

# Voluntary Support Scheme

Registered Charity Number: 1097279

Newsletter no. 21  
Autumn 2009

Is sleep an issue for you? See the back page...

## **Moving, belonging and being with others**

I've just discovered how important people are. I have been living a somewhat solitary life in temporary accommodation for the past 8 months. Sometimes days would go by without me talking to another person. I think I was rather depressed because I couldn't get it together to invite anybody I knew in for coffee. The person I used to be got replaced with somebody who couldn't hold a conversation, couldn't sit quietly without falling asleep and couldn't remember anything. I worried about things I couldn't fix. I had nobody else to measure myself by and thought I was either going mad or demented.

I have now (chaotically) moved house with the help of my family. For the first two weeks it looked like a warehouse full of anonymous boxes that had come from 3 different houses and been in store for months. Unpacking was a bit like looking at old photographs. Had I really bought those hideous curtains?

As I have mobility problems I couldn't go upstairs very often so I had to go across the yard for the lavatory, which was not pleasant on dark wet nights. The lift from my old house went temperamental and relays of electricians came out from Exeter, scratched their heads, drank a lot of tea and went back to Exeter again. Now that they have entirely rewired the lift and it works I feel a new woman. My personal alarm system has been set up by Erica from Age Concern, who has the perseverance of Miss Marple in tracing the reasons why it didn't work. We were all beginning to feel there was a mysterious force field, but "quiet calm deliberation untangles every knot" as Churchill said and I can now summon help if I fall over getting out of the car. The plumber is still awol, so if I can't put up with strip washing – or more importantly my friends and family find me less than fragrant- I shall have to go to Bristol and use my eldest daughter's shower until we can kidnap the plumber and take away his car keys.

More importantly, being with other people for long periods has turned me (almost) back into being a person myself. Life seems much more fun and I have a future to look forward to.

Thank you for the good wishes, the cards and the offers of help. I look forward to welcoming my friends here in the not too distant future.

Sue Larg  
VSS Chair

Contact us at:

Beck House, Beck's Square, Tiverton, EX16 6PJ

Telephone: 01884 258507

Email: [voluntary.supportscheme@virgin.net](mailto:voluntary.supportscheme@virgin.net)

Website: [www.voluntarysupportscheme.org.uk](http://www.voluntarysupportscheme.org.uk)

## Do you find Christmas difficult? Would you like the opportunity to do something different?

On Christmas Day from 11am – 3pm there's a chance for you to meet at St George's Extension, Tiverton, for coffee and a chat and/or an informal bangers (meat or vegetarian) and mash lunch.

All ages welcome.



There will be no mince pies, carols or decorations, just the chance for some company on what can be a tough day for some people for a whole variety of reasons.

It can also be difficult going along to somewhere new, when you're not sure that you know anyone. If you would like to know more pop into St George's with a friend, between 10.30am and noon on Wednesday 2nd December, for a coffee and to find out what it is all about.

We'd love to have your company, so contact one of us or come along for coffee on the 2nd. **We look forward to meeting you.**

If you have any questions don't hesitate to call Dawn Hampshire on 01884 258507 or Sue Snell on 01884 255734 who will be happy to talk



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## LIVING WITH MIND-CHANGING DRUGS

I am now middle-aged and most of my life I have had psychotic problems. When I was younger I had jobs and I could cope reasonably well particularly if I could work by myself at my own pace. I also had my mother to look after but I never had many friends. Now I live in a rented flat and I'm alone most of the time.

Sometimes my voices are really loud and critical and I have hallucinations as well. They make me feel physically sick at times and I have to send for the Crisis Team. In the background there are other voices which are like a radio commentary or a needle stuck in the groove of a record.

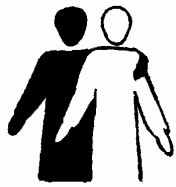
## LIVING WITH MIND-CHANGING DRUGS cont'd

I've tried a lot of drugs over the last 20 years to relieve the symptoms. At present I'm on an anti-psychotic drug called Amisulphride which is designed to help in dealing with disturbed thoughts, feelings and behaviour. These drugs do give some relief as the loud voices are about 80% less but the background voices are still there. The side effects are severe. It says on the prescription that 1 in 10 people may have difficulty in sleeping, feel drowsy or put on weight. I seem to be one of the unlucky ones. In addition my emotions are dulled and I am forgetful. It is difficult to find motivation for anything and I often feel worn out. I understand how people on such drugs want to get rid of them but I feel the alternative is worse.

Religion is one of the things I have been interested in for many years. I used to think that my voices were from God but I don't believe this any more. Still I get stuck on religious ideas. Sometimes, my voices say I'm going to hell, it isn't nice.

My nurse wants me to get out more but some days I don't feel I can. I have found that being with people does help as I am not alone with my thoughts. Going to group things does help a bit but sometimes I find the chatter difficult and I withdraw. Art therapy is good. I am grateful for the company of my VSS volunteer, who I have known for over a year. He is interested in all kinds of things and I can talk to him about discussion programmes on the radio and about books. Sometimes we go for coffee. He makes me feel normal.

Talking about how I feel is something I've tried to do only recently. I have been to a Group in Exeter for people with my type of symptoms but it is an effort to get there. Before I've always thought that other people couldn't understand. Perhaps talking about how I feel may help me to see what is happening. The psychiatrist at the hospital referred me to a psychologist who is offering one-to-one therapy. I have not done this before so I'll see if it helps.



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# SLEEP AND WELL-BEING FORUM

10.30 – 2.30

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November

St George's Church Extension, Tiverton

WHAT HAPPENS DURING SLEEP  
WHY SLEEP PROBLEMS HAPPEN  
PRACTICAL TIPS FOR IMPROVING SLEEP

Anya Whitmarsh, Psychological Treatment Services, Tiverton Hospital

Huw Williams, School of Psychology, University of Exeter

Free including lunch (a £10 charge for people who do not attend having booked)

Booking essential:

Write to VSS, Beck House, Beck's Square, Tiverton, EX16 6PJ.

Email: [voluntary.supportscheme@virgin.net](mailto:voluntary.supportscheme@virgin.net)

or ring 01884 258507 by 17<sup>th</sup> Nov.

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