housing Support Project helped me in my nomad-like removals, including a final move to a flat in Partick rented from Partick Housing Association. Housing Support ensured that the flat did not become too much like 'Steptoe's Yard' and helped me with jobs around the flat.

With the opening of the Chancellor Street premises I received further support, including a move to a larger flat, unfortunately four up!, what is known in Glasgow as a 'tap dancer'. It must have seemed like a 'labour of Hercules'. The Chancellor Street office has provided me with support for jobs around the flat, and given me a place to socialise and air my problems. It is, I believe, a necessary help in providing people with advice, practical assistance and social life which can be as important as the drugs so many of us rely on to get us through day to day. Practical help, support and advice can make the difference between being hospitalised due to a 'bad patch' and leading an ordinary life in the community, I have personal experience of this.

To put it into crude pounds, shillings and pence terms it is cheaper to support people to lead a life in the community, looking after themselves, than it is to provide 24 hr intensive care in hospital, with all that entails, in terms of loss of freedom and disruption of your life. For this I am grateful, and the 'powers that be' should take due note that the support provide by projects such as Housing Support, while not cheap, are cost effective and help people with mental health problems lead lives with more dignity.