

Spring 2009

Islington Borough User Group – iBUG – is a group of people who either use or have used mental health services and have come together to monitor the provision of these services in Islington. Our function is to give a professional voice to people in Islington who have mental health problems and who seek help with these from service providers whether in the statutory or voluntary sector.

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# Spring Newsletter



## Chair's Report by Peter Jones

What is iBUG all about in 2009? Over the last few years iBUG has been redefining its purpose. The most important role iBUG will always play is to give a professional voice to mental health service users in Islington. It is crucial that when discussions take place about commissioning or de-commissioning services an informed service user voice can fully participate in these meetings.

We have run the monthly Patients' Council ever since we moved to the Highgate Mental Health Centre. This is the successor organisation to the old Waterlow Unit Patients' council. It was always envisaged that iBUG would do this work that the old Waterlow Unit Patients' Council undertook once our move to Highgate was completed. This therefore must be considered part of our core activity.

One of our unique selling points is that all iBUG members are mental

health service users or ex-service users. This means we have a different perspective on life. We have all experienced a hidden disability that only we can fully appreciate. Recently my father in his eighties suffered a fall which resulted in him breaking his hip and femur. During his recovery he was delirious and started to see things. For the first time in his life he could empathise with me and understand what it is like to suffer from manic depression.

It is because mental health disorders are so different and affect people in so many different ways, that our unique understanding means that we can give advice and help about life from a completely different perspective.

To this end we were able to secure some pilot funding to run an 11 week course which we called the iBUG Get Your Act Together Course. Edit has written in detail about this in another article.

What is important about

this is that the course was devised by service users for service users.

Many people have been asking us why iBUG has not got a web site. Well all the Directors have been very clear that yes we wanted a web-site. But we also wanted enough money to do the job properly.

We wanted to train several Directors and some members to maintain and learn about web design.

Our newsletter has always been written by service users for service users. In this same spirit our web-site will be developed and maintained by service users.

We have been very fortunate to get an Awards For All grant from the National Lottery to produce a web-site and to train some service-users to update it.

This is what iBUG is all about in 2009.

*I am happy to report that service users are involved in all stages.*



## Day Centres Review

By Suzy Lee

The service specification of the day centres, developed with service user input, is now finished. The team is now starting the tendering process, and at the pre question qualification stage. When I spoke to Laval Lebon he was reluctant to give me too many details - the tendering process, by nature competitive and commercially sensitive, has to be confidential. However, he was able to tell me that they had started the process, and were currently short

listing providers for the invitation to tender stage. He expected that they would complete the tender in July and it would then go to the executive for a final decision in September. I am happy to report that service users are involved in all stages.

There have also been regular meetings to consider the refurbishment of Ashley Road and Despard road day centres, including service users, staff, the capital project manager and the archi-

tect. They have been meeting every six weeks to go over the plans, which are near completion. They are now looking at the finishing touches, including colours etc. They will put this work out to tender soon.

Southwood Smith is undergoing a slightly different process as the building is owned by the Foundation Trust, but I understand that plans are well in hand.

## Service User Profile- Shirley

Shirley Scott-Norton

I got married quite young, and at the age of 21 I had two young children. My mother then found she had cancer. This eventually led to her being housebound. So I agreed to move in with her so that she didn't have to go back into hospital. I needed to be there to look after my mum and younger sister.

I got very depressed at the thought that my mum wasn't going to be around for much longer and this led to me taking some of her medication which was opiate based pain relief. This has to have been the biggest mistake of my life; I was addicted to the pain killers and when my mum died I didn't know where to turn so I started

using heroin.

My two children had to go into care and they were put up for adoption, I didn't try to stop this happening because I couldn't see a light at the end of the tunnel. Both my children were adopted by the same couple so they at least had each other.

I've had some quite bad episodes of depression and still do get very depressed at times; I've learnt to get on with it now. I stopped using drugs not long after the children were adopted and stayed that way for 10 years. Then I had another really bad emotional upheaval and started using heroin again. That was in 1996; I still use drug services but I'm stable and don't use heroin. User involvement

has really helped me to stay focused and busy which has helped with my recovery. I've been involved for over 5 years now and have done lots of training, and gained all my self-esteem and confidence back that I lost while using drugs.

One of my children that were adopted came looking for me and we have met up: I have a lovely grandson and she is married to a police officer. It's really good to know that everything turned out well for them both, I have not heard from my son but there is plenty of time for that to happen. I wouldn't change anything that's happened as it's what makes me the person I am today.

## Reflections on Zhongguo (China) 'The Middle Country

*Gerard Greene recently visited China and these are his reflections on his visit.*

Controlled and orderly, with the imperial court of Beijing, the unchanging centre of the Cosmos.

The Great Wall, the fantastical red, black and gold temples and palaces, the smell of incense, rice fields and fruit trees, in the middle of cities of tall, thin skyscrapers.

The country has a population of 1.3 billion people, and this with the 'one couple, one child' policy from the late seventies.

Buddhism, Taoism, and Mammon exist together in well-brushed lacquered harmony, armies of cleaners, thousands of banners put up overnight on mile after mile of new motorways, some with elaborate toll stations.

At Hong Kong's ordered, bustling, and spotless ferry and bus stations, structured and running on time, neat people all wearing seriously expensive looking watches hurry past a monkey-like beggar lying under rags prone, not old, his bowl by his

hairy head, on the junction of a busy overhead walkway. And he is still there more than an hour later, position just slightly changed.

Gardens are beautifully geometric - even the weeds manicured, venerable bonsai in rows. There is early morning communal Tai-Chi in the public parks and spaces where occasionally, a tent is neatly pitched, people gambling, clustered on street corners.

At Xian, there are the pits of the Terracotta Warriors, immense hangers with wooden planks and ceilings and the smell of hot cement: the 81 year old man digging for a well who discovered them, signing tourist books ('no pictures!') should he be at home, feet up with a cup of tea, watching the Chinese costume soap operas. They are too old to heed the 'parental guidance' given before a Simpsons episode.

And ask a policeman for the 'copy market' to buy a genuine 'Shanghai Rolex'; the idiom that 'you can't take it with you' apparent in the tombs and magnificent muse-

ums.

This is so especially at Xian's 'First Emperor's' 5.3 acre site, circa 230 B.C., tantalisingly unexplored yet with its representation of the universe, rivers and seas of Mercury, booby trapped: the Eight Wonder of the World, according to the United Nations.

The people are mostly elegant, graceful and polite buying the products advertised on T.V. 'because they are worth it'.

This is so even in Chongqui, the city the size of Austria with a 32 million population, but with only ten million living downtown, according to the guide! Commuting time of two hours one way, common and crowded.

The country is analogous with a well intentioned but uptight uncle, who can be paranoid but is optimistic about the global 'cappuccino culture' and his part in it, as proprietor of the latest café to be visited.

Clean, neat, elderly beggars in wheelchairs are pushed by (P.T. O) younger relatives with their bowls, politely smil-

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## Reflections on Zhongguo(China) The Middle Country

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ing - like the street vendors who hassle less than in other parts of the world.

It is not advisable to drink tap water, not even for teeth brushing: two Yuan (20p) for a small bottle, Perrier a treat at 30 Yuan, knowing it is cheaper elsewhere. Some drug offences are punishable by death.

The towering scrapers are a contrast, clustered together with busy, clean markets at ground level, to the low-rise , narrow, high density backstreets: a journey back in time, serene courtyards kept pristine within exquisite and lacquered buildings, with rooms a few feet above ground level, a raised panel to step over the doorways- to bow to the gods or just to keep out drafts from stencilled stone flags?

Everywhere crowded, ordered movement, traffic phenomenal and a silver grey miasma like a pall over the cities. It is beautiful but terrible at the same time: hoping it won't be another case of 'the rich getting the pleasure but the poor

getting the blame' but nonetheless, feeling the optimism.

It is all a world away from the sublime 'Three Gorges' with a contrasting, slow moving mist amongst the towering karst limestone cliffs; it is easy to see the attraction for generations of artist-artisans. It is a hard life one time, farming and fishing, subsistence level and muscled.

One and a quarter million people are displaced to provide eight to



ten per cent of the country's growing energy requirements, transferred and transformed.

Everywhere available is 'foot massage' reflexology, traditional Chinese Medicine outlets and dubious 'parlours', petite men and women in fashionable snug denim, some with long straight black hair curled, 'a la mode', half the people ( but

mainly the males) smokers. There is a ratio of 130 men to 100 females.

A 'gay scene' is private and quietly tolerated by the intelligentsia but scarcely liberated; the 'single child' generation is perhaps spoiled but aware of reproductive traditional responsibilities so as not to disappoint expectant parents. There is a certain liberation for highly educated women, but as for the main roles mother and home maker, once more married, although this is changing.



## Poem– We met at Bethany’s House

By Sybil Adelaja

Where can we meet Ladies? It’s been a long time long stuff love  
 Got out and played have a girl’s night in.  
 And get me a fruition to play on I’m too nervous to get it up.  
 I’m supporting you have my per no  
 I loved him so much that small looked too good to hope  
 Never mind that I found the whistle by mystery  
 It’s especially fun damp.  
 It’s sly and lonely up there  
 Girls get it together  
 Pull the other one it’s got brass legs on it  
 Start rounder round the clock dance the demo demon climb the stairs  
 Snug and throw him back to bed.

## POLICE AND MENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

By Helen Shoenberg

This article is just to let your readers know that I was elected 4 years ago to be a user member of the Metropolitan Police Association (MPA) independent advisory board, DIAG ( Disability Independent Advisory Group). As someone who has been sectioned by the police under section 136 of the Mental

Health Act a number of times since 1977 and who nearly died as a result in 1979 I am particularly keen to hear from anyone about their experiences either of Section 136 or S135 to feedback to the MPA,s Mental Health Project Team. ( Section 136 is when the Police pick someone up on the street in order to ensure they have a

mental health assessment; s135 is when the police enter someone’s home to ensure that they have a mental health assessment).

I am currently an inpatient at HMHC but can be reached by email at helenshoenberg

@btinternet.com

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## Music Therapies and Therapeutic Music Activities

by Edit Szarvas

In the series of “alternative therapies” this article is about music therapy and therapeutic music activities. I aimed to include as much information as possible about the basics of this therapy and the way you can access therapies or activities. I also interviewed Catherine Carr, music therapist, to provide you with some practical information and hands-on experiences.

### What is music therapy?

Music therapy is an interpersonal process in which the therapist uses music and all of its facets—physical, emotional, mental, social, aesthetic, and spiritual—to help clients to improve or maintain their health (from wikipedia). It is an “interactive, primarily non-verbal intervention” and “provides a process through which clients can express themselves, become aware of themselves and interact more easily with others” (APMT, 2009).

### So how does this work in reality?

“Music therapists assume that music is universal and that every culture has music as a form of expression. There are numerous methods used in music therapy to encourage people to express how they feel at that moment of time. There are different ways of participating: in one-to-one or group and sometimes even community sessions. Participants don’t

need to have any musical skills or knowledge to be able to benefit from the therapy and the therapist will assure them that they don’t need to worry about getting it right or wrong. By listening to music, emotional responses come to surface; by playing music, emotions can be expressed; and by using different clinical improvisation techniques, participants are supported to become actively involved in the session. It is also very useful to talk about the music and during group sessions participants might be asked to play in pairs and listen to one another. The role of the therapist is to facilitate the session and to underpin what is going on to support participants to find out about their own feelings and ways of relating to others. Music therapists might also use psychodynamic techniques to enhance the understanding of these emotional responses. In the end of the session participants are also given the opportunity to talk about how it felt to play and what emotions came up during the session.”- Catherine tells me.

### Who is a music therapist?

“To be a qualified music therapist applicants have to finish a two year Masters course approved by the Health Professions Council and have to be registered with this institute afterwards.”- says Catherine who at first studied to become a sound

engineer at York University. “After a while I found out that it just wasn’t right for me. I worked on a sonic environment project on how the sounds of the environment can be regarded as music and that’s when I first read about music therapy. I was very interested and looked into how I can become a music therapist. They wanted applicants to have experiences in a care setting and to be able to demonstrate a certain level of music abilities. To gain the required experiences I worked as a tutor with autistic children and with the elderly.

Many people who train to be music therapists have often had personal experiences which have led them to want to be a music therapist. My own experiences of mental health problems in my family were a key reason for me, and I soon found that other students on the course often had similar personal reasons.”

Catherine has three jobs. She works as a music therapist at Highgate Mental Health Centre, she has a role in the executive committee of the Association of Professional Music Therapists and she also works on a research study on how people with post-traumatic stress disorder can benefit from music therapy.

**How can you be referred?** Patients at Highgate Mental Health Centre can be referred to music

## Music Therapy continued

therapy by mental health professionals. "I always go and see the patient on the ward after receiving their referral. I introduce myself and explain to them what music therapy is. I also ask what they would like to get out of the sessions and about their musical preferences and experiences. From this conversation I can work out whether group or individual work is appropriate and then discuss which option might be best with them. The sessions take place in the group room at the OT department where people can feel safe, away from the ward. The group sessions are open which means that newly referred members join each week so each session can sometimes feel like it is like a new beginning."

Music therapy for outpatients and anyone else having emotional difficulties is also available at the **Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy Centre** in Kentish Town. Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy provides and promotes the skilled use of music with individuals, groups and communities who are challenged by disability, illness or injustice. You can be referred by a health professional or can be self-referred.

(2 Lissenden Gardens, London, NW5 1PQ, tel: 020 7267 4496, fax: 020 7267 4369, email: [admin@nordoff-robbins.org.uk](mailto:admin@nordoff-robbins.org.uk), [www.nordoff-robbins.org.uk](http://www.nordoff-robbins.org.uk))

Music therapists also work privately. If you want to

find out more about music therapy, find a music therapist or check a music therapist is registered with the HPC, you can contact the **Association of Professional Music Therapists**. ([www.apmt.org](http://www.apmt.org), [APMTOffice@aol.com](mailto:APMTOffice@aol.com), tel:020 7837 6100).

There are organisations providing music activities for outpatients in the community.

**Islington Music Forum's Key Changes Programme** provides a range of music and dance activities for mental health service users. To find out more, call Peter Leigh on 020 7549 8172 or send an e-mail to [info@keychanges.org.uk](mailto:info@keychanges.org.uk).

**The Creative Health Lab** is a not-for-profit organisation funded by Camden PCT and established in 2006 to improve integrated healthcare in the community. It aims to deliver a range of free and affordable arts and horticultural therapeutic activities. They provide many fantastic activities including: therapeutic art, drama, movement and horticulture sessions, and also therapeutic music sessions from May 2009. The services are available to Camden and Islington residents, and you can be referred by a health professional or can be self-referred. For more details visit [www.creativehealthlab.com](http://www.creativehealthlab.com), call 020 8888 6293 or e-mail to [info@creativehealthlab.com](mailto:info@creativehealthlab.com).

**Core Arts** is a registered charity that exists to promote the artistic and creative abilities of people who experience severe and enduring mental health issues. For more information: 1 St Barnabas Terrace, Homerton, London E9 6DJ, Tel: 020 8533 3500.

### Recommendation

I haven't used music therapy myself but have read about it a lot during my research for this article and found out that it is beneficial in many ways to everyone. Researchers found that music activates all areas of the brain, from the oldest part, the amygdala or brain stem, to the frontal lobes and that activities that stimulate both sides of the brain help us integrate our rational and emotional thinking.

Finally, I would like to close my article with this quote below from Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy:

"The benefits of music therapy are wide-ranging, and relate to the different reasons for which people come to receive music therapy. For those with communicative disorders it can enhance expressive and interactive ability; for people isolated by illness or disability it can provide a means of socialisation, sharing and community. Music therapy can also facilitate a process of self-exploration."

*Many thanks to Catherine Carr for her contribution to this article.*

*"Patients at Highgate Mental Health Centre can be referred to music therapy by mental health professionals...Music Therapy for outpatients...is also available"*



*There has not been a murmur from either the banks or the government about the root cause of the mess we are in.*



## On Greed

By Phillip Fox

There has been so much in the news recently about money—or the lack of it. Bizarre that not only does no-one know where we are heading, but how long it is going to take for us to repair the situation.

The only thing really clear is that the blame lies somewhere between the banks and the politicians, convenient for both parties as the finger cannot be pointed at either.

There was a news programme shown a couple of weeks back, when half a dozen men of high rank in both government and banking were under fire, and an apology was expected from them.

It surprised me how half hearted and grudging their approximation of an apology was. As the camera does not lie their discomfort and guilt were patently obvious—

this is all we need to know in order to be convinced that there has been dishonesty going on somewhere in the wings and for some period of time, and that some of them knew it all along.

This sort of behaviour is no proper example to be setting for the young and promising criminal - after all if those at the top in a position of responsibility and trust are stealing, then it is not surprising that theft is going on with increasing fervour at street level and in between.

The man who has been awarded the 700k pension is equally rigid in his refusal to show any humility or acquiescence; no doubt all his cronies are tugging at his sleeve encouraging him. “If you surrender your pension, matey, we will be expected to do likewise.”

There is something of the ‘exclusive club’ going

on here. It is particularly terrible in this case— as some of the worse off have lost out on their pensions to support this shameful cause. This is surely as black as white can get.

There has not been a murmur from either the banks or the government about the root cause of the mess we are in.

As the word greed has become a taboo then we shall never be able to balance the scales.

So I call on you, Mr. 700k and all the other members of your money grubbing cartel, let go of the denial and repeat after me; I have been GREEDY and in future I shall settle for a little less.

## iBUG 'Get Your Act Together' Course

iBUG has started running our first course as a pilot project called Get-your-act-together! The course is funded by Islington Council and PCT.

The overall aim of the 11 weeks course is to support mental health service users to achieve an increased quality of life by giving them the opportunity to acquire skills and knowledge to cope with everyday challenges. Participants learn how to "get their act together" to organise their lives and to realise their goals.

The course focuses on real problems in everyday life and how to find ways to overcome them. A support group will be available after the last session giving the opportunity to have one-to-one discussions and to answer specific questions individuals may have.

The course as well as the support group are facilitated by the iBUG Directors but guest facilitators, who are mental health professionals and project workers from public and voluntary sector organisations, also contribute to a few sessions.

Both the facilitators and the participants are enjoying the course very much and now the management of iBUG decided to apply to secure permanent, external funding for the project to run the course two times a year.

We will let you know about the progress of this plan in the next Newsletter.

Edit Szarvas, Project Coordinator

*The overall aim of the 11 weeks course is to support mental health service users to achieve an increased quality of life*

## Competition

Here at the coalface we have been beavering away thinking up new ideas for the newsletter. We have got some funding, and would like to turn the newsletter into more of a magazine format, and start including more pictures and images, change the format

etc.

We would also like to rename the magazine and are offering a £10 Marks and Spencers voucher to anyone who comes up with the winning name.

As always, we are always looking for articles, par-

ticularly from service users although we do also print relevant professional articles as well. So we would love to hear from any budding journalists (and don't forget Poet's Corner)

We pay all service users for articles-so get scribbling!





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I'd like to say a big thank you to all of those who visited me and sent best wishes, flowers etc to me during my hour of need. To those of you not in the know, I had a nasty bout of pneumonia and ended up in the Whittington. The nurses were really nice but lying in bed breathing oxygen and being stuck full of needles is not my idea of fun!

Still, I am much better now and back at work part-time. My main disappointment is that I have missed the 'Get your act together' course but at least I am still in one piece!

Thanks again to all my supporters.

Suzy

### iBUG Diary



14/4/2009, 2-5pm	<b>meeting room!</b>	members may attend.
<b>Patients Council</b>	32/4/2009 1-3.30pm	28/4/2009, 2-5pm
Highgate Mental Health Centre, Gallery meeting room.	<b>MHLIT</b>	<b>iBUG Business meeting</b>
Contact:iBUG 020 7561 4140.	Training room, 338-346 Goswell Road, London EC1V 7LQ	Hanley Road Education and Employment Centre, 75 Hanley Road, N4 3DY
iBUG members may attend.	Contact: Shirley at iBUG 020 7561 4140 or Linda Shakespeare 020 7527 8168.	Contact: iBUG 020 7561 4140
Please note that the meeting is in the <b>Gallery</b>	Only designated iBUG	For all Service Users.