



champions of change
newsletter 2011 issue 1

Champions Got Talent!

This is only the start of what is going to be a great year for Champions of Change

There are now 71 network members. Just by being a member gives people the chance to speak up. There is strength in numbers. We have tried to contact you all over the past few weeks to thank you for your valuable voices and give an update. Unfortunately there are some of you we were unable to make contact with. Please don't think we have forgotten you. You are all important. If any of you have changed number recently give us a quick call, and we can update your details.

How To Talk To Your Doctor.

You should have all received a flier through your door informing you about the 'How To Talk To Your Doctor' short course.

It only lasts for 2 and a half hours, and after that time you should be able to effectively get your point across to your Doctor, feel more confident, use techniques to communicate more assertively and identify forums and groups that you can join in. Call Kathleen or James to book your place on 0115 8379 474



Volunteer Event

We will be holding a volunteer event some time towards the end of March. YIPPEE! This will be a weekday day time event and we will let you know the date in the next newsletter and send out a text. This will be for volunteers from all Bright Ideas projects, including Champions of Change. To make resources stretch further, Bright Ideas is teaming up with some partner organisations to hold the event – 97.5 Kemet FM and the African-Caribbean and Asian Forum.

The event is being held to celebrate our volunteers and to say thank you to all our volunteers for your valuable time. We recognise that we could not do our work without you.

We are planning to get a venue which has a stage.

We want this event to be planned and led by and for volunteers. This event is about you, for you!

All ideas and offers of practical help are welcome. We want to be able to show case what Champions means; in a creative informative way. Let us know your ideas. Even if you haven't any ideas give us a call or come to the next Chatroom (Wednesday 23rd February and Wednesday 23rd March are the next 2 dates) come along and buzz off each other. We'll bounce a few ideas about.

Also, if you have a talent and want to entertain us at the event with a song, a dance or a poem, for example, let us know.

Let's show them all how great we Champions of Change are!

This is an experience I had at my previous GP surgery a few years ago...

From the very first time I went to the doctors feeling unbelievably low, I got a sense that I should feel embarrassed for not feeling "normal". I felt the doctor had no time to communicate with me. It was more a case of "these tablets will help you to sort your head out" then rushing me out so the next patient could come in.

I just wanted to know why I was feeling so sad and why I suddenly couldn't get certain things out of my head. I really didn't want to take medication at the time, but that was all that was available so I'd take them (on and off) forgetting when I was feeling good, taking extra when I felt low. I never completed a full course properly.

There was no control and no proper guidance with the medication. As I kept forgetting them I would start to feel down again, so kept thinking maybe they were wrong for me. I was put on so many different types of tablet to try, that in the end I would just pretend I'd taken them. I also got a bit scared of some of the side affects, not to mention the fact that I would be given sleeping tablets and a change of medication at any point.

This lack of consistency when trying to give me medication and no communication about why I felt so down in the dumps at times was quite confusing for me. I felt fobbed off!

The amount of tablets dished out to me was a joke, Zopiclone, Xanax, valium(diazepam), Prozac(fluxotine), sertaline, citalopram and more that I've forgotten the names of. All of these were issued to me over a number of months, some I tried some I didn't.

Now one particular day, I'd had a really sleepless night. I went straight to my GP surgery and waited to be seen. I was crying as I entered the doctor's room, I'd just had enough. There was also a nurse in the room with him.

When my GP asked what was up and I started to speak; he interrupted me, and in quite an angry voice told me he doesn't know what my problem is, saying I probably had no real problems apart from taking drugs, telling me how he lost family members he does not sit there crying. He got his

mind focussed and is now a successful doctor, so how can I go in there complaining when I don't know about suffering? The nurse looked disgusted. Obviously I was appalled by this and ran out of the room to complain at reception, they told me there was nothing they could do, I'd have to make a written formal complaint. So that is what I did. I wrote a letter and sent it to the NHS complaints section.

I got a reply saying that my GP and the nurse had both been asked about the incident and had denied any knowledge of what had happened. Insisting I'd become abusive for no reason and had been asked to leave.

Shortly after I also received a letter from the GP saying I was now struck off from the practice for my abusive behaviour. I couldn't believe it! The doctor had always been a little offish with me, but for the nurse to just stand back and let this happen, I was extremely upset.

I did raise my voice in the surgery, who wouldn't? Nobody should be spoken to like that from a health professional; it's not what you expect. But as far as abusive, I was in such a weak frame of mind at that time; I was upset, not abusive.

I was struck off from that surgery for no good reason.

Then whilst in hospital at a later date, I had a little peek at my medical notes and the first thing I noticed was it said I have spent time in the John Stora Clinic for Heroin use; I do not even know where the place is. I have never been there in my life. It said Heroin user. I have never been a Heroin user. That is all I managed to read before a nurse noticed and took them off me. I have been told I cannot have this wrong information taken out of my medical notes. Totally unfair!

Where did my doctor get this wrong information from? Is there really nothing I can do about the blatant lies on my medical records?

There should be more patient data collected to see if people are happy with their doctor/GP.

Since moving doctors I received counselling for a short while; which really helped. My new GP had me fill out various questionnaires before they would issue any medication; they talked me through everything so that I felt I fully understood what the tablets were for and why I should take them every day.

Having a GP who listens and doesn't judge has made a huge difference to my life and my recovery.

We are about to start a new consultation and engagement exercise called "What does your doctor do for you?" We will be contacting you next month to ask if you wish to take part in it. The questions that we will be asking are based on the conversations we have had with Champions and other members of the public in the first year of the service.

We want to hear your experiences, both good and not so good so that we can learn about how services can be improved and pass this information on to relevant people.

If you want you can write your story instead or ask one of our team to write it with you. These experiences can hopefully give some headway into changing things for the better.

What was your experience of accessing mental health treatment and services through your GP?

The network of Champions is engaged and consulted on how they would like to see mental health services improved in Nottingham by taking part in surveys, one to ones and other methods of collecting feedback.

The reason for this survey is to see people's experiences of accessing mental health services through their GPs. This will give some insight into how GPs deal with people who go to them with mental health issues. Good or not so good we would like to know about your experiences.

Over 2009/2010 Champions of Change collected feedback from members of the Champions' Network and the wider public about their experience of accessing mental health services in Nottingham. Over 1000 conversations took place about mental health provision in Nottingham. From these conversations one issue particularly stood out. This related to how people felt about going to their GP to discuss their mental health concerns and how sometimes people felt let down by their GP in relation to this. It also reflects how some people would like other options when initially discussing their mental health needs with a health professional. In other words referral through the GP should not be the only way into mental health services.

In the future GPs will be responsible for commissioning mental health services. In Nottingham 4 GPs will be taking the lead on this work and we think that the information we collect from this survey will provide them with invaluable information.

Your participation in this survey will be very much appreciated and we will be contacting you over the next few weeks to see if you would like to get involved.

A Message From Focusline

A Champion has told us about a problem they had with focus line. We have told Focusline about the problem. They have been very helpful and they have asked us to send you all this message:

Focusline staff are very concerned to hear that some Nottingham callers have been unable to get through and that this has caused them confusion, disappointment and distress. Our phone technology is remotely managed and calls are re-routed to us, this can on odd occasion result in a technological hitch. The area codes of home numbers do not 100% of the time match with geographical areas. Another hitch may be where the person has used a number provided by cable or Skype. Such problems can usually be solved if you send us the area code (i.e. 0115 for Nottingham) as well as the first three digits of your number, we can then pass this on to the call centre who enable you to get through. If you have any problems getting connected to Focusline please e-mail, text or phone in your complaint, as well as the numbers as explained, to Bright Ideas who will inform ourselves. Please accept our sincere apologies for any inconvenience or upset caused.

We would like to thank the Champion who told us about this and Focusline for their positive response.

Champions' Chat Room

New Champions' Chatroom format

We will now be holding one chatroom session each month. This chatroom is open to all champions.

Chatroom for all

Chatroom sessions are informal and fun where we have meaningful discussions. The topics will depend on issues we are consulting on at the time. For example, we will be talking about experiences of doctors/GPs. It is also a good time to give us your feedback about the Champions of Change service. We will make notes, however, there will be no minutes taken and no strict structure. We would love to see an increase in attendance this year. You are all invited to bring your lunch with you to any of these meetings. We will supply free refreshments and biscuits and we will reimburse reasonable travel expenses.

Reference Group Chatroom

These meetings are more formal, and discussions are structured with minutes being taken, and discussion points being set by the Mental Health Steering Group (previously called the JCG). As you may remember a group of Champions have put themselves forward to sit on the Mental Health Steering Group and they feedback key issues coming out of the network. Depending on the agenda they then choose the representatives they would like to attend the meeting. It is not too late to sign up to be a Reference Group member. So if you are interested in contributing to these sessions then please inform Lisa or Simon who will inform you when the next meeting will be. Anyone interested can be briefed before.

Don your rock cakes are amazing! Keep em coming.

Wednesday January 26th was the first Chatroom under the new format, and what a great Chatroom it was. One Champion brought along a beautiful tin of biscuits for us all to enjoy. Yum Yum! Thank you very much Champion (you know who you are!).

The session was used to discuss and review the GP survey. Many suggestions were made and Kathleen took note of these and forwarded them on to Lisa Robinson (Managing Director of Bright Ideas Nottingham). One of the main suggestions was to include a diagram to illustrate/explain how the survey will be used.

The next two Chatroom dates for all to attend are Wednesday 23rd February and Wednesday 23rd March, 12 midday– 3pm. You don't have to stay the whole time and you can turn up when you want. Unfortunately we can't guarantee that anyone from the team will be available to meet you before 12 so please note the start time.

Rough 'n' Smooth

The Nottingham City Council carer/employee drop-in sessions went well. Carers spoke freely and the support received from Nottingham City Council and suggestions were made for influencing and improving practice to meet their needs.

Jeniba would like to thank all carers for their contributions. A report will be submitted to Bright Ideas Nottingham with regards to employee suggestions.

BME Toolkit

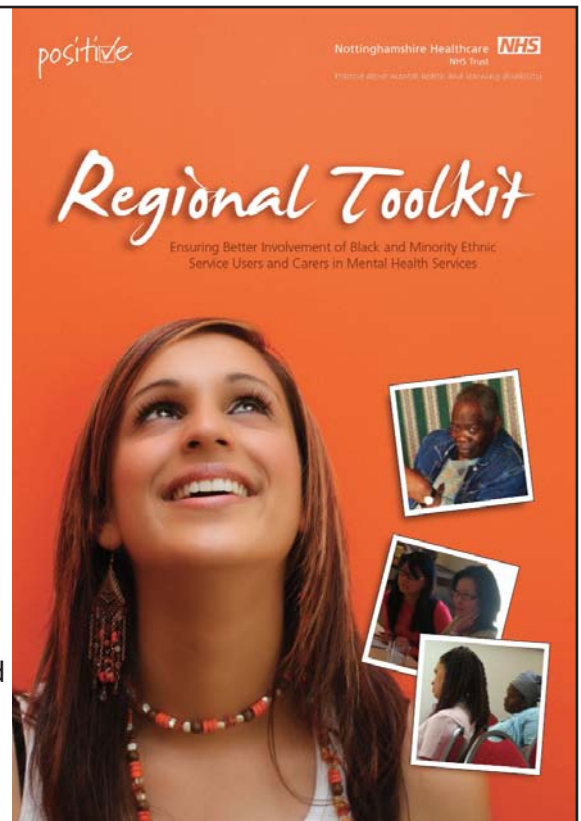
In 2009 a project started to put together a toolkit to help mental health services improve consultation and engagement with Black and minority ethnic people. Two of our Champions (a volunteer Champion and a support Champion) were involved in the consultation that led to the production of this document. Others wanted to get involved, but unfortunately were not well enough at the time.

The project's objective was to develop a framework for involvement that could ensure Black and minority ethnic (BME) representation was balanced and supported within services with a clear criteria and induction process. The framework (or toolkit) is a main outcome of this project.

This toolkit offers practical advice on how to tackle communication, accessibility and cultural barriers. If you would like to read this document online then please go to

<http://www.nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/aboutus/equality-and-diversity/>

If you do not have internet access and would be interested in a copy then please get in touch with us on 0115 8379 474 and ask for Kathleen.



Where is Helen?

Do you wonder what happened to Helen, our previous Champions' Network Coordinator?

The Hyson Green Flats were built in the mid sixties and demolished in the late eighties. They stood on the site of where Asda is now. The Partnership Council based in Radford is running a community project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund which will record the memories of people who used to live in the Flats, to find out what it was like to live there. Helen, who is passionate about local history is now leading on this project.

What was it like living in the Hyson Green Flats?

If you lived in the flats and would like to share your memories then one of the project workers (many of which are local volunteers), will interview you. The memories you share in this interview will be used to create a booklet and a web site which will describe what life was like for those living in the Hyson Green Flats. If you have any friends or family members who lived in the flats who may like to get involved, please pass this information on.

If you would like to share your memories or you have friends or family members who would like to share them please contact:

Helen Bates
Hyson Green Flats Project
Partnership Council
Unit C
Tennyson
Forest Road West
Nottingham
NG7 4EP

0115 970 8200
helenb@partnershipcouncil.co.uk





Helen and Tanimola have been fantastic members of the Bright Ideas team, helping to develop work with their well honed skills and expertise. They have both begun new jobs, which started at the beginning of January.

Helen will be staying here in Nottingham (see the article *Where is Helen?*, on the previous page) Tani, bless him, is all the way down in Exeter working as a research fellow for a university.

We will be staying in touch, and they will still be helping the Champions' service out from time to time. However, we want to wish them all the best in their new roles and thank them for all their hard work whilst with us. We will miss you both dearly!



Tani (top left), Helen (top right), James (bottom left), Kathleen (bottom centre), Rebekah (bottom right)

Bright Ideas has some new staff, James and Rebekah who now work on Champions of Change and other Bright Ideas projects.

Rebekah is our new Community Troupe organiser, assisting volunteers out in the community and helping to organise events.

James is our new Volunteer Coordinator; as well as going out and about with volunteers, he will be contacting you regarding workshops and courses that we will design for and with Champions.

Kathleen (who some of you will already be familiar with) is our new Champions' Network Coordinator, she will be your main point of contact in the office. Kathleen also attends the chat room sessions and events and writes this newsletter.

We hope you will wish us the best of luck.