

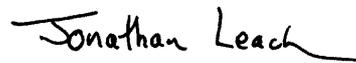
## Our newsletter includes:

- 1 The future of OSMHN
- 1 Students with mental health problems & disability discrimination legislation
- 4 Supporting students with mental health problems – what can staff do?
- 5 Research with users of day services in Oxfordshire
- 5 Mental health developments within the local institutions
- 6 The local voluntary sector
- 8 OSMHN's online guide to student mental health

## Welcome!

Welcome to our latest newsletter. It has been very gratifying to see how much is going on locally and we hope that you will find this issue informative. We are now mailing out to over 650 individuals which demonstrates the interest in student mental health locally. We have articles on local voluntary sector organisations, as well as an account of some research commissioned by OSMHN on the experiences and aspirations of mental health day centre users in relation to education. It feels important to cover the recent SENDA Disability Discrimination in this issue, as it has important implications for student with mental health problems and those who work with them.

As we approach the final six months of our three year project we are in urgent need of your feedback. Any decisions about the future direction of the Network need to be informed by your views and experiences. We look forward to hearing from you.



Jonathan Leach  
Project Manager/Researcher

## The future of OSMHN

Since June 2000, the Oxford Student Mental Health Network has received funding for its work from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), this funding will end in March 2003. However, additional funds will enable us to continue with paid staff until the end of June 2003. One to the key aims of the OSMHN project has been to leave a sustainable Network in place at the end of the three years of funded work.

The OSMHN Steering Group has agreed in principle to

- ❖ continue to meet, share information and common concerns between educational and healthcare institutions
- ❖ take responsibility for ensuring OSMHN's web site is updated and maintained after the funding ends.

It is not clear at this stage what else would be possible after June 2003, but it would be useful to hear from you if there are aspects of the Network which you (and your organisation) value and would like to see continued. Enclosed with this Newsletter is a feedback form and a list of some of our activities. We would also welcome any ideas for new activities relevant to promoting student mental health, and it would be useful to know if you and / or your organisation would consider supporting OSMHN in the future. This support could include any of the following:

- ❖ Financial
- ❖ Staff time & expertise
- ❖ Hosting events
- ❖ Facilitating workshops / meetings

Please let us have your thoughts as soon as possible so that we can continue to plan for the future of the Network.

## Students with mental health problems & disability discrimination legislation

At the start of this academic year the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act (SENDA) extended the terms of the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act to education providers. Up to this point there were enforceable rights for disabled people in workplaces, shops, theatres and cafes but not in schools, colleges or universities.

Does this legislation have implications for students with mental health problems? For many it will. Any clinically recognised mental condition is classed as a disability if it has an effect on person's *'ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. That effect must be:*

- ❖ *substantial (that is, more than minor or trivial), and*
- ❖ *adverse, and*
- ❖ *long-term (that is, has lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months or for the rest of the life of the person affected)'*

This means that it is not only those students who have experienced illnesses such as schizophrenia or bi-polar disorder who are covered. Students with severe anxiety conditions, depression or obsessive compulsive behaviours, and a range of other conditions could also be classed as 'disabled'.

The legislation makes it unlawful to discriminate against a disabled person:

- ❖ *'in admissions or enrolments of students*
- ❖ *in the terms on which admissions or enrolment offers are made*
- ❖ *by refusing or deliberately omitting to accept an application*

continued overleaf

## Students and disability discrimination legislation

❖ *in the provision of services provided wholly or mainly for students or those enrolled on courses. This includes provision such as courses of education, training, recreation, leisure and catering facilities or accommodation.*

*Responsible bodies of institutions have an additional duty not to discriminate against disabled students by excluding them temporarily or permanently from the institution on the grounds of their disability.'*

The Disability Rights Commission gives some examples in their Post 16 Code of Practice:

### Example 3.10A

A college learns that a student admitted himself to hospital during the holidays because of an ongoing mental health difficulty. The college excludes the student from the institution because staff fear he may be dangerous. The college has no evidence that the student will be dangerous; staff have simply made an assumption. This is likely to be unlawful.

### Example 4.17A

A student has a mental health problem and, because of the medication she is on, finds it difficult to get to her first morning class. After several weeks during which she has missed all her morning classes, and without approaching the student to find out why she has not turned up, the college decides to remove her from the course. The institution has not taken reasonable action to find out whether the student's failure to attend is due to a disability, and so is likely to be acting unlawfully.

### Example 4.17B

In the same situation the tutor approaches the student and asks her in private if there is any reason preventing her from coming in to her first class. The student denies that there is any particular reason for her non-attendance. The college decides to remove her from the course. This is likely to be lawful.

### Example 5.8D

A student with depression is on a Hair and Beauty training course run by a further education college. She spends part of the week in a hairdressing salon. Work placements are usually arranged on the basis of a full working day. However, because of the effects of her medication she is unable to attend in the mornings. A likely reasonable adjustment would be for the college to arrange for this student's placement to take place in the afternoons only.

### Example 5.8J

A student with mental health problems has to attend a month's work experience placement as part of his college course. The usual college procedure is for students to go independently to their placement but this student is very anxious about how he will cope. A likely reasonable adjustment would be for his tutor to arrange to accompany him on the first day and then to telephone him at regular intervals.

These are given as examples only, and it is likely that the interpretation of the Act will occur through court cases over the next few years. This was the case when the employment legislation was introduced in the mid 1990's. Sadly it was only after a few high profile legal settlements that many employers began to become aware of their

responsibilities. Educational bodies are charged with an anticipatory duty towards disabled students, they cannot wait to react to what comes at them.

*Responsible bodies should not wait until a disabled person applies to a course or tries to use a Service before thinking about what reasonable adjustments they could make. Instead they should continually be anticipating the requirements of disabled people or students and the adjustments they could be making for them, such as regular staff development and reviews of practice. Failure to anticipate the need for an adjustment may mean it is too late to comply with the duty to make the adjustment when it is required. Lack of notice would not in itself provide a defence to a claim that an adjustment should have been made.*

(DRC Code of Practice 2002)

So staff in educational institutions need to be thinking about the ways in which they can meet the needs of students with mental health problems. Guidance offered to employers by the Employers' Forum on Disability (EFD) enables us to draw on the experience gained in the field of employment, to inform good practice in education:

### Guidance based on the EFD's advice

1. The most important adjustment may be to deal with attitudes and assumptions. Staff training on equal opportunities and mental health awareness can help. Staff must be made aware of the institution's policies on disability and equal opportunities.
2. The best way to ensure compliance with the legislation is to adopt best practice rather than to adopt a strategy of doing the minimum required. The ambiguities in the interpretation of the legislation make it inadvisable to "sail too close to the wind".
3. A student with a mental health problem may choose not to disclose it before starting the course. However, if there is a culture in which willingness to make reasonable adjustments is known, students are more likely to disclose and discuss their needs.
4. Confidentiality must be ensured, but if the student has told a responsible person in the organisation about their disability, the organisation is deemed to know that they are disabled and is expected to make reasonable adjustments.
5. If an adjustment has to be made, e.g. time off from studying or special exam arrangements, tutors or fellow students do not need to be told the precise medical reasons behind that decision.
6. When drawing up entry requirements for courses or modules, distinguish between the essential and the desirable requirements. This may enable some flexibility in admitting students whose school education has been interrupted by mental health problems. Concentrate on what is to be achieved rather than on how it is to be achieved. Some people with mental health problems may approach things differently to other students. Ensure that the mental or emotional requirements of the course have been identified, but avoid general statements like 'must be able to tolerate stress'. Instead focus on what is required e.g. 'ability to write essays', 'capacity to conduct research' etc.

7. During recruitment and selection, bear in mind that an applicant with a mental health problem may not have filled in an application form for some time, so they may welcome guidelines or assistance. It will also help them to know what to expect if they are required to attend for an interview. They may have poor interpersonal skills. They may wish to be accompanied by a friend or advisor.
8. If an applicant discloses a current or previous mental health problem, focus on their ability to do the course and give them opportunities to demonstrate their abilities. If there is an interview, it can be helpful to consider their support needs whilst studying at a second stage, after having discussed the suitability of the course for them.
9. During induction and the early stages of the course, the student may need a particularly clear and thorough explanation of what they are required to do. If their attendance, performance or behaviour gives rise to concern, the first step should be to find out the reasons. If it is linked to their disability, can any adjustments be made?
10. Studying arrangements may need to be considered. The person themselves is often the best expert on what their needs are. See opposite for examples.
11. For students who find face to face communication with their tutors and others difficult, e-mail may be a solution.
12. There may be a need for adjustments to examination arrangements, the Student Mental Health Manual provides suggestions [www.studentmentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.studentmentalhealth.org.uk)
13. If the student is housed in university / college accommodation it would be good practice to identify the type of setting that would be best suited to their needs. The Student Mental Health Manual has some advice on accommodation.

## Examples of changes that can be made to studying arrangements

- ❖ The student may have problems with anxiety and concentration with crowded rooms and so benefit from having a note-taker to attend lectures with them. Similarly they may find it easier to have their own computing facilities rather than work in a pooled room. If the student needs this level of support they should be able to get financial assistance towards the costs under the Disabled Students' Allowance. Whilst the provision of separate facilities may be helpful, there is a danger that it will increase the person's isolation, so they need to weigh up the situation carefully.
- ❖ The side effects of medication can cause the person to be tired in the mornings, have difficulty in waking up on time, or be exhausted by the afternoon. So the student may need to consider: part-time study, the use of a note-taker, the selection of modules which takes into account their time-tabling needs.
- ❖ If the course requires students to go on field-trips the student's needs have to be considered. This situation is covered by: *Birnie, J & Grant, A (2001) 'Providing Learning Support for Students with Mental Health Difficulties Undertaking Fieldwork and Related Activities' (Cheltenham: Geography Discipline Network):* <http://www.chelt.ac.uk/gdn/disabil/mental/index.htm>
- ❖ The student may need time off to attend medical appointments, counselling sessions or meetings with a supporter. The more notice they can have of their academic time-table, the better they will be able to participate in both academic and supportive activities. The student should be made aware of any support services available to them within the institution.

The implications of the SENDA legislation do not require staff to become quasi-medical experts on mental health conditions, but they do make it necessary for staff to address the disabling barriers faced by student with mental health problems. Further information on all aspects of student mental health can be found on OSMHN's website.

### References

Disability Rights Commission 2002 *Disability Discrimination Act 1995 Part 4 Code of Practice for providers of Post 16 education and related services* London: Disability Rights Commission

Employers' Forum on Disability 1998 *A Practical Guide to Employment Adjustments for People with Mental Health Problems*. London EDF

## Disability legislation resources

<b>Disability.gov.uk</b> <a href="http://www.disability.gov.uk/">http://www.disability.gov.uk/</a>	Information about the Disability Discrimination Act
<b>Disability Rights Commission</b> <a href="http://www.drc-gb.org/drc/default.asp">http://www.drc-gb.org/drc/default.asp</a>	Information about disability legislation and rights.
<b>Rethink</b> <a href="http://www.nsf.org.uk/information/legal/index.html">http://www.nsf.org.uk/information/legal/index.html</a>	Information about mental health legislation and rights
<b>Skill</b> <a href="http://www.skill.org.uk">http://www.skill.org.uk</a>	Information about the DDA and SENDA



## Mental health resources What's new on the web

### Student moneynet

<http://www.studentmoney.net>

Student Moneynet has been developed to provide advice on financing further education studies. It contains information on all aspects of funding a student life including details on Government loans and sponsorships.

### Student counselling

<http://www.studentcounselling.org/faq-1.html>

The student counselling web page provides answers to some frequently asked questions about counselling and provides information on what you can expect from your university or college counselling service.

### Students in mind

<http://www.studentsinmind.org.uk>

Students in Mind is a new confidential service for students and those with experience of mental distress. The service will be launched in early 2003.

# Oxford Student Mental Health Network Workshop

Last term, OSMHN ran two workshops for staff from local HE and FE institutions. Both were led by Jonathan Leach, OSMHN's Project Manager/Researcher. A summary of the first workshop can be found below.

## Supporting students with mental health problems – what can staff do?

The workshop focused on the following four issues:

- ❖ How do I know if a student has a mental health problem?
- ❖ How do I relate to the student?
- ❖ Who else could be involved in supporting the student?
- ❖ How do I look after myself?

### *How do I know if a student has a mental health problem?*

The workshop highlighted that the ability to recognise when a student has a mental health problem is a major issue of concern for HE/FE staff. Due to the stigma attached to 'mental health', students do not readily disclose their condition. As a result, staff may need to draw on other methods to determine when one of their students is in need of support.

Jonathan pointed out that before being able to recognise when a student has a mental health problem, there is a need to be clear about what is meant by 'a mental health problem'. Often, individuals are under the mistaken impression that the term only refers to severe mental illness e.g. psychosis/schizophrenia. In reality, mental health problems can incorporate a whole range of conditions including eating disorders, drug/alcohol abuse, phobias, depression and anxiety.

Staff do not necessarily need an extensive knowledge of all the mental health conditions and their symptoms but a general knowledge and awareness of the possible warning signs can be helpful. Be alert to the fact that a student may approach you with a practical issue e.g. a study problem but this may be masking an underlying mental health problem.

Ideally, institutions should enable students to disclose their mental health condition. Some suggestions for encouraging disclosure include:

- ❖ Be aware of your own reactions to mental health and try to normalise the problem. Negative perceptions may discourage a student from disclosing.
- ❖ Make students aware that you are available to talk to if the student has a problem.
- ❖ Another suggestion raised was to make a habit of asking students if there is anything else on their mind which they'd like to discuss following tutorials.

Once a student has disclosed, staff should not be too focused on the medical diagnosis. Instead, concern should be around the effect of a student's mental health problem on their ability to function in the academic environment and the support they require to be enabled to continue with their studies.

### *How do I relate to the student?*

How staff relate to students with mental health problems will partly depend on the nature of their own positions within the institution, for example whether their role includes pastoral support and how much day-to-day contact they have with the student body.

Many delegates at the workshop indicated that a common problem faced by staff is when the boundaries between the student-staff relationship become blurred. Jonathan stressed that this should be avoided for a number of reasons, e.g. because staff can find themselves providing support to students without having the relevant knowledge or experience to do so and additionally, because providing such support can take up a disproportionate amount of staff time if boundaries have not been established.

The workshop identified some guidelines for staff to consider, including:

- ❖ Be clear about what is expected of you within your role in terms of pastoral support and your influences for negotiating support / allowances for the student.
- ❖ Identify your own personal limitations, both in terms of ability to support the student and time commitments. Communicate these limitations to the student.
- ❖ Be aware of your procedural obligations to the institution when approached by a student e.g. what are the referral routes? What are the procedures regarding confidentiality?
- ❖ Be aware of other sources of support to which you can refer the student if you are unable to provide direct support yourself.

### *Who else could be involved in supporting the student?*

The lack of information and knowledge about the mental health services and support available both within and outside the institutions has been highlighted consistently throughout OSMHN's research interviews and workshops.

The workshop indicated that when faced with a student in crisis, often, the first service staff will think of is the university/college counselling service. In reality, the counselling service is not equipped to deal with the severe end of mental illness. The Service can deal with everyday life issues and varying degrees of distress, but is not set up to provide a route into psychiatric services. If you suspect that a student has a severe mental health problem, it is best to contact the GP in the first instance.

OSMHN's website includes details of institutional and local support services for students with mental health needs.

### *How do I look after myself?*

The majority of the delegates expressed a strong need for support for the supporters. The following suggestions were given at the workshop:

- ❖ Know your professional and personal limits and set boundaries.
- ❖ Be aware of other support services to which you can refer the student if you are unable to help.
- ❖ Talk to colleagues and support each other. Counselling service staff can be phoned for advice.
- ❖ Avoid danger. Although extremely unlikely, be aware of good practice techniques/training opportunities if you feel there is a threat to your safety.

**A copy of the workshop notes is available from OSMHN**

## Research with users of local day services in Oxfordshire

Having completed my undergraduate degree in Sociology and Anthropology at Oxford Brookes University in June, I was happy to have the chance to utilise the research skills I had gained by undertaking some research for Oxford Student Mental Health Network.

The research title was 'Access to, and provision of, education for people within Oxford, who have or are experiencing mental health problems.'

Despite hoping to cover Oxfordshire, due to limited time and resources I concentrated on Oxford City. The most effective way to gather participants for the research was to approach different day centres in Oxford, explaining the research and gauging the interest, from the eight that were initially approached six were willing to participate.

The data was gathered by interviewing participants either individually or in groups, depending on the recommendation of the day centre's manager. Each day centre was visited between two and four times, depending on the interview format. The term 'learning opportunities' was often used as opposed to education, during the interviews, due to negative connotations some individuals expressed towards the latter (when writing up the results education is the preferred term and is used in the broadest possible way.) The inclusion of vocational courses within education was important to emphasise, reducing the chance of education being solely interpreted in terms of academia.

The results from the research are currently being written up and show a relatively clear and concise picture of participants' aspirations and desires, within education and their lives in general. A large majority of the individuals showed some interest in education. However, many felt their internal barriers such as low self-esteem and medication and perceived external barriers such as money issues and stigma, dictated what they could and could not achieve. It was not that the desire wasn't there but the barriers were too daunting to challenge alone and some were unsure of how to challenge them.

### Mental health developments in Oxfordshire's institutions

#### Oxford Brookes University

Oxford Brookes University will be holding a Mental Health Awareness Week for their staff and students from 27 – 31 January 2003. A full programme of activities is being organised for everyone with an interest in student well being and there will be an opportunity to find out about support services available. Information about the week can be found on OSMHN's web site at <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/osmhn>.

#### University of Oxford

Oxford University has written a mental health policy. The full policy can be found online at <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/shw/mhpol.shtml>.

Oxford University's counselling service is now online at <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/shw/counsर्व.shtml>.

Some participants involved had already studied, others are currently in education, and the remaining group were those who had considered education, to a greater or lesser degree. The response with regard to fears and anxieties were all relatively similar, suggestions were made on how to make entering and surviving education seem less daunting, below are some examples:

Anxieties	Suggestions
Gaining information on education	Being given a talk from a college representative explaining the different course and services available.
Entry into college	Taking someone who knows you well along to the open day.
Obtaining and maintaining support while studying	Counsellors, mentors, buddies
College is too daunting	In-day centre education, helping individuals prepare and cope in a safe environment.

The whole process of this piece of research has been thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding for me, mental health is an area that I am extremely passionate about. The participants in the research were superb and I felt, for some at least, talking about choices and chances available in education enabled them to appreciate the different possibilities available to them.

The results will be sent out at the beginning of 2003, which is something for everyone to look forward to. They will also be published on OSMHN's web site.

Wishing you all a 'Very Happy Christmas' and 'A Happy New Year!'

Sophie Pitts

### Mental health in the newspapers

3 Dec 02 *The Guardian* [Support sites](#) Students are increasingly suffering mental-health problems.

10 Sep 02 *The Guardian* [Fight for Survival](#). Could student suicides be prevented with better targeting of support services?

24 Aug 02 *The Guardian* [Party on, safely](#). You can enjoy your freedom at university but you need to look after yourself too.

15 Aug 02 *The Independent* [HELP: All right?](#) Whatever your problems, from fresher flu to financial crisis, make sure you talk about it - sooner rather than later.

Links to these online articles and more can be found within the latest news section of OSMHN's web site.

For further articles on all aspects of mental health see the Guardian's Mental Health Section at: <http://society.guardian.co.uk/mentalhealth>

## The voluntary sector in Oxfordshire

---

There are a wide range of local organisations providing support and advice on mental health issues to students and others in Oxfordshire. Read about the aims and activities of four local organisations: Oxfordshire Mental Health Matters, Opportunities, The Refugee Resource and the Learning Centre.

### Oxfordshire Mental Health Matters

Oxfordshire Mental Health Matters is an organisation committed to providing comprehensive information and services on a variety of mental health issues to all members of the public, as well as to service users, mental health professionals and carers. We aim to ensure that our services are accessible to all, whatever their social or cultural background and we support other organisations, groups and individuals working towards similar aims.

As well as an Information Service, we provide other services which aim to empower individuals to deal with issues arising from their mental health, or to deal with those experiencing mental distress. Allies Advocacy is a service which supports in-patients on psychiatric wards in Oxfordshire and we are currently running a pilot scheme for Independent Complaints Advocacy, that extends this service out into the community. Our Training Service runs various low-cost (or free) training workshops on a variety of mental health issues, as well as our own training programme for people wishing to volunteer in our Information and Advocacy services.

Our Information Service is run by two Information Co-ordinators, both with a special remit for working with particular sections of the community for whom mental health services are less accessible for a variety of reasons. Their aim is to identify the obstacles that prevent awareness of and access to mental health services and work to overcome them. One Information Co-ordinator has a special responsibility for rural communities and the other is responsible for Black and Minority Ethnic Issues. Both Co-ordinators host workshops and training programmes to educate others working within these particular communities, as well as attend various conferences to learn more about the problems affecting access to services.

Research has shown that black and minority ethnic communities lack confidence in mental health services and feel that they are neither welcoming nor culturally sensitive to their particular needs. To overcome this, we are currently running a Bilingual Information Workers Scheme – an innovative project, unique in Oxfordshire, that aims to provide information to the black and minority ethnic communities in languages other than English. Trained volunteers spend half their time based at external organisations that specifically cater for ethnic minority communities and the other half of the time at OMHM. The aim is to provide our services in a culturally sensitive manner so as to restore the confidence of these communities in mental health services and to forge links within these communities.

One of our Bilingual Information Workers is currently working with asylum seekers at Asylum Welcome, a charity set up to provide support for asylum seekers in the Oxford Area. This worker provides support and information in Albanian and is doing invaluable work by making our services more accessible to those who are particularly vulnerable and less aware of what help is available to them. We are hoping to extend this service, by placing workers who speak other languages in similar host bases to consolidate our links with other ethnic groups.

We are always interested in recruiting and training new volunteers, whatever their background, and anyone who is interested in training as a volunteer in any of the areas of service we provide should contact OMHM for details. We aim to provide a service that is as diverse as the community it serves and welcome anyone who wishes to help us to achieve this aim.

---

### The Opportunities Project

Are you or do you know a student who is:

- ❖ Thinking of learning a new skill?
- ❖ Looking into training?
- ❖ Thinking of doing some voluntary work?
- ❖ Interested in becoming more involved in the community?
- ❖ Keen to get into employment but feel you require additional support?
- ❖ Perhaps you would just like more information about the possibilities?

Whatever your past experiences of work, training and education, and whatever your interests, Opportunities would like to work with you.

Opportunities is co-financed by the European Social Fund to assist people with mental health problems to overcome barriers regarding learning, training employment and involvement in activities of their choice.

Four Opportunities project workers are based in Mind centres throughout the country and aim to provide a relaxed and informal atmosphere for you to discuss and work towards your aspirations, no matter how large or small.

What we can offer:

- ❖ One-to-one support to assist you to take the steps forward that you choose, when you choose them.
- ❖ Information and advice to help you get the training and employment you require.
- ❖ Contacts to relevant projects and organisations
- ❖ Opportunities to (re)learn skills and get qualifications
- ❖ Practical advice and support in overcoming barriers
- ❖ Support in pursuing your interests

Contact details for these organisations can be found opposite

### Refugee Resource

*Refugee Resource is a voluntary organisation set up to meet the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in Oxfordshire.*

A consultation research conducted in the summer of 2000 to investigate the needs of refugees and asylum seekers and to highlight the gaps in service provision, identified that refugees and asylum seekers needed help towards building a new future, in the form of support into employment and training and mental health support.

From this consultation, two projects were developed:

- ❖ Access First - an Employment and Training Project which provides a work preparation course (including ESOL), arranges work placements enabling refugees and asylum seekers to obtain relevant UK experience and references, and general employment and training consultancy.
- ❖ Woodpath - a project for young refugees and asylum seekers (aged 12-25). The project works in close partnership with other voluntary and statutory agencies within the county. It provides training for professionals (e.g. teachers, mental health practitioners) to raise awareness around refugee mental health issues and supports their work through consultancy support and joint working. It also offers a direct service to young refugees and asylum seekers either on an individual basis or group support. Young people can access the service through Social Services, their GP, schools or colleges and/or by coming to the office directly themselves.

Some refugees and asylum seekers access our service when they have been in the country for some time, when they have put down some roots and learned the language or started college or work and realised there is a need to explore some of the feelings of sadness and loss they may have about their country and experience. For others, we can be a place to explore the difficulties and frustrations of being here, the isolation that they may be experiencing and to support them in managing the difficulties of transition. Pursuing education may become difficult for some, due to lack of concentration, isolation, change of culture and society, and difficult past experiences.

Woodpath also offers help through the opportunity to be in a group to explore cultural identity issues, share experiences with other young refugees and to support each other.

Woodpath is developing further 'New Roots', an existing allotment project that provides refugees and asylum seekers with a piece of land to grow flowers or vegetables. A member of staff alongside them regularly can help them work through some of their feelings of the past and integrate them into the present.

For further information contact Liben Gebremikael or Susie Healey at the address opposite.

### The Learning Centre

The Learning Centre aims to make education, training, employment and involvement in the community more accessible to people who may be experiencing mental health difficulties.

We run courses, and provide an information, advice and guidance service for people wishing to explore education, community or employment opportunities.

This term, courses have included creative writing, a return to learning course, computer training, Maths and English workshop, a singing workshop and exploring musical instruments. All courses are free.

We are planning to develop a study support group, which will aim to provide support to people who are already studying.

For further information contact please contact Martin Ousley or Alan Foulkes at the address below.

#### Contact information

##### Oxfordshire Mental Health Matters

19 Paradise Street                      Tel: 01865 728981  
Oxford  
OX1 1LD

##### Opportunities

(Towards Involvement, Learning and Employment)

46 Cowley Road                      Tel: 01865 247207  
Oxford  
OX4 1HZ  
E-mail: [opportunitiestowards@hotmail.com](mailto:opportunitiestowards@hotmail.com)

##### Refugee Resource

Hooper House                      Tel: 0845 4580055  
3 Collins Street  
Oxford  
OX4 1XS  
E-mail: [info@refugeeresource.org](mailto:info@refugeeresource.org)

##### The Learning Centre

Manzil Way                      Tel: 01865 455825  
Cowley Road  
Oxford  
OX4 1YH

*Details of these organisations and more can be found on OSMHN's web site at <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/osmhn>*

**If you are a local organisation providing support to students with mental health problems and would like to be included on our web site or profiled in our next newsletter please contact us at [osmhn@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:osmhn@brookes.ac.uk).**

# OSMHN's online guide to student mental health

Over 30 people from Oxfordshire came to help OSMHN celebrate the launch of its new redeveloped web site on 28 November. Attendees had the opportunity to see the web site in action, view information gathered during the Project's research activities and find out about the work of local and national mental health organisations.

With information tailored towards students, higher and further education staff and healthcare staff, the site aims to address some of the common questions and concerns many of us have about student mental health, for example:



By browsing the site, staff and students will also be able to find out about the various sources of support available for students with mental health difficulties within the HE/FE institutions and locally in Oxfordshire; read about national research findings into student mental health; learn about the implications of disability discrimination legislation; link into the web sites of over 150 national organisations and mental health resources and much, much more!

We hope that the site will become a valuable resource for staff and students alike across Oxfordshire. Please tell us what you think of the site and let us know if you have anything specific which you would like to see included.

## OSMHN Steering Committee members

OSMHN is supported and advised by a Steering Group consisting of representatives from its partner institutions. The present members are as follows:

### *Oxford University*

Elsa Bell, Head of Counselling  
Dame Fiona Caldicott, Chairman  
Committee on Student Health and Welfare

### *Oxford Brookes University*

Keith Cooper, Head of Student Services (Chair)  
Marion Casey, Senior Counsellor

### *Oxford College of Further Education*

Pam Woolley, Manager of Student Support

### *Oxford City Primary Care Trust Representative*

Anna Hinton

### *Oxfordshire Mental Healthcare NHS Trust*

June Dent, Consultant Clinical Psychologist  
Mike Hobbs, Consultant Psychotherapist; Clinical Director

## OSMHN contact details

OSMHN is unable to offer direct support or advice to students, but aims to collaborate with those organisations and services that are involved in supporting students with mental health problems. OSMHN can be contacted at:

### Oxford Student Mental Health Network

Ground Floor, Chatsworth House  
Heritage Gate  
Sandy Lane West  
Littlemore  
Oxford, OX4 6LB

Telephone/Fax: 01865 488128  
E-mail: [osmhn@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:osmhn@brookes.ac.uk)  
Web site: <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/osmhn>

## Mental health resources: National mental health helplines

### Eating Disorders' Association Helpline

Offers information, help and support for people affected by eating disorders, in particular anorexia and bulimia.

Adult Helpline (over 18): 0845 634 1414

(8.30am to 8.30pm Monday to Friday)

### SANELINE

Sane provides a helpline for people with mental illness.

Helpline: 0845 767 8000 (12pm - 2am)

### National Drugs Helpline

The helpline gives information and advice to anyone concerned about drugs. This includes drug users, their families, friends and people who work with them.

Helpline: 0800 776600

### CRUSE Bereavement Care Helpline & information line

The Cruse helpline is for people who are bereaved.

Helpline: 020 8940 4818 (9.30–5pm Monday to Friday)

### Student Debtline

A dedicated helpline for students worried about debt and money problems has been set up by the Consumer Credit Counselling Service (CCCS).

Student debtline: 0800 328 1813

(8am-8pm Monday to Friday)

These helplines and more can be found on OSMHN's web site at <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/osmhn>