

Get it off your chest!

How are you feeling? What are you thinking? Let us know and we can share those thoughts with others. If it's good or bad we want to know.

LOUISE'S STORY

"I moved into South Fort Street hostel after a long period off homelessness.

This is the first time a hostel has felt like my own home.

The staff have been helpful and supportive; I find them easy to chat with.

This has allowed me to address my issues.

I have recently been involved with interviewing people for a staff vacancy, doing this has boosted my confidence."

Louise.B

Rebecca Muir
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Visiting Support

Hi Folks. We're the Visiting Support Team here in Edinburgh and we would like to share with you some of the things we get up to.

Earlier this year we looked at the topic of nutrition. As a result of attending a training day ourselves, we were struck by how the Nutritionist could pass her knowledge on to our service users in a meaningful and fun way. Our solution was to invite her to participate in two workshop sessions, entitled "Nutrition for Mental Wellbeing" and "Nutrition and Addictions".

We worked with Community Services who invited us to use a local Community Centre with kitchen facilities. The space allowed us to show a nutrition related video, "Supersize Me", which highlights the dangers of junk food and how to provide a well balanced lunch. The session from the Nutritionist proved to be a good balance of entertainment, participation and scientific information which gave us a good understanding of the links between diet and mental wellbeing. This session has certainly impacted on staff members who are now spotted regularly drinking cups of

green tea and munching on nuts and seeds.

On a more serious note, we learned how balancing blood sugar can reduce cravings whilst keeping energy levels and moods stable – this allows individuals to feel more in control of their day. We also discovered that, amazingly the brain is made up of 80% fat. To keep it working well it needs to be fed with the right kind of fat e.g. obtained from oily fish, nuts and seeds, to allow the neurotransmitters to do their job.

One of our most popular activities is a monthly bowling group. This is run by a member of our team, Jane Moyes, who is a qualified person centred counsellor, with a particular interest in the relationship between mind and body – "I wondered if the experience of the bowling group would decrease service users' feelings of isolation and exclusion, and hoped that the experience of being invited, welcomed, acknowledged and missed when they didn't attend, would help raise their self-esteem. I hoped it would provide a restorative experience for people whose early experience of groups had been traumatic."

Many service users who attend the group regularly have experienced their capacity to improve progressively, with practice, and look forward to trying to beat their own personal best, which is therapeutic in itself. On another level, current thinking on



becoming mentally healthy emphasises the role physical activity plays and for those of us who feel depressed, allowing ourselves to have fun may be an important part of feeling better. Research also suggests that activities requiring body/mind/hand to eye focus/co-ordination help people experience some control across a wide range of psychological diagnosis.

Described by one of our service users as "a way of holding on to my sanity", the visiting support team strive towards helping people to learn to value themselves and move towards independence. Our team has an established person-centred value base, enriched by energy, dynamism and commitment to new opportunities for service users. An integral part of the process is our support and commitment to each others' skills and knowledge. Team members have a wide variety of qualifications, from Community Education to Counselling to Social Policy.

If you are a service user who thinks that the visiting support team could help you, talk to your support worker who will be able to tell you more.



GowrieNews

ISSUE 1 : SUMMER 2006 Gowrie Care Ltd / Edinburgh Edition Newsletter



Welcome...

Hello and welcome to the first issue of the Edinburgh edition of the Gowrie newsletter. There are many ways this newsletter can be used by you. The "you" in this case is anyone reading this month's issue, whether you are a project manager, an employee, a tenant, someone who uses Gowrie services, or even a neighbour of one of our projects. Use it as an opportunity to have your say, to have a moan, to share something you consider newsworthy, show off your talents as a poet, musician, or chef, highlight what goes on in your project, or an in-depth history of your project. Reviews on your favourite album, film, book, etc also most welcome. Ideally the more contributions we have from service users and /or tenants the better. We are hoping that the newsletter will

be produced quarterly so another one will be out at the end of October. So get your thinking caps on!

The newsletter team based in South Fort Street, Leith, is made up of service users and a staff member. This first issue may be a brief one (not as many contributors as we had anticipated) but the last thing that we want is for it to be top heavy in South Fort Street's favour month after month.

To prevent this **"WE NEED YOU"** to send in articles, for publication. We would like to get away from the traditional format that newsletters come in, and for you to shape and mould how you want your news presented. Fill in the feedback form on the back of this newsletter to give us your views on what you would like to see.

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In the words of the mega musical legends "Mcfly", "it's all about you."

We look forward to hearing from you.

The South Fort Street News Team

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Self Harming

Simon, from the newsletter team, has been out and about visiting projects and met up with D at Bruntsfield. This is her story.

D is a nineteen-year-old young woman who has been self harming from the age of ten. D has been staying at Bruntsfield House, one of Gowrie's projects in Edinburgh for the last two and a half months, and is enjoying the safety that the project affords her.

While a patient at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital she noticed some posters advertising "Artlinks Art workshops". She attended these and designed and produced a series of posters highlighting and raising awareness around Self Harming.

The purpose behind these in essence, is to get a message across to as many people as possible. D's message is plain and simple: "people that Self Harm are not mad or crazy and certainly not alone, help is available. Homeless people are particularly prone to self harming as a way of coping"

According to D "as many as one in ten does self harm." "It is very important to address the issues behind the self harming and to remove the stigma attached to self harming". D stated that now she is in a safe place, the periods between her self harming are becoming longer.

D's poster campaign is currently being used at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital. Mental health campaigners "See Me" (who are currently running an awareness campaign on television) have expressed a great deal of interest in the poster campaign and taking them to a wider audience i.e. nation wide.

D is currently hoping to do mentoring work with young people and is working on getting into schools to promote awareness of Self-Harming. With regards to young people, D is worried about the current trend towards self-harming being a fashionable thing amongst them. One of her posters highlights this very aptly:

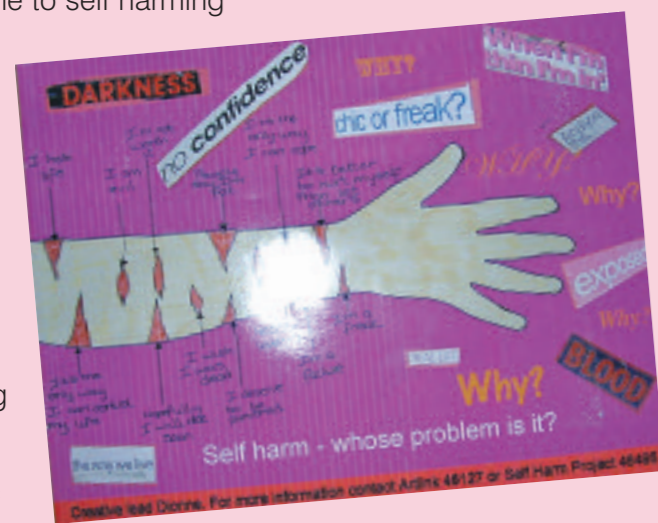
"This can make the task of

supporting/helping genuine self harmers more difficult than it already is" and also raises the question of "what's going on

with young people that they feel this is a "chic" thing to be doing?"

The final words are D's

"Don't let self harm control you. You can control Self-Harming. There is help out there that you can use and can help you because Self Harming is an illness".



How does a relationship survive the pressures of hostel life? *by Louise*

Difficult at the best of times, relationships take on added pressures when couples also have the experience of homeless issues to deal with. Louise, a member of the newsletter team, met up with Darren and Kelly to hear their story.

Darren and Kelly are such a couple who have experienced hostel life and came out of the other side wiser, and closer than ever.

Darren had been homeless since 1997 and was in shared accommodation and was also in and out of Bed and Breakfasts and Hostels. Then he moved into a Gowrie Project at Bruntsfield House who helped and supported him to make the move into another Gowrie project, South Fort Street.

It was here that he met his partner Kelly who had also been in various hostels, bed and breakfasts and friends' houses. When the two of them met in South Fort Street Romance was in the air!

Darren and Kelly both found South Fort Street to be the best hostel in Edinburgh. They did not feel under pressure to find somewhere else to stay.

The staff were very approachable and understanding, they also found staff couldn't do anymore towards preparing them for their future. Kelly also went on to do cooking classes as well as a computer course.

When the time was right they began to bid for a while, they both got their own tenancies with help and support from the staff at South Fort Street. After getting their tenancies, Darren was given help from visiting support and from support worker Carol Arthur, which has led to them both being happy and content with their lives.

The pair also said that if they didn't have each other for support who knows where they would be today?

A few of your favourite things...

Do you like listening to music? Reading Books? Reading Poetry? Watching Films? Whatever it is, let us know. For this edition we've got a few members of staff to say what they like. We'd like to hear from you for the next edition.

Yvonne's favourite song is... "It's a kind of magic" by Queen

"The reason I like this song is the power of the vocals and the meaning behind them. I also think that the music and beat is very good."

Yvonne D, Support Worker

Rebecca's favourite singer is...

Robbie Williams

"Robbie writes brilliant songs that have good lyrics and great music to go along with them. He's a great entertainer and isn't that bad looking either!"

Rebecca, Publications Officer

Graeme's favourite hobby is learning the button key accordion.

"Favourite player is Fergie MacDonald who plays and composes some great tunes although he can't read music (like me). Doesn't make me very popular at home though."

Graeme Brown, Area Manager

Graeme Brown is the area manager for Edinburgh. This means that he oversees all of the projects in Edinburgh and works with project managers and staff to improve the service given to you. Graeme is very pleased to see a newsletter like this getting off the ground.

“Many thanks to everyone who has helped to put this newsletter together and contributed articles. It is helpful to have a different perspective on how people's experience of using

Gowrie Care's support services has impacted positively on their lives. From an organisational point of view involving people who use our support services in work such as recruitment interviews has proved to be a mutually rewarding experience for all concerned. Joint working between people who use our support services and staff is an area we are always keen to explore. Suggestions are always welcome! It has been a difficult time for providers of services to

people who are or have been homeless in Edinburgh with a large reduction to the funds we have available to work with. In Gowrie Care we have managed to absorb the first round of cuts without a major impact on the services we are able to provide. Gowrie Care hope to extend opportunities for supported employment and again, suggestions are always welcome!”

Graeme Brown
Area Manager

Newsletter Feedback (Please tick appropriate box)

Did you enjoy reading this newsletter?

Yes No

If no, why not? _____

What would you like to see more of?

Other People's stories Competitions

Info about services available to you Photos

Reviews Info about staff

Other (Please specify) _____

Please use this space for **any other comments** about the newsletter

Just cut round this box and post your replies off. There is no need for a stamp.