

Any enquiries concerning items in this newsletter should be made to Nigel Rose c/o the MIND office, P O Box 451, Manchester, M60 1GY. Tel no: 061 236 9316. The newsletter is produced irregularly. Please send any news items headed Newsletter c/o MIND office.

STOP PRESS

Financial Crisis: There is a very serious financial crisis at the Regional Health Authority due to the underfunding of inflation by the present government. This crisis may be deepened if the government does not fully fund the nurses pay award. This is threatening both the resettlement of people from the large hospitals and the development of District Acute Services. The Region has now called a halt to any further resettlement bids as it has no more money. So far the Region has only recouped roughly £5,000 for every £14,700 it pays out when a person moves out of hospital. The Region is looking at all options for a way out, but there is little hope.

Alcoholic Treatment Unit: There has been a reprieve for the Alcoholic Treatment Unit at Withington Hospital which was to be closed to save money. The city council agreed to release £20,000 of underspend from joint finance monies to fund the unit for a further 8 weeks. There is to be a city-wide joint working party set up to discuss the future of Alcohol Treatment Services. The Community Health Council have set up a public meeting to draw in consumers and other interested parties into these discussions on 13th Sept, 7.30 p.m. in the Lord Mayor's Parlour at the Town Hall.

S.A.N.E.: Margaret Wallace fearless exposé of the "schizophrenia scandal" in recent newspaper articles and the T.V. programme "Whose mind is it anyway?" which equally fearlessly did as much damage as it could both to community care and user empowerment, in other circles is better known as Countess Warbek. Perhaps this is why she did not get around to interviewing anyone black or from the working classes.

MANCHESTER MIND

Homelessness: Manchester MIND has started some research into what happens to people who are homeless whilst in hospital when they are due to be discharged. After speaking to town hall housing workers it is clear that the options are few and the "care" minimal. Community care is failing at the first step. We have found that: 1) Notice of proposed discharge to patient or friends is inadequate. 2) Preparation for discharge is often non-existent. 3) Housing workers are often providing support to people they feel have been discharged inappropriately - when this support is not sufficient there is re-admission. 4) 40% of all those in Direct Access Hostels or B&B have had or still have contact with psychiatric services. We are seeking to establish links with Housing Associations, Shelter, CHAR and the Housing Rights Campaign to work to create more housing options for people "coming out".

Co-operative Development Project: As part of the INROADS Employment Project (the job-finding and support scheme run by Manchester MIND) Mind has made an application to the European Social Fund for £40,000 over the next two years to fund an extra one and a half workers. These workers will work with a small group of people who have had mental health problems to enable them to set up a co-operative. It will be known in February whether the application has been successful. It is intended to make another smaller application for around £1000 to carry out some preliminary research.

Social Advocacy: Opportunities for Volunteering is a government scheme which will fund projects for 3 years upto a maximum of £30,000 per year. These projects must use unemployed volunteers. Manchester MIND intends to make an application to this scheme for a Social Advocacy Project. This project will try to help people who are isolated and lonely by giving specialised advice and support as to how to meet other people. This will include counselling to help a person explore ways of meeting people or improving existing relationships, doing research to find a club, church, sport etc. that suits the person, going along with the person or identifying someone in that social activity who will introduce the person into it. The next meeting of the group discussing the project is on 26.9.88 at the Town Hall. Contact the MIND office for the room number.

Street Collection: The street collection that MIND did at Safeways in Chorlton on 12th and 13th of August raised over £300. Many thanks to everyone who participated.

Annual General Meeting: The Annual General Meeting of Manchester MIND will be in November on the topic of "What is a Community". Jeremy Seabrook the writer of "The Idea of the Neighbourhood" and many articles in the Guardian and other papers is to be invited. The members of the executive for the year 88/89 will be chosen at this meeting. Anyone who wishes to be on the executive should start coming now if at all possible.

Commonplace: Recently Commonplace has been in a state of flux. The reason for this is that we have had a couple of venue changes for our meetings. However until next October between 7 p.m. and 9.30 p.m. every Thursday and Sunday, Commonplace (the Drop-in and Socialising centre) will be at Waterloo Place, 178 Oxford Rd, M13 which is the dark green door near the University Precinct. The meetings are mainly for ex-psychiatric patients especially those who are isolated. However people who have never used the services come to the group. So if you want a friendly chat over cups of free tea, come along! We'll do our best to make you feel welcome. Contact John Christie on 434 7258 for more details.

MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Police Monitoring Committee: A report went before this committee in January on the operation of section 136 of the Mental Health Act. This is the legal power that authorises the police to detain a mentally disordered person at a place of safety for up to 72 hrs. In Manchester a place of safety tends to be either a police station or the Accident and Emergency Dept of a general hospital. The conclusion of the report which was prepared by the Afro-Caribbean Mental Health Group was that there is a clear need to monitor the level of use of both of the types of "places of safety" and the extent of use of this police power. Also, there is need for clarification of current police practice and training and the view of the Chief Constable should be sought concerning the recommendations in this report and in the book "A Place Of Safety" by Anne Rogers and Alison Faulkner, produced by National Mind. It is not known if Chief Constable Anderton has made a reply.

Forrester and Plymouth House: Forrester House and Plymouth House, 2 large social services hostels for mentally ill people are to close by April next year. The people living there will be rehoused in small shared houses. Manchester MIND has now started work in these hostels, talking to the residents, helping to ensure that they get the best possible deal.

NORTH WEST REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

Prestwich Hospital: As reported in the last newsletter, Prestwich now has contingency plans to build units for 100 people who will be left at the hospital. 50 may not be resettled because some District Health Authorities have not got their act together. The other 50 who Prestwich doesn't think it can resettle are broken down into 4 groups 1) those people who are actively resisting moving, 2) those who are too elderly and frail, 3) younger people with severe behavioural excesses, and 4) those with a positive behaviour disturbance who have been in hospital a long time. There is no more information as to what these categories actually mean. Time is pressing as the sale of the land at Prestwich must go through by Sept 89. Prestwich is looking for ideas.

SOUTH MANCHESTER HEALTH AUTHORITY

Refusal of Senior Nurse: Withington Psychiatric Hospital is not known for its openness to criticism but this seems to have reached new heights. The Director of Nursing Services at Withington refused to let her nurses give evidence at the hearing into the tragic death of a woman who killed herself in one of the wards at Withington Psychiatric Hospital. Only when the C.H.C. secretary threatened to go to the U.K.C.C. the nursing council, did the Director back down.

SNIPPETS

Gene Clue for Schizophrenia: "Scientists believe they have pinpointed a faulty gene which can be inherited". This was reported in the Guardian on 25.7.88. However even if you have this gene there is only a 13% chance of being diagnosed as having schizophrenia. Now society can rest easy knowing that this "illness" is caused by a gene, or can it? To begin with the results are extremely suspect as the diagnosis "schizophrenia" is theoretically unsafe as shown in a recent article by David Pilgrim and Anne Rogers in Openmind. Secondly what are doctors going to do with this information, the only course of action open to them is abortion but even by their figures only 13% of people with the gene will end up diagnosed schizophrenic. It's time researchers stopped wasting their time and our money searching for the cause of schizophrenia and dedicated themselves to researching ways of helping people who are in distress without recourse to damaging medication or the lock and key.

Didsbury Cricket Club: On 14th July this year the local authority housing committee considered an application for planning permission for a home for 6 mentally handicapped people in Didsbury. 26 letters of objection were received. As well as the usual letters about how it would bring house prices down, have an adverse affect on the minds of small children etc. the objection of Didsbury Cricket Club stuck out for sheer absurdity and small-mindedness. Their objection was that the residents of this home might be "alarming and frightening to members of the cricket club".

Byline Debate: Many of you will have seen the programme by Marjorie Wallace on B.B.C T.V. on 1st August and the article she wrote in the Observer which both claimed to expose the "scandal of schizophrenia". S.A.N.E (Schizophrenia A National Emergency) took out large adverts in several papers advertising for donations and members shortly afterwards. The programme on T.V. distinguished itself by its unmitigated gloom and doom, the banality of the discussion that took place after it and by omitting to interview anyone who was actually suffering from "schizophrenia". The programme interviewed only relatives and professionals. This programme is part of a long-term attempt by the National Schizophrenia Fellowship and similar organisations to halt the closure of the old hospitals and to keep people who are diagnosed as schizophrenic segregated from everyone else.

In response, the executive of Manchester MIND have written to the programme producers and are contacting the local t.v. networks about making a programme from the point of view of users of the services, that focusses on the positive aspects of community care and what people could be doing if the money from long-stay hospitals was released into community services.

ARTICLES

Deaths in Psychiatric Hospitals by Hazel Burke

When violent or unexpected deaths occur in institutions, an inquest is usually held, particularly if the person has died whilst in custody (in a police-station, prison cell or while detained in psychiatric hospital under the Mental health Act). It may be extremely difficult for families or friends to find out the exact circumstances in which the person has died and prison and hospital authorities may be reluctant to disclose information or carry out a full investigation. As part of a research project I have been talking to relatives of people who have died in Psychiatric hospital or shortly after discharge about their experiences at the inquest hearing and the problems they have faced

Deaths in unexplained circumstances (e.g. after injections of major tranquilisers or because of inadequate supervision by prison or hospital staff are particularly shocking and disturbing. Relatives may find it difficult to get their questions and concerns put to the inquest and the coroner has discretionary powers as to which witnesses will be called, what verdict should be given (even if there is a jury) and what information can be disclosed (e.g. medical records and nursing notes). If relatives want a solicitor to represent them at the hearing they have to pay legal costs as Legal Aid is not available for representation at inquests. Prison or hospital staff, however, will be legally represented at the inquest.

Some reforms in inquest procedures may give families more chance of finding out how and why their relatives have died but state institutions need to be less secretive and more accountable if there is to be a full and open investigation. I would be interested in talking to anyone with similar experiences and the Legal Department and National MIND is also gathering information concerning deaths after major tranquilisers have been given. There is also a group called INQUEST which is campaigning for changes in inquest procedures and in the way in which deaths in custody are investigated.

BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS

Report of the Interdepartmental Working Group of Home Office and DHSS Officials on Mentally Disturbed Offenders in the Prison System in England and Wales: Copies of this report can be borrowed from Manchester MIND. It contains many useful statistics and recommendations.

National MIND leaflet on Abuses in Psychiatric Hospital: Cost £1, available from National MIND. Glossy fold-out leaflet with excerpts from reports into the "Decay, Squalor, Neglect" that goes on in mental hospitals. Very expensive for what it is and very unclear as to who it is actually aimed at.

CONFERENCES

COMMON CONCERNS: International Conference on User Involvement in Mental Health Services. 26-28th September 1988 at the University of Sussex. Brighton Health Authority, East Sussex Social Services and National MIND are jointly organising this multi-disciplinary conference on the theme of user involvement and empowerment, self-help and advocacy within mental health services. Speakers include Judi Chamberlain of "On Your Own" fame and many others. Cost is £95 non-residential, and £140 residential. There are a limited number of sponsored places to enable service users who are unwaged to attend. Application forms available from Manchester MIND.

Understanding and Helping Those Who are in Grievous Circumstances: 2 day residential course at Whaley Hall,

Whaley Bridge organised by Manchester Polytechnic. More information can be obtained from Mrs D Tallantyre, Admissions Secretary, Manchester Polytechnic, Dept of Applied Community Studies, 799 Wilmslow Rd, Didsbury, M20 8RR.

The Psychiatric Issue: Trieste, Italy 3rd-7th Oct. International Congress. The aim of the Congress is to carry out a critical investigation of mental health strategies. Very Expensive. More details available from MIND office.

Real Work, Real Pay: Fri 23rd Sept 2-4 p.m. in Warrington. Cost £5/person, £2/MIND member, free to (ex) users. North-West MIND have invited four work projects/groups to describe their development, activities, organisation and funding. Contact North-West MIND on Preston 21734 for booking form.

MENTAL HEALTH GROUPS

If you know of any other group that should be included in these listings please contact the MIND office.

Afro Caribbean and Mental Health Group: This group meets monthly and is looking for funding for a project to plan services for black people living in Mosside. Its membership includes Manchester Social Services, Central Manchester Health Authority, Manchester MIND, 42nd St., and members of the local community.

Phoenix: Phoenix meets weekly on Wednesday at 7.30 p.m. at the Pankhurst Centre, to provide support for women experiencing or who have experienced mental health problems. The group is involved in educating the community regarding some of the issues around women and mental health. The group is interested in campaigning for better health care for women recognising that until women collectively express dissatisfaction with the present health care system it will not improve. For more information contact Isi (061 865 6198) or Linda (061 226 9757).

Survivors Speak Out: This is a national organisation of survivors of mental illness services and their allies. To join contact Ivy Buckland, Contact, Chesterfield Community Centre, Tontine Rd, Chesterfield S40 1QU. Membership is £1 for survivors and £5 for allies. There is a local group that meets regularly. For more information contact Meryl Fowkes c/o the MIND office. The National A.G.M. will be held on Saturday September 10th in London at the Hampden Community Centre, 150 Ossulton St. London NW1.

MIND Consumer Network: National MIND has appointed a half-time worker to set a Consumer Network. Her name is Jan Wallcroft. The North-West Region of MIND has set up its own branch which has met 4 times already with great success. If you are interested in attending please contact Steve Brady, c/o Oldham MIND. Consumers who join get free membership of National MIND. MINDWAVES the first issue of the newsletter of the MIND Consumer Network is now available.

South Manchester Health Emergency: This group has been set up to fight the cuts at Withington Hospital. It has been very successful in publicising what is happening. If you wish to join the campaign write to 86 Arnfield Rd, Withington, Manchester M20 9AR.

Chorlton Depressives Self-Help Group: The group has now been running for three years and is affiliated to Manchester MIND. Meetings take place every Thursday evening between 8.00 p.m. and 10.00 p.m. at Chorlton Central Church, Barlow Moor Rd (almost opposite Chorlton Bus Station). Anyone suffering from depression, anxiety, loneliness is welcome to attend the group and can be assured of receiving understanding support, help and encouragement both during the group meetings and the rest of the week.

Manchester Users Support Group: This group meets every week on a Wednesday at 1-30 p.m. in the Social Therapy Dept in M-Block at North Manchester General Hospital to discuss issues concerning mental illness services. All enquiries should be made to John Dockney c/o Harpurhey Resettlement Team, Harpurhey Health Centre, 1 Church Lane, Harpurhey, M9 1BE.

Any enquiries concerning items in this newsletter should be made to Nigel Rose c/o the MIND office. The newsletter is produced irregularly, any news items should be sent headed Newsletter c/o the MIND office.
