



# PATIENTS COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

January 2017

NEWS, VIEWS AND COMMENT FROM THE ROYAL EDINBURGH HOSPITAL

## Patients Council Annual General Meeting

28 people enjoyed a thoroughly entertaining and informative session with Chris Young, the driving force behind Walk a Mile in My Shoes, who told us about his incredibly positive experiences walking round the UK with no money, relying on the hospitality of the people he meets and telling his story to raise awareness of mental health stigma. Since 2011, he has walked in stages round Scotland and North West England and has now reached North Wales. To reach more people, Chris contacted See Me and "Walk a Mile" was born, getting people together to share social space and get to know each other and see each other as people – service users, professionals, carers, members of the public. 16 events have been held so far, involving over 1000 people, including one at the Fete at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital in August. Chris still has mental health issues but he loves what he does and hopes it shows how it's possible to work with people with mental health conditions. Walk a Mile is now a charity, reaching out to England and Wales as well as Scotland.

We elected six service user members of our new management committee – Albert Nicolson, Martin McAlpine, Stephen Muirhead, Stephen Polockus, Alison Robertson and Patricia Whalley.

Our Annual Report for 2016 was available at the meeting. We learned that the Patients Council met the three priorities set by the management committee in 2016 – improved social media presence, human rights training and debates, and getting funding (from Linda Irvine – many thanks Linda!) to enable us to employ Katherine McMahon, our new Stories of Changing Lives III development worker, who will be joining us in early January. We are all looking forward to working with Katherine who has a wealth of relevant experience and is brimful of ideas and energy – welcome, Katherine!

## Stories of Changing Lives Three

Hello from your new staff member! My name is Katherine McMahon, and I'm the new Development Worker at the Patients Council. I'm a performance poet and an arts facilitator - I've been writing for many years, and I've performed my work across the UK. I've also run a range of different projects and events, from making books to putting on shows to creating literary scavenger hunts. I love to work collaboratively to get creative, get people's voices heard and make positive changes.

This is why I'm so excited to be working with the Patients Council on Stories of Changing Lives Three! It's an exciting project collecting together your stories of recovery - your journey through the hospital and beyond, and how your life has changed along the way. The end result will be a book - you might have seen volumes one and two around. This one will be even bigger!

The project will have lots of different opportunities for getting involved - from really informal storytelling sessions, to chatting one to one with me, to creative writing workshops and open mics. The aim is to support you to tell your story your way - we'll provide lots of inspiration and any help you need to get it down on paper. What would you like to tell the world about recovery and mental health?

I'll be working in the Patients Council offices three days a week, and I'll be around on the wards as well. Please come and chat to me if you're interested! We want to hear from people of all ages, backgrounds and experiences. Watch this space for more details of what's coming up...

I'm looking forward to meeting you and I can't wait to get started!

We were so sorry to hear of the deaths in December of two of our long-standing and greatly valued volunteers, Ronnie Jack and Alison Prosser. They will be sorely missed. Our thoughts and sympathy are with their families and friends at this very difficult time.

## **Group Advocacy**

As the colder weather started to come in, we began to hear more and more complaints from patients across the hospital campus about the NHS's new "Sleep-Knit" blankets. This "bedding system" involves thermal blankets which have replaced duvets; patients told us they don't feel as comfortable or as warm as the duvets most use at home. One woman said she needed seven of the blankets before she felt any warmth, male patients said they were sleeping in their day clothes to compensate. We raised this issue at the Staff Patient Dialogue meeting in December. The new Chief Nurse told us that Sleep-Knit bedding use is now a national requirement across NHS Scotland; they are supposedly much easier and cheaper to launder. Patients often complain they don't give much of a sense of warmth, but the only solution at the moment is to request additional blankets. Staff say there are plenty of spare blankets available at the moment and agreed that patients shouldn't be feeling cold in NHS hospitals. Some patients are even bringing in their own duvets, but not everyone is able to do this.

Over autumn and winter we became increasingly aware of patients experiencing delays in discharge. People feeling ready to return home and considered medically fit to move on, were finding practical obstacles in the way preventing them from doing so. Problems with accommodation and housing, with putting care packages in place, with getting different agencies to agree to provide funding for placements were given as typical reasons by patients. These are complex problems with various causes and the Patients Council is advocating on behalf of patients at several different strategic and local planning groups, which all recognise that there is a problem here and are trying to improve what they call the "patient flow" between hospital and community. We're hoping that the new integrated ways of working which are becoming operational shortly in the four localities of Edinburgh (North West, East, South West and South Central) will find new ways to address this crucial transition to and from hospital and the community.

2017 will see major changes for patients at the hospital, starting in Spring as many wards will move over to the new REH building and others will move from their current location to fill the spaces vacated. Over the rest of the year, all sorts of building and renovation work will begin elsewhere on the campus site. The Patients Council will keep a watching brief over all this and the inevitable teething problems, but genuinely hope many patients will see some significant improvements that make any temporary hiccups worthwhile.

**Have a look at our website**

**[www.rehpatientscouncil.org.uk](http://www.rehpatientscouncil.org.uk)**

**Lots of information about the Patients Council and links to other interesting items**

**[www.facebook.com/rehpatientscouncil/](http://www.facebook.com/rehpatientscouncil/)**

**[twitter.com/rehpatients](https://twitter.com/rehpatients)**

**The Royal Edinburgh Hospital  
Patients' Council**

The Patients Council is an independent collective advocacy project for people who use or have used the services of the hospital. We provide a forum for common issues about mental health treatment and care and represent patients' interests in order to improve services. We hold general meetings every two months. To get involved with mental health issues from the service-user's viewpoint, contact our staff.

**Telephone:** 0131 537 6462

**Email:** [info@rehpatientscouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@rehpatientscouncil.org.uk)

**Write:** The Patients' Council, Royal Edinburgh Hospital, Morningside Terrace, EH10 5HF

**Our Management Committee**

Albert Nicolson, Martin McAlpine,  
Stephen Muirhead,  
Stephen Polockus, Alison Robertson,  
Patricia Whalley

*Co-opted member:*  
Cathy Robertson

**PATIENTS COUNCIL  
MEETINGS**

**201**

**2 – 3.30pm**

**30 January**

**27 March**

**29 May**

**24 July**

**25 September**

**27 November:**

**Annual General  
Meeting**

**1.30 – 3pm**

**followed by buffet**

**History of the Patients Council**

A few of our members have written a history of the Royal Edinburgh Hospital Patients Council highlighting some of our activities since 2000. Please contact us for a copy.

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The Royal Edinburgh Hospital Patients Council is a registered charity  
Scottish Charity No SC021800  
Our offices are between Outpatients and Mental Health Tribunal in the ADC  
[www.rehpatientscouncil.org.uk](http://www.rehpatientscouncil.org.uk)

**All patients, former patients, staff and visitors are warmly invited to attend**

# **PATIENTS COUNCIL MEETING**

**from 2.00-3.30pm on**

**Monday 30 January 2017  
in The Hive**

**Daniel Johnson  
our local MSP**

**will be speaking about topics related to mental health in Scotland, the developments on the REH site, and the views of the local community**