

## Join CSN:

**CSN is a (service user led) membership organisation. We are always looking for new members and/or volunteers as community advocates and befrienders.**

**If you want to join, and to be part of shaping the future of CSN, please fill out the form in page 8, and send it to: CSN, 336 Brixton Road, LONDON SW9 7AA, give it to one of our advocates, or email us at: [info@csnsl.org.uk](mailto:info@csnsl.org.uk).**

**Prospective volunteers please see page 7.**

### Another assault



### **Launch of Mind's campaign - Another assault**

Mind launched *Another assault* - It campaign for equal access to justice for people with mental health problems on 29 November 2007. The report exposes the shocking extent to which people with mental health problems are the victims of harassment, bullying and physical or sexual abuse in the community. It also shows the further blow that they are dealt when trying to access justice for the crimes committed against them, revealing that they are frequently not believed or taken seriously by criminal justice agencies. For further details visit

[<www.mind.org.uk>](http://www.mind.org.uk)

# The new Management Committee was elected at the CSN's Annual General Meeting

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The first meeting of the new committee, from the left: Helen Judge, Vice Chair, Cherry Pedler, CSN manager, the new Chair Patricia Lawar ...

## Editorial

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the second edition of CSN news.

In this issue, we have a questionnaire for you, devised by Lambeth PCT (Primary Care Trust) health promotion team to test your well-being. An article about Asperger and autism, and a write up of CSN's AGM. Please send us any articles, poems, news or letters which you want us to publish, and do consider becoming a member of CSN (completely free of charge and without obligation) if you are not already: please see membership form and information.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Cherry Pedler  
CSN Manager

CSN held its eleventh AGM on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2008. This was attended by eighteen full members of CSN.

CSN's new Management Committee (MC) now consists of eleven people, five men and six women, of whom ten are full members, identifying as having experience of mental distress, and seven are members of black and minority ethnic communities. A further three people are interested in attending MC meetings with a view to possibly being co-opted onto the MC in the future.

Cherry Pedler, the CSN Manager, drew members' attention to the developments which had oc-



Andy Daw , company secretary, centre, the members Jeffy Wong,  
and Ola Onilude.

cluded within CSN over the last year or so, a second In-Patient Advocate (Ometha Toussaint in November 2006); the post of Community Advocacy & Befriending Volunteer Coordinator (Michael Edwards: October 2007) and part-time Administrator (Ivanil Shaw: August 2007); and the first CSN newsletter for a number of years was recognised, having been printed shortly before Christmas by Ivanil. Cherry also spoke about developments 'in the pipeline' such as the CSN/Lambeth MIND proposal to develop a User Led Resource Centre.

Helen Judge, as CSN Chair, emphasised that it was important not to lose sight of the excellent advocacy work which was being done in forensic\*, community and in-patient settings. (\*for people who have mental health problems and have committed some sort of crime, usually violent or arson). Helen went on to say that CSN was a member-

ship organisation, and planned to hold regular seminars or other events to bring members together in the future. Finally, Helen called for a vote of thanks to Cherry and her team of advocates for their hard work over the last year.

Matters arising under 'Any Other Business' included concern about the arrangements by Lambeth Council for renewal of disabled persons' travel permits, and over the staffing of advocacy services in Southwark. There was a motion that CSN's quorum at AGMs be reduced from ten to eight full members. This was agreed. Finally, members are to be invited to a consultation event early in March 2008 to consider the User Led Resource Centre proposal, and Cherry is to circulate membership forms to Effra Resource Centre to encourage Effra users to take up membership of CSN.

## How happy are you?

How well do you look after yourself? Answer the following questions by ticking the option which most applies and then turn to page 24 to find out your happiness score. And if the result inspires you to make changes, you'll also find details of ways you can take steps to a healthier, happier you.

## TEN WAYS TO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

- |                                |                                 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> Take regular exercise | <b>6</b> Quit smoking           |
| <b>2</b> Eat a balanced diet   | <b>7</b> Drink more water       |
| <b>3</b> Get enough sleep      | <b>8</b> Think positive         |
| <b>4</b> Reduce stress         | <b>9</b> Learn to love yourself |
| <b>5</b> Drink less alcohol    | <b>10</b> Smile more often      |

### NEGATIVE FEELINGS

Over the past week, how much of the time have:

None or hardly any of the time    Quite rarely    Some of the time    Quite often    All or most of the time

- |   |                            |                            |                            |                            |                            |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. You felt depressed                             | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| 2. You felt that everything you did was an effort | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| 3. You felt tense or wound up                     | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| 4. You felt anxious                               | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |

### POSITIVE FEELINGS

Over the past week, how much of the time have:

- |                                     |                            |                            |                            |                            |                            |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 5. You felt happy                   | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| 6. You had fun                      | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| 7. You felt that life is going well | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| 8. You felt good about yourself     | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |

### PERSONAL

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Strongly disagree    Disagree    Don't agree or disagree    Agree    Strongly agree

- |   |                            |                            |                            |                            |                            |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 9. I feel like I am free to decide for myself how to live my life                   | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| 10. Most days I feel a sense of accomplishment from what I do                       | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| 11. When things go wrong in my life, I can usually get back on track pretty quickly | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| 12. I'm always looking for opportunities to make improvements or changes to my life | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |

### SOCIAL

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- |   |                            |                            |                            |                            |                            |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 13. I feel close to the people in my local area                               | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| 14. People in my local area help one another                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| 15. For most people in Southwark, things are getting better rather than worse | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| 16. I have a number of really good friends                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |

With thanks to Lambeth Primary Care Trust and (nef) new economics foundation, who authored this questionnaire. For more information, go to [www.lambethwellbeing.co.uk](http://www.lambethwellbeing.co.uk)

## HEALTH AND WELLBEING QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

### NEGATIVE FEELINGS

Feeling unhappy or down is a normal response to difficult, unpleasant or upsetting situations. But if these feelings won't go away, especially if they are intense and hard to control, they may be a sign of more serious problems.

#### Mostly 4s and 5s

Your responses show that you often experience negative moods and emotions. It may be that things have been difficult for you recently. But if you find that these feelings are difficult to shake off, it might be time to seek extra help. As a first step, talk to your GP or contact NHS Direct.

There are other things you can do which might help you feel a little better. Lots of research shows that exercise – perhaps a daily walk or a swim – has a positive effect on overall mood, as does eating more healthily. Even just spending time outside in green spaces and getting some fresh air can have a surprising effect on how you are feeling.

#### Mostly 3s

Your responses show that you experience negative moods and emotions quite often. This is not necessarily a bad thing and may be an understandable response to your situation. If, however, these feelings are interfering with your daily life – perhaps making it hard to concentrate at work – it might be time to seek extra help, such as from your GP.

When you are feeling low, there are things you can do that might help you feel a little better. Taking some exercise is a great way to lift your mood. It's also important to find time every day for things you enjoy

#### Mostly 1s and 2s

Your responses indicate that you rarely experience negative feelings and emotions.

### POSITIVE FEELINGS

People who feel optimistic and positive about life a lot of the time tend to be in better health, living up to seven years longer (on average) and may be at lower risk of some serious illnesses. They also tend to be more able to cope when bad things happen to them. When people are feeling positive they tend to think more creatively and are better able to learn new skills.

#### Mostly 1s and 2s

Your answers suggest you don't feel positive and optimistic all that often. This doesn't necessarily mean you have been feeling bad; it may be just that things have been difficult recently.

Being able to 'find a silver lining', even in adverse situations, can help increase the amount of positive emotions you feel and can have lasting benefits. Why not try keeping a 'happiness' diary, by every evening writing two or three good things that you can take from the day's events? If you feel you don't have enough opportunities to have fun, why not try something new?

#### Mostly 3s

Your responses suggest you experience positive feelings and emotions some of the time, but also that there is room for more. It can be easy to slip into habits that, while not making you unhappy, don't give you a chance to flourish. Why not make a list of the things you most enjoy and ask yourself whether you make as much time for them as you could?

#### Mostly 4s and 5s

It sounds like you have lots of positive feelings and often enjoy yourself in your daily life. Congratulations! Happiness can be contagious so share your good feelings with a smile.

### PERSONAL

How you feel about yourself and your abilities is very important to your wellbeing. This can involve several factors, such as autonomy (feeling like you have control over your decisions), competence (feeling able to get things done), resilience (how well you cope with difficult situations) and optimism (feeling positive about the future). People with high personal wellbeing tend to feel sure of their abilities and look forward confidently to whatever the future might bring.

#### Mostly 1s and 2s

Your responses suggest your personal wellbeing is quite low. Perhaps you don't have enough opportunities to feel valued or sometimes feel uncertain about your skills and abilities. If you're feeling a bit low in self-confidence or generally pessimistic, it can help to talk through how you feel with someone you trust. Learning a new skill is another way to boost your confidence.

#### Mostly 3s

Your responses suggest your personal wellbeing is fair. It may be that you are comfortable in your life overall but don't often challenge yourself to develop your abilities. Remember that some of the most enjoyable experiences happen when we push ourselves to the edge of our comfort zone. Why not learn a new skill or try out a new activity?

#### Mostly 4s and 5s

You scored highly, which suggests you have a strong sense of your own capabilities and belief in what you can achieve. Remember, though, that we never stop developing and changing, so don't stop challenging yourself to try new things.

### SOCIAL

Another important aspect of wellbeing is how you relate to other people. Research suggests that people who have strong social connections with friends and family tend to have better personal wellbeing than those who do not. Also, local areas with a strong community identity and busy social networks promote wellbeing.

#### Mostly 1s and 2s

Not everyone is sociable and confident, and it may be that you often prefer to

keep your own company. But your score suggests you don't socialise with people all that often and don't feel part of a community. Perhaps you aren't aware of the activities in your area and other ways to meet people? Have a look at [www.southwark.gov.uk/events](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/events) for ideas.

#### Mostly 3s

Your responses suggest you don't rely on your local community for social contacts – perhaps your close friends and family are

more scattered or you prefer to keep your own company? Maybe, though, you'd like to be more involved but aren't sure what's available. Have a look at [www.southwark.gov.uk/events](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/events) for ideas.

#### Mostly 4s and 5s

Your responses suggest you have strong networks of friends or family and probably enjoy socialising in the community.



# Autism and Asperger Syndrome

CSN staff were delighted to be blessed by the awareness raising session provided by Jane Sparks, one of CSN's new Advocacy/befriending volunteers. Jane attended one of our team meetings and spoke for a little under an hour about autism and Asperger Syndrome, answering questions as she went along. Jane also prepared an excellent handout with lots of detail.



Jane Sparks, CSN volunteer

In summary, Jane said that there was such a thing as an autistic spectrum, with people at different places along this. Only about two thirds of people with autism had a learning difficulty in addition. Many people with Asperger were very bright and were able to hold down work. Both Asperger and autism were 'lifelong developmental disorders, that affect how a person makes sense of the world, processes information and relates to other people'. About four times as many boys as girls are effected by these conditions.

All those on the autistic spectrum had difficulties, to varying degrees, in three areas: Social Communication, Social Interaction and Social Imagination. People with ASD had difficulty with change, enjoyed routine and tended to use ritualistic behaviour as a coping mechanism.

## Social Communication:

Those with autism and Asperger have difficulties understanding tone of voice, facial expressions and body language, and difficulty communicating socially.

## Social Interaction:

'All people with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) experience some difficulty engaging others in a reciprocal (two-way) social interaction. People with ASD often have difficulty recognising or understanding other people's emotions and feelings and expressing their own, which can make it more difficult for them to fit in socially'. People with ASD commonly do 'not understand the 'social rules' (e.g. personal space)'.  
  
Social Imagination: the ability to understand and predict other people's behaviour, make sense of abstract ideas and to imagine situations outside of our daily routine'.  
"We have trouble working out what other people know. We have more difficulty guessing what other people are thinking".  
  
People with ASD 'have difficulty with new or unfamiliar situations. Thus can be extremely rigid in their thinking and thus may insist on things being the same'.

In addition, there are additional characteristics of ASD:

*Love of routines (even rules and rituals, obsessions and Repetitive behaviours which they develop for themselves, particularly as a way of coping with the stress of social interaction and change), Special interests (eg collecting things), "Sensory difficulties (any of the senses of someone with ASD may be under or over sensitive, and the person with ASD may develop their own strategies for coping with this).*

Reality to an autistic person is a confusing, interacting mass of events, people, places sounds and sights.

There seem to be no clear boundaries, order or meaning to anything. A large part of the life of an autistic person is spent trying to work out the pattern behind everything. Set routines, times, particular routes and rituals all help to get order into an unbearably chaotic life. Trying to keep everything the same reduces some of the terrible fear". (Howlin 1998).

## How to support someone with ASD

**RECOGNISE** that STRUCTURE and ROUTINE are very important.

**COMMUNICATION** – clear/concise/consistent/slow.

Keep

**LANGUAGE UNAMBIGUOUS** – keep it simple – avoid 'sayings'.

**POSITIVE** language

**POSITIVE** expectations, and communicate these

**MODIFY** environmental factors, eg make less noisy, give space etc

**SENSITIVE SUPPORT**

**RESPECT** routines, rituals and repetitive behaviours

Treat each person as an individual: get to know the person and their particular issues and triggers.

**RECOGNISE** that stress (including changes) and illness can act as triggers for an increase in ritual or repetitive behaviours and/or obsessions and may result in self-injurious or other challenging behaviour.

## **South London**

Are you a volunteer with experience looking for  
a new challenge?

Community Support Network runs an advocacy and befriending service in Lambeth and requires volunteers to staff this essential service for individuals with Mental Health issues.

### **How much time can I donate?**

You can donate ½ a day per week, to 5 days a week (Mon-Friday, business hours only).

### **What sort of experience are you talking about?**

If you have experience of paid or voluntary work in a front line role of a service that deals with vulnerable adults in an information/advice giving or befriending capacity,

Or if you have worked in the mental health field or are training towards a qualification in health and social care or a relevant discipline we would love to hear from you.

### **How can I apply to become a volunteer?**

You will need to contact Michael Edwards on the details below to get an application form, or if you have any questions please call the numbers below.

We particularly welcome applicants with experience of mental distress/accessing MH services; CSN is an equal opportunities employer.

Michael Edwards, [medwards@csnsl.org.uk](mailto:medwards@csnsl.org.uk), 07942 201 254 / 0207 274 4490

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### Membership Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

New member       Renewal membership

#### **Membership Type:**

- Full individual membership (voting rights at AGM)**  
- For individuals applicants that must be over 18 years of age; and  
- A user/survivor of mental health/psychiatric services and/or experience of mental distress; and  
- Support the aims and objectives of the CSN
- Full Group Membership (voting rights at AGM)**  
Any mental health user led group that shares and supports the aims and objectives of the CSN.  
This must be a recognised and registered group or organisation.
- Associate Membership – Individual or Group (please circle)**  
Any individual or group that shares and supports the aims and objectives of the CSN (no voting rights at AGM)  
Associate members are members who are not a user/survivor of mental health/psychiatric services and have no experience of mental distress, but share the values and goals of the CSN.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

The CSN is a charity and a company limited by guarantee. If the organisation dissolves, current members and those who have been members in the last 12 months agree to pay up to one pound towards the cost of the dissolution and liabilities incurred.

**We are committed to an equal opportunities philosophy and to opposing all forms of discrimination.**