

*Foreword: Newsletter of the Mental Health Forum
Neath Port Talbot and Swansea*

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CRISIS INFORMATION CARDS:

EMERGENCY TREATMENT YOU CAN CARRY

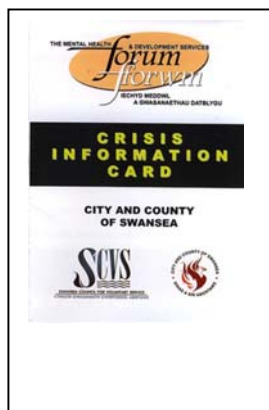
This month Swansea Mental Health Forum launches an innovative Crisis Information Card for use in emergencies by mental health patients. Produced by Swansea Mental Health Forum in co-operation with Swansea Local Health Board and Swansea Social Care services, the card is the first of its kind to be used in the City and County of Swansea and only the second in Wales, and is the outcome of a long process of development and consultation between the Forum and local police, and local Council. If the user is in crisis and detained by the police the **Crisis Information Card** will make them realise the user may be experiencing mental health problems and make arrangements for their care. The **Crisis Information Card** should also mean that the police can call the user's nominee immediately.

How It Works

This card allows the user to say how the user wishes to be treated in a mental health emergency when the user may have difficulty in making the user's wishes known. Its main purpose is to make sure that a person of the user's choice will be contacted to act as an advocate for the user in these circumstances.

It is entirely up to the user whether or not to make use of this **Crisis Information Card** scheme. When folded it is small enough to fit in a purse or wallet.

For more information on the **Crisis Information Card contact** The Mental Health Forum Information Officer at Swansea Council for Voluntary Service on 01792 642755, email mhf@scvs.org.uk or browse <http://www.scvs.org.uk/represent/part/p1540/mhf/cic.html>



The **Crisis Information Cards** launch will take place to coincide with the **Mental Health Forum** meeting on **June 23rd** at 2PM. If you are interested in seeing and discussing the cards, want to collect some for distribution or would like to feature launch information in your own news publication please see us there or call us now on **01792 544020/544021**.



It is very difficult to come back to work after a period of depression

Depression Alliance spokesman



Depression 'top sick leave cause' Depression and anxiety are now the most common reasons for people starting to claim long-term sickness benefits, researchers in London have said. They have overtaken musculoskeletal conditions such as back pain, which used to prompt most such claims, the team told the British Medical Journal. They called for more to be done to help people with depression return to work. The King's College London team said these benefits - available after six months' sickness - cost £13bn a year.

The researchers' call for action comes as the House of Lords backed down in a confrontation with MPs over extending disability discrimination legislation to people who suffer bouts of depression. Long-term sickness is counted as anything over six months - when people become eligible to claim benefits such as Incapacity Benefit. The government recently announced that benefit, paid to 2.7 million sick and disabled people, was to be overhauled to remove disincentives to return to work.

Therapist shortages Illnesses such as depression are treated using medication, although patients often say they would prefer therapies such as psychotherapy or counselling. However, there are long waits for "talking therapies". The King's researchers also say there are too few occupational therapists in the UK - just one specialist for every 43,000 workers. They say occupational physicians can help find ways for people to return to work after a long illness.

'Vicious circle' A spokesman for the Depression Alliance said employers were often not equipped to recognise the warning signs of stress and mild depression in workers, and so were unable to help them early on in their illness.

"Employers...need support to understand the situation and their responsibilities. Unfortunately the necessary resources are scarce. And the incapacity benefit system itself is simply not designed to deal with the special requirements of people affected by depression. Service users often tell us that they end up in a vicious circle where they are unable to return to work or are forced back to work too quickly."

More info: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/4419491.stm> bbc.co.uk



'Infomania' worse than marijuana

Workers distracted by email and phone calls suffer a fall in IQ more than twice that found in marijuana smokers, new research has claimed. The study warned of a rise in "infomania", with people becoming addicted to email and text messages. Researchers found 62% of people checked work messages outside work; new technology can help productivity, but users must learn to switch computers and phones off. The study, carried out at the Institute of Psychiatry, found excessive use of technology reduced workers' intelligence. Those distracted by incoming email and phone calls saw a 10-point fall in their IQ - more than twice that found in studies of the impact of smoking marijuana, said researchers. More than half of respondents said they responded to emails "immediately". Dr Glenn Wilson, the psychologist behind the study, said that unchecked infomania could reduce workers' mental sharpness, with similar effects on the mind as losing a night's sleep,

Evolving Minds: Alternatives for Mental Health

What is insanity? We tend to assume that there is a clear line between "sane" and "mad". Most people would say that hearing voices, seeing things or generally having a distorted view of reality are signs of insanity. But then, how should we define psychic or spiritual experiences? From Evan Roberts, leader of the Welsh Religious Revival to celebrated poet William Blake, history is littered with people whose visions have won praise and admiration from many.

Maybe a person is only seen as "mad" if their delusions cause distress or difficulty - in which case a doctor may send them down a path that involves medication and sometimes hospitalisation. Melissa Gunasena has been forcibly sectioned on several occasions. She found the experience "disempowering, disabling and often terrifying." It led her to work with Swansea-based

alternative news service Undercurrents on a film, *Evolving Minds*, which offers a fresh and radical perspective on alternative approaches to mental health.

For Melissa Gunasena, the experience of being sectioned and hospitalised only added to the distress she was already suffering, making it even harder for her to recover once she was released.



The film has been screened at the Dylan Thomas Centre. It is also available to buy from Undercurrents: www.undercurrents.org

But in a society that seems to have a pill for every ill, how else can we address mental suffering? Melissa's film explores a number of approaches, including meditation, shamanism and psychotherapy, but for her the most effective solution is also disarmingly simple. She firmly believes that drugs treat the symptoms of mental distress but not the cause - a view that

takes on added weight when you consider findings that a large proportion of patients relapse once they stop taking antidepressants.

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By providing practical guidelines on nutrition, *Evolving Minds* aims to equip viewers with techniques that will help them gain or maintain good mental health. The film is also a timely and fascinating exploration into the very nature of "madness". It would seem that a lot can be learnt from spiritual practices such as Buddhism and Shamanism, both of which have a flexible view of reality that allows "psychotic" experiences to be defined and dealt with in a different way.

Thanks to Jenny White and the Evening Post for the use of this material.

CRISIS INFORMATION CARDS: Now Available for Use.

Cards can now be collected from Reception at SCVS, 7 Walter Road, Swansea SA1 5NF. If your organisation and/or service users would benefit by using them please feel welcome to collect the quantity required.

175,000-strong hidden army of school-age carers

"The cause of raising the educational attainment and improving the life chances of a significant proportion of Britain's children requires this issue to emerge from the shadows."

Martin Rogers,
coordinator of Ten

The report says:
"Despite their numbers, the experiences of these children remain largely unknown outside the circle of professionals and agencies working to support them. Some schools do not believe that they have young carers among their pupils. This is unlikely to be the case, with 175,000 school-age carers and only 30,000 schools."

**Guardian
Unlimited**

Britain has a "hidden army" of school-age carers - some as young as five - who have been forced into adult-style roles looking after family members, a report reveals today. It claims there are at least 175,000 young carers, of whom one in five regularly misses school or suffers educational difficulties because of the huge responsibilities and demands on their time. Many subsequently leave school with low grades or no qualifications. Their schools may not even be aware of their caring role.

These children act as carers for older relatives who suffer from illness or disability, giving practical help such as shopping, cooking and cleaning, as well as emotional support. But nearly a quarter also regularly provide intimate personal care for adult family members.

The vast majority care for a parent, but in some cases it may be a sibling, grandparent or other family member. The report, *Young Carers*, has been produced by The Education Network (Ten), a policy and research organisation which supports local education authorities, with input from the Children's Society and the Princess Royal Trust for Carers. It claims that its figure of 175,000 young carers - based on official census data - is likely to be an underestimate, because many families will not admit the situation for fear of being reported, and because of the stigma attached.

The publication highlights the toll on youngsters' education and their longer-term prospects. Many carers encounter problems with teachers for being late or not completing homework when they should receive support, praise and encouragement.

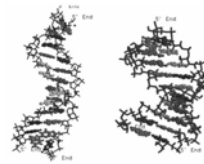
**Congratulations to the Swansea Carers' Centre!
On April 1st they became an Independent Charity.
You can find out more about their work by calling
01792 653344 or e-mailing them on
admin@swanseacarerscentre.org.uk**

New Research Reveals High Suicide Rate for Wales

Newly released data from the Office for National statistics shows that the suicide rate in Wales is higher than in any of the England regions. Whilst the adult suicide rate per 100,000 population in 2003 was 11.4 for England and Wales as a whole, the rate for Wales alone was 13.9. The rate of male suicide in Wales per 100,000 population was 22.5, compared to 17.6 for England and Wales combined; the rate for Women in Wales was 5.5 per 100,000 persons, compared to 5.7 overall. Neath Port Talbot emerged as one of the regions with the worst suicide rate, with 18.8 adults per 100,000 committing suicide. The suicide rate for men in this area was very high at 32.6 per 100,000 population. Merthyr Tydfyl and Carmarthenshire were also shown to have a high figure. Bill Walden-Jones, Chief Executive of Welsh mental health charity Hafal, stated: "Sadly the high suicide rates in Wales are to some extent a reflection of the state of services that deal with mental illness.

"A significant number of suicides result from diagnosed severe mental illness, especially schizophrenia; but this is not inevitable: good support services which prevent people from languishing can make all the difference."

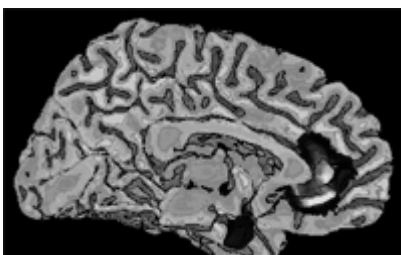
Info: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/3106451.stm>



New Clues About a Depression Gene

Hot on the trail of the genetic influences on depression, researchers may have found a new clue about one particular gene. The gene -- called 5-HTT (the serotonin transporter gene) -- may be one of several genes that affect susceptibility to depression. Serotonin, a brain chemical messenger, has been implicated in depression. When levels get too low, you get depressed. However, a variation in this gene doesn't seem to doom anyone to depression by itself. If it did, Daniel Weinberger, MD, and colleagues might have had a harder time with *Nature Neuroscience's* online edition.

The results appear in *Nature Neuroscience's* online edition. The exact causes of depression are not known. Both genetic and environmental factors may play a role. For the public, perhaps the most important thing to know about depression is that it's treatable. It's also a serious, widespread illness tied to other Nearly 19 million American adults per year have depression, according to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)



CEFN COED CHANGES ANNOUNCED A WAG press release announced £52.4 million Capital is to be made available for the re provision of Cefn Coed Hospital and Mental Health Community services in Swansea, to be spent by 2009.



Bruce Torrance, Operations Manager at Cefn Coed, told Foreword, "The Trust, in collaboration with statutory & non-statutory partners, is seeking a comprehensive redevelopment of mental health services in Swansea. Replacement of those services currently provided at Cefn Coed would be a part of the overall project.

"Recently the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) earmarked £ 52.4 million of public capital funds to enable the Trust to take the redevelopment forward over the period 05/06 - 08/09 & beyond. The Welsh Assembly Government allocation came in response to a Strategic Outline Case (SOC) submitted about 2 years ago.

"We will now need to work with all stakeholders in revisiting service models and locations and identifying preferred solutions within the resources available. The WAG will expect to be advised of the proposals to ensure they are in line with national policy guidance etc before they actually delegate the funds. The original SOC estimated that in addition to the capital sum about £6 million of additional recurring revenue would be required to meet the cost of new staff & higher running costs for the new services. This element of the funding is not yet clear & will require further discussion with the WAG & our commissioners of services Swansea Local Health Board.

For more information: <http://www.swansea-tr.wales.nhs.uk/cefncoed.htm>

Shaping the future through democratic learning

WEA



WOMEN'S HEALTH & WELL BEING INCLUDING AROMATHERAPY, RELAXATION TECHNIQUES AND BUILDING A POSITIVE SELF IMAGE.

Thursdays 10.00am – 12.00

WEA Centre,
Orchard Street,
Swansea, SA1 5UH (Opposite Central Clinic)

PUBLICATIONS – FOCUS ON CREATIVE WRITING

Survivors' Poetry is a national literature and performance organisation dedicated to promoting poetry by survivors of mental distress through workshops, performances, readings and publications to audiences all over the UK. It was founded in 1991. The 16 page *Poetry Express* magazine is professionally produced and contains a lot of useful information. This magazine is issued quarterly and its purpose is to publicise events and activities organised by *Survivors' Poetry* and other groups around the country. The magazine is published quarterly and is available in large-print format.

Poetry Express

Diorama Arts Centre, 34 Osnaburgh Street, London,
NW1 3ND, UK
info@survivorspoetry.org.uk



Mad Not Bad <http://www.madnotbad.co.uk/index.htm>

"This site is the realm of the mental health 'Service User' and those close to them - the carer, family or friend. By collating examples of their experiences, opinions and creativity I am hoping to help illuminate the darkness that surrounds mental ill health. To foster the idea that being 'mad' doesn't make you 'bad' and that it's ok to talk about it. Let's challenge the stigma."



Mental Health Media www.mhmedia.com

Mental Health Media uses all media to promote the voices of people with experience of mental distress and challenge the discrimination they face. We produce a wide range of video and new media resources and offer training, advice and support to people with experience of mental distress. We also run the annual Mental Health Media Awards and work with journalists and broadcasters to inform their coverage of mental health issues.



To have your work included on the Depression Alliance creative writing webpage e-mail it to **creative@depressionalliance.org**.

**The Mental Health
Forum Neath Port
Talbot and Swansea**

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7 Walter Road
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SA1 5NF

Tel: 01792 642755

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mhf@scvs.org.uk

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2 Alfred Street
Neath
SA11 1EF

Tel: 01639 631387

Email:
nptcvs@ukonline.co.uk

We're on the Web!

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.scvs.org.uk



**Scotland pioneers
mental health 'first-aider' scheme**

MENTAL health "first-aiders" are to be trained across Scotland in a programme that will enable ordinary people to assist sufferers of severe mental illness. The national training programme, funded by the Scottish Executive and NHS Health Scotland, is the first of its kind in the world and will train at least 300 instructors over the next three years. Eventually it is hoped that thousands of people from all walks of life will be able to practise "CPR [cardiopulmonary resuscitation] for the mind".

The roll-out is part of the Scottish Executive's National Programme to Improve Mental Health and Well Being, and will be launched officially in June. Gregor Henderson, the director of the Mental Health Programme, said the scheme is one of a number of initiatives to reduce the stigma attached to mental health.

Based on the concept of first aid training, mental health first aid (MHFA) was developed at the Centre for Mental Health Research at the Australian National University, Canberra. The method teaches the general public to recognise the symptoms of someone with mental health problems, such as difficulty coping with work, and to deal with a crisis situation through guiding someone towards professional help.

NHS Health Scotland ran a pilot scheme last year involving 15 people who went on to train 900 people across Scotland. An independent evaluation of the pilot scheme found that people who attended the course not only lost their negative attitude to people with mental health problems but also improved their own mental health.

Scotland is one of the first countries with a strategic programme of MHFA. By October, 142 people will have been trained as instructors through a four- to six-day course, which requires regular refresher training. The instructors go on to take groups of up to 15 people from all walks of life for 12-hour courses spread over two days.

Mr Henderson said: "It gives participants the skills to support people, to talk to them and to put them in touch with local helpful agencies and support. It is like CPR for the mind."

For more information: Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health on 0131 555 5959.

<http://news.scotsman.com/health.cfm?id=481892005>

Neath Port Talbot CVS Training Programme



Learning is increasingly seen as a key factor in promoting individuals' health and well being, across the generations. Older people and carers in particular, are now having their needs recognised and addressed.

The New Learning Network (NLN) with Local Action Centres in most communities within Neath Port Talbot, mean that opportunities for learning are now more accessible than ever.

The extensive community development and regeneration programmes currently underway aim to promote community involvement and increased confidence amongst individuals and communities.

Thursday 09/06/2005: **Making Effective Applications.**
(10:00 am - 4:00 pm) **NPTCVS, 17-19 Alfred Street, Neath**

Thursday 23/06/2005: **The Criminal Records Bureau and You.**
(10:00 am - 4:00 pm) **NPTCVS, 17-19 Alfred Street, Neath**

Thursday 30/06/2005: **Disability Equality Training**
(10:00 am - 4:00 pm) **NPTCVS, 17-19 Alfred Street, Neath**

Tuesday 05/07/2005: **Quality Models.**
(10:00 am - 4:00 pm) **NPTCVS, 17-19 Alfred Street, Neath**

- Please contact our Training Unit for more information and cost of all courses on: **01639 631246**



SCVS TRAINING PROGRAMME SUMMER 2005

COURSE	DATE
INVOLVING VOLUNTEERS (3 day course)	Mondays 6th, 13th and 20th June 2005 10 am to 4 pm
COMMUNITY WORK - COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITY WORK (½ day course)	Tuesday 7th June 2005 9.30 am to 12.30 pm
COMMUNITY WORK - SKILLS FOR COMMUNITY WORK (½ day course)	Tuesday 7th June 2005 1.30 to 4.30 pm
COMMITTEE SKILLS – (6 half day sessions which may be booked as a whole course or booked as separate sessions)	Begins Wednesday 8th June 2005 10 am to 12.30 pm
WELSH WORKS (In partnership with Menter Iaith Abertawe & Estyn Llaw)	Tuesday 14th June 2005 10 am to 4 pm
COMMUNITY WORK – COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION (½ day course)	Tuesday 21st June 2005 9.30 am to 12.30 pm
COMMUNITY WORK - ADDRESSING SOCIAL EXCLUSION (½ day course)	Tuesday 21st June 2005 1.30 pm to 4.30 pm
DISABILITY AWARENESS (free ½ day course)	Monday 27th June 2005 10 am to 12.30 pm
DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT (DDA) (½ day course)	Monday 27th June 2005 1.30 to 4 pm
COMMUNITY WORK - COMMUNITY PROFILING	Tuesday 28th June 2005 10 am to 4 pm
PRODUCING NEWSLETTERS	Wednesday 29th June 2005 10 am to 4 pm
VOLUNTARY SECTOR INTERNET MARKETING AND WEB SITE IMPROVEMENT	Monday 4th July 2005 10 am to 4 pm
BASIC FUNDRAISING	Tuesday 5th July 2005 10 am to 4 pm
INTRODUCTION TO MONITORING AND EVALUATION	Wednesday 6th July 2005 10 am to 4 pm
MANAGING ETHICALLY	Friday 8th July 2005 10 am to 4 pm
USING THE INTERNET FOR RESEARCH (½ day course)	Monday 11th July 2005 10 am to 12.30 pm
UNDERSTANDING LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN WALES (½ day course)	Monday 11th July 2005 1.30 - 4 pm
HEALTH AND SAFETY AND RISK ASSESSMENT (2 day course)	Tuesday 12th and Wednesday 13th July 2005 10 am to 4 pm
COMMITTEE SKILLS – BOOKKEEPING AND THE ROLE OF THE TREASURER	Tuesday 12th and Wednesday 13th July 2005 10 am to 4 pm
E-LEARNING IN THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR (½ day course)	Tuesday 19th July 2005 10 am to 12.30 pm
BRITISH RED CROSS BASIC FIRST AID CERT.	Tuesday 19th July 2005 1.30 to 4 pm

**For further information contact:
Amanda Carr 01792 543633
Sarah Harris 01792 543632
Pamela Sutton 01792 544014**