

Newsletter 13 (Summer 2007)

Welcome to Issue 13 of the OSMHN Newsletter. Recently, we celebrated the 5th Anniversary of the Network by doing the things that the Network does best. We gathered together an array of speakers and participants in a lovely setting to learn, to exchange ideas and to explore how we could more effectively contribute to the mental well being of students. This newsletter aims to extend the reach of OSMHN by carrying on this kind of activity electronically. If you have something you would like to share with the network eg an example of a group, a workshop or training that worked for you, let us know about it. Or you may have come across a mental health issue which you think needs addressing in Higher Education or Further Education – some practice or policy that you think may be having a negative impact on the mental health of students. Email osmhn@brookes.ac.uk with your contribution.

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1. OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY BIBLIOTHERAPY SCHEME



The Counselling Service at Oxford Brookes University will shortly be introducing a Bibliotherapy or "recommended book scheme". This will enable students suffering mild to moderate emotional difficulties to borrow recommended self-help books from the University libraries. Book recommendations will come from support services, health, academic and non-academic personnel. The scheme, managed by OBU Counselling Service, aims to provide a coordinated strategy for the whole University body to enhance the emotional, mental and physical well-being of the student population.

How will the scheme work?

'Emma', a second-year History student, comes to see her personal tutor because she experienced a panic attack before a recent presentation. Her tutor suggests that Emma contacts the Counselling Service and gives her information about how to make an appointment. The tutor asks if Emma might also find it helpful to read something about panic attacks? When Emma says yes, her tutor consults the Bibliotherapy list and writes out a 'prescription' for 'Panic Attacks' by Christine Ingham, one of the recommended titles. On the way to make her counselling appointment, Emma takes her prescription to the Library, where she quickly locates the self-help book.

Bibliotherapy has now become a well-established and respected practice within the National Health Service and particularly within the mental health and therapy areas, especially CBT. Oxford Brookes' scheme is based on the prototype developed by Cardiff University under Professor Neil Frude and implemented throughout Cardiff city in March 2003, involving all the city libraries and GP practices within the local health authority. 80% of books on the Cardiff shortlist use a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) approach with practical treatment programmes with exercises, self-assessments, and diary sheets. Cardiff city libraries stocked the list of selected books and every GP practice, and other authorised prescribers, were given 'prescription packs', with prescriptions for books, which the client could take to the library.

Bibliotherapy demands a level of literacy and motivation, and is therefore well suited to a student population. Students are used to self-study and self-motivation, and familiar with accessing resources online and in print form. OBU's Bibliotherapy scheme will be embedded alongside existing academic systems, whereby resources and reading are recommended to students.

It is already common practice for counsellors and health professionals to recommend books. The bibliotherapy scheme develops this practice by setting up a partnership with library services to ensure that the recommended books are available to a wider range of students. The OBU Scheme will involve academic staff, hall wardens, Student Union advisers, Student Services staff, linked medical practices and others who may be approached by students over pastoral issues, enabling them to respond positively and confidently to situations of concern.

The argument for a prescribed list is to give guidance to both students and University personnel in selecting from the enormous range of self-help books currently available. The scheme enables counsellors, linked GPs and University staff to make informed evaluations of particular books and

recommend with confidence. Research shows that formal recommendations are more effective than simple verbal recommendations.

The scheme can be accessed through several routes:

- Students and staff can access the booklist independently through the counselling website or library system
- It can be part of a coordinated approach, complemented by face to face counselling and/or visit to the GP
- 'Prescriptions' (recommendations) can also come from academic staff, especially personal tutors, or non-academic staff e.g. hall wardens, when issues of pastoral care emerge.

The Oxford Brookes Bibliotherapy scheme is programmed to start in June 2007. Once the Library services have purchased the recommended book, the scheme will be publicised throughout the University via articles, talks and training workshops, aiming to involve as many staff as possible in the scheme.

2. 'HERTFORD MINDS' MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS DAY



Although colleges, students, and outside organisations provide various services to help deal with mental illness, there seems to exist a reluctance among students to talk about the problem. There is a social stigma attached to mental illness. So the primary motive in organising the awareness day was to get people talking about mental health.

The event consisted of speakers from MIND, Nightline, the University Counselling Services, and OSMHN giving short presentations on an array of topics. From anxiety, and exam stress, through to depression, the first-years who attended were given a crash course in what to do, and who to speak to, if they or someone they knew began to suffer from these life-affecting illnesses. Students were also given the opportunity to reacquaint themselves with college welfare personnel through tea and biscuits before and after the information session.

Having aimed the event at first-years we were very pleased that about 40, nearly 1/3 of the year-group, turned up, and the feedback has generally been very positive.

If the information given out at the event helps one person through a difficult period in their life, then that is the greatest mark of success possible. If anyone has further questions about how to organise such an event then please feel free to email me at thomas.lowe@hertford.ox.ac.uk

Tom Lowe
JCR President
Hertford College
University of Oxford

3. OXFORDSHIRE MENTAL HEALTH INFO ON-LINE

The official launch of the new online database of mental health services for Oxfordshire will be on Tuesday 15th May from 12.30 - 2.00pm at the Town Hall, Oxford. Come along for a preview of the site or see <http://www.omhi.org.uk>.



The new website should make accurate and up-to-date information about mental health and other community services easier to obtain. It will complement the existing information service, provided in a partnership between Oxfordshire Mind and Oxfordshire Mental Health Matters, which includes telephone, email and face-to-face contact, as well as the printed Mind Guide.

There are various ways to contact the services provided by Mind & Mental Health Matters:

Telephone Information Line

Monday to Friday 9.30am - 4.30pm except public holidays 01865 247788
(Local call charges apply. You can also text this number and we will call you back).

Email: info@oxford-mentalhealth.org

Online: <http://www.omhi.org.uk>

To find out where you can get face-to-face information at one of the sites across Oxfordshire - call 01865 247788.

4. FROM THE OSMHN WEB SITE: RESEARCH INTO STUDENT WELLBEING - WHAT'S HAPPENING NATIONALLY?



YoungMinds 'Stressed Out and Struggling Project'

Aims to highlight the mental health needs of 16-25 year-olds and campaigns to improve their access to and acceptability of mental health services. Published papers include:

- Information for Higher Education Institutions on helping students with personality difficulties or disorder
- Higher Education Institutions and International Students' Mental Health
- Making Mentoring More Effective
- Emerging Practice: Examples of Mental Health Services for 16-25 year-olds

Response and Prevention in Student Suicide



Joint Project between PAPYRUS (national charity working to prevent suicide in young people), University of Central Lancashire and King's College London looking specifically at student suicide within higher education.

This study finished in 2006 and the full report can be purchased through the RaPSS site. A summary report is freely available.



UNIqoLL UNIversity Quality of Life & Learning (UNIqoLL)

Project ran from 1999 – 2006 at the University of Leeds and aimed to monitor student well-being over time, on a university-wide basis.

The UNIqoLL website includes summaries of Project findings and details of published journal articles, including articles around student debt and its relation to student mental health and how social class differences affect students' experience of University.

Details of all these Projects and others can be found in the 'Research' section of this web site.

5. TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



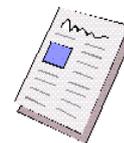
Mental Health Matters Workshops

Introduction to CBT: 21 May 07 £30
Working with Survivors of Sexual Abuse: 4 June 07 £30
Introduction to Mindfulness: 6 June 07 £30
Working with Controversy: 13 June 07 £30
Employment and Mental Health: 20 June 07 £30

To find out more or to book a place, contact :Amanda Smith,
Oxfordshire Mental Health Matters, 19 Paradise Street, Oxford OX1 1LD tel: 01865
246767 www.oxford-mentalhealth.org

6. THE OXFORDSHIRE MIND NEWSLETTER

The Oxfordshire Mind Newsletter for May contains information about activities planned to mark Mind Week (10-19 May). Many events are planned, including the Spring meeting (all welcome). The new services in Abingdon and Kidlington are also up and running. The Oasis project in Oxford is offering a FREE course for women.



To get an electronic copy of their information packed newsletter telephone or email Clair McGowan, the Mind information Officer.

Tel: (01865) 310830 ext 31

Email: claire.mcgowan@oxfordshire-mind.org.uk

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7. THE OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE PARTNERSHIP

Laura Mackenzie writes: Becoming a Foundation Trust – what it means for us

As you may be aware, OBMH is applying to become a Foundation Trust. We took our first steps down this road last year, but our application was deferred until we had completed a year's accounts as one merged Trust. This will demonstrate to both the Department of Health and Monitor, the regulator of Foundation Trust. The Trust is confident of a year end break-even position, so we are

back on track for a successful authorisation in autumn this year.

So why is this important? As an NHS Foundation Trust, we would be one of the first Trusts in our area (NHS South Central) to achieve this status. As an independent and strong Trust, we are able to meet and set high standards, and deliver first class services for our patients. We can invest in the care which is needed, raise the profile of mental health, and be responsive to our local community.

But above all, a Foundation Trust gives a genuine and strong voice for our patients. Patients and carers will have much more ability to participate and to influence the future of the Foundation Trust, and participate in the decisions we make about mental healthcare in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

So, what does becoming a Foundation Trust mean? It means we can offer our staff improved job security. Staff will benefit from more career development opportunities and increased involvement. All members will have a say in how services are developed and run. Their ideas and proposals can shape the future, and their first hand experiences of our services will influence the care we give.

In order to be an effective Foundation Trust we need a strong, well informed membership and we need you. As a member you can decide how involved you want to be, whether you just want to receive regular updates from the Trust, or maybe sit on working groups and contribute your ideas. You could decide to stand for election as a Governor of the Trust. It is your choice. So please support us and encourage your colleagues, friends and local people to join us too.

For more information contact:

Laura Mackenzie on 01865 782180 or visit <http://www.obmh.nhs.uk>

8. NORTH STAFFS ASPERGER/AUTISM ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE

'Transition into Adulthood' is the theme of the NSAAA conference is taking place at Keele University on Tuesday 12th June (lunch and refreshments included).

To book your place and view more details, please see the website <http://www.nsaaa.co.uk>, print off a form and return it to:

NSAAA
3 Andrew Place
Newcastle under Lyme
Staffordshire
ST5 1DL

Or drop into the office between 10am - 5pm Monday to Friday.

Kelly Jackson
Helpline Supervisor
North Staffs Asperger/Autism Association
3 Andrew Place
Newcastle under Lyme
Staffordshire

9. OSMHN EVENTS

How to Help Students Manage Their Stress Creatively

On the 23 February the subject of student stress was explored using two different but complementary approaches. 49 people signed up including 6 students who work in a supporting role with fellow students.

Caroline Merry, from the Oxford University Counselling Service, described an holistic approach to understanding and managing stress. She covered the following topics:

- What is stress?
- Recognising your own early warning signs
- Focussed Relaxation Techniques
- Sleep Problems
- Nutrition



Dr. Nicola Spiller, also from the Oxford University Counselling Service, explained the Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) approach to stress emphasizing the thought-feeling connection - how thoughts can lead to and/or exacerbate stress and anxiety. She talked about evaluating, challenging and reframing unhelpful thinking. She outlined some unhelpful thinking styles that can

lead to increased stress and anxiety.

If you want to see an example of how two tutors from Oxford Brookes adapted the workshop handouts to use with their undergraduate and postgraduate distance learners, email osmhn@brookes.ac.uk and you will be emailed their power point presentation.

The OSMHN Anniversary Event 18 April

The OSMHN 5th Anniversary Event was held at Somerville College. The aim of the day was to celebrate and mark the achievements of the past 5 years and to involve members of the network in planning the work of the next 5 years.

During the first half of the afternoon, three speakers gave thought – provoking presentations, each from a slightly different perspective. Dr. Mike Hobbs reviewed the recommendations from the Royal College of Psychiatrists on the Mental Health of Students in Higher Education and encouraged the participants to use them as a basis for thinking about the future work of OSMHN.

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/publications/collegereports/cr/cr112.aspx>

Peter Quinn, reviewed the Disability Equality Act and encouraged the group to consider the work of OSMHN in the light of our legal duty to students.

To find out more about Oxford University's Policy go to:

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/disab/des.shtml>

To find out more about Oxford Brookes Policy go to: http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/hr/eod/disability/disability_equality_scheme.html

Jamie, a former student, talked about the reality of being a student and coping with mental health problems. He talked about what helped and what didn't help him and other students he has supported. The three presentations set the tone for the afternoon's small group work when participants were asked to come up with three suggestions for the future work of OSMHN in promoting student mental well being.

In between the presentations and the small working group activities, Somerville laid on a delicious buffet lunch.

The representatives from the voluntary organisations played an important part in the day both as information providers at their stalls during the lunch hour and in the discussions during and after the group work. Many participants at previous OSMHN events have said how they appreciate the networking opportunities provided by OSMHN. The format of the Anniversary Event was designed to provide time and space for exchange of information and ideas in a way that some skills-based workshops are unable to provide due to time constraints.

When the working groups convened, they were given the task of identifying 3 ways in which OSMHN could contribute to the mental well being of students. The level of engagement and the suggestions they produced were evidence of the fact that the tasks were taken seriously. The suggestions put forward by the small working groups (and the plenary session which followed) will be summarised and presented to the Steering Group for consideration at their next meeting in June.

Future Workshops

The activities planned for next academic year will be publicised by email as soon as they are finalised.

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 is currently staffed by a part-time administrator one day a week, Barbara Jackson, who can be contacted at:

c/o OSMHN
Oxford Brookes University
The Lodge
Harcourt Hill, OX2 9AT