

FOLKESTONE AND DISTRICT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2017

CHAIR'S REPORT

A trawl through recent newspaper articles on mental health can prove very instructive:

'Politicians have listened; now they must act';

'I wish we could talk more openly about mental health...';

'Men much less likely than women to seek mental health help';

Half of all mental ill health starts before the age of 15';

'Schools cutting mental health services';

'Mental health nurses in short supply'.

The good news is that there *are* so many articles on mental health. Mental health *is* in the news. It was significant, for example, that when I was holding the collecting tin for Mind at Tesco recently, people were very generous indeed. No one had to ask what Mind was; few passed by without contributing; many had a friendly and supportive word with us. I think people are facing the fact that so many - one in four of us- suffer at some time from some form of mental health problem.

What is also evident from my newspaper cuttings, however, is that Mental Health is not getting its fair and promised share of the much stressed national and social care budgets, and that more and more responsibility falls on the great charities- like us. At the same time our traditional funders, also looking desperately to save money, have demanded radical changes in the way we work.

What a complex and difficult situation that has put us in, and still does. Last year I remarked that we were making real progress on coping with change and, in this, my last report as Chair, I am happy to say that we have kept up the momentum, coming to terms with our role as Delivery Partner for Porchlight, looking for new ways to meet very urgent needs without sacrificing our long- standing services and always seeking extra finance to make this possible. A Strategic Plan reaching out to 2020 has been created. We know what we have to do and we have the team to achieve it.



I am sure that Michael and David will fill in some of the specific details, but I want to leave myself time to say a particularly big thank you to everyone, past and present, with whom I have worked. I came to the world of Mental Health really by accident when I became a member of the much lamented Community Health Council and from there to Mind. I have met so many interesting and dedicated people over the years that it has been truly inspirational. Many of the problems we know so well were apparent in 2005; in some ways the statutory services were more available. But throughout the years one thing has remained constant, the desire of everyone at Folkestone Mind to make the world a better place for all its service-users. Of all the people I've met, they are the ones I value most and I wish them good health and happiness in the future.

Thankfully there is hope, if you permit it, that I can remain as a Trustee so I do not have to say a final good bye. There are those who have left us, however, during the past year. They include people who have worked devotedly for Mind for a long time: Sheelagh Blackham and Theresa Laws in the Cheriton shop; Fran Lintern, Counsellor and Counsellor Supervisor, Bev McLellan, Counsellor and Support Worker; Ekrem, our invaluable cleaner. We Trustees have had to say goodbye to Shaun Habbershaw. We thank them for all they have done for us and hope they enjoy the next stage of their lives. Tragically Sarah Stringer, one of our former Trustees, died during the past year. She was much valued and we miss her. Our continued sympathy goes out to her family and friends.

To all those who have joined Mind over the past year a warm welcome: to Georgia Bond, Shop Manager at Cheriton; to Di Rampton, Counselling Supervisor and to Lisa Harris who having been a Volunteer has become a Support Worker. I know you will learn a lot, teach us a lot and make good friends. Thank you to *all* my fellow Trustees. I must, at this point, however, pay a special tribute to our Vice-Chair, Anne Houlahan. Unbelievably, this is Anne's fifteenth year as Vice-Chair. We are so lucky to have her as a Trustee. She brings us a wealth of experience, a warm humanity and a forensic intelligence, especially when it comes to seeing the implications of over ambitious ideas!

A personal thank you as I step down to those with whom I have worked most closely over the years: to Pam, to Karen, to Sharon, to Michelle, to Michael, indeed to everyone. And the very best of good wishes to my successor. I hope she enjoys the job as much as I have done. Have a wonderful evening.

Norma Smyth

Chair: Folkestone and District Mind