

Regular

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the star

giving you a voice

Issue 9 December 09

newsletter for customers of Brighter Futures

New service to help older people stay 'safe and sound'

Brighter Futures has launched a new service to help people over the age of 55 to live in their homes independently for as long as possible. 'safe and sound' offers support around money matters; learning new skills or finding new hobbies; meeting new people or helping them to keep in touch with friends and family; health and emotional wellbeing.

We held an event at the **WRVS** in Hanley to launch the service and were joined by other organisations who offer support to older people. These included **Warm Zone, Beat the Cold and Age Concern**. We were also lucky enough to have the choir from **Burnwood Community School** come along who entertained us with a selection of songs.



We are already supporting 75 customers



but we have capacity to help 102.

Some of the comments customers have made already are, *'Since being involved with the safe and sound scheme I've felt a lot happier. I've enjoyed going to Happy Mondays and the people I've met there and especially at the Changes workshop. Listening to other peoples stories has helped me feel that I am not on my own. I don't feel so isolated.'*

The people on the scheme have made me feel that I matter. I haven't felt like that for a long time'

Our aim is to reach as many older people in **Stoke** as possible, so if you know someone over the age of 55 who would benefit from help in maintaining their home, is struggling with daily tasks, or who may be lonely or vulnerable,

then **safe and sound** could help them to live as safely and independently as possible, for as long as possible.

Just call the team for more details on:

01782 683166

We are currently without a sponsor! If you know of any organisation that would be interested in supporting your newsletter to allow us to continue printing in colour, please let me know. ER

Brighter Update

Welcome to the December issue of your newsletter!

As always its packed with the goings on within Brighter Futures' schemes. A big thank you to all who have contributed to the newsletter and especially to **Richard Snell** who, as well as producing some fantastic articles and poetry, has come up with ideas for future issues and has proof-read it for me - so definitely no spelling or grammar mistakes this time!

If you would like to be a part of producing the next issue - due out in March, please get in contact with me or your support team member to find out more.

If you want to find out more about our services, what's on, and the latest news visit

www.brighter-futures.org.uk

Happy Reading,
Emma Robertson x

Clubhouse Network

Shared lives - Barry

Our lives are made up of memories and feelings which are ours and no-one else's, and that can be a very lonely thing. We need to share with others, tell them our stories, listen to theirs, discover common ground. That is why **Barry's** story is worth hearing. He has lead a life which is all his own, and yet many of us will see something of ourselves in it. He has become well-known at **The American Clubhouse** for his love of conversation and games-playing, his fascination with crossword puzzles and his clever Friday quizzes, which are always difficult enough to be interesting and easy enough to give everybody a chance.

When I asked him why he had come to the Clubhouse in the first place, he told me about his childhood in **Hanley** (he is just old enough to remember the wartime sirens) and his schooldays. He was unsettled from the beginning, something which became clear in the mid-nineteen fifties when he started work. He passed from one job to another, working in an office, a carwash, behind a shop-counter, delivering bread, packing pottery, and then, disastrously, at **Sneyd** colliery. There he found the constant early waking, the long tedious hours standing by a conveyor belt deep underground, the poor food, everything about the job, intolerable. He began to suffer from extreme agitation and anxiety, made worse by chronic insomnia.

He begged his parents to let him leave the pit, but they insisted that he was better off working. The result: a complete breakdown. Only nineteen years old, he was given E.C.T. (Electroconvulsive Therapy – an electrical charge through the brain) and also insulin therapy, a deep temporary coma. This drastic treatment eased his depression enough for him to return to work (though not down the mine), but it was far from cured and finally, in his mid-thirties, he had no choice but to give up working. He got some comfort from helping his mother after she had been widowed; but the time came when he found himself having to face his depression alone. However, with psychiatric care, medication and as he puts it 'keeping busy', he learned to cope with it.

He heard about the Clubhouse when it first opened nine years ago and it has been his home-from-

home ever since. For this all who know him are grateful, because whatever it is that makes Barry unique, there is something in his character we can all hope to emulate: he refuses to let his illness defeat him, and he lives each day for what he can do with it.

Richard Snell

Art Community



In partnership with **B Arts**, the **Art Community** are putting on an event called '**standstill**'

Standstill is a performance art event on the **21st December**,

everyone will meet at **The Observatory** at **4pm** where people will be invited to come into the gallery and see a shadow puppet show and an art installation in the gallery.

Then there will be a lantern parade into **Hanley**, and at **5pm** in **Fountain Square** there will be lots of exciting things happening, dance, music and art, we will then ask everyone to stand still and think about the time of year and what it means to them.

Christmas can be a difficult time for people, so we want to invite people to just take a moment to contemplate and be still.....

If you want to be involved in this event please come along and make it happen!

There will also be lots of activities happening throughout the New Year within the **Art Community**, so if you are interested in getting involved please contact **Zoe Best** at **The American**.

Zoe Best
Art co-ordinator

Clubhouse Network

A lesson from Liverpool



On Wednesday 14th October members of **Zoe Best's** art workshops visited the **Tate** and the **Walker** art galleries in **Liverpool**, and it

was a hugely enjoyable experience, everything such a visit should be (thank you, **Carl** and **Zoe**). But this isn't about that. It's about art, and what it means to everyone involved with **Brighter Futures** who has ever benefited from **Zoe's** generous help and support. There is a great deal in the two galleries which are things of genius: well-crafted, intelligent, intriguing, deeply-felt; but sadly, in the **Tate** especially, there is also a lot which is ugly, lazy, pretentious, just plain shoddy.

I found myself wondering about this stuff: how did it get made in the first place, never mind exhibited? I thought about what happens in **Zoe's** groups at **The Observatory** and **The American Clubhouse**, and it occurred to me that there are days when visitors to those groups might wonder how anything can happen at all, what with the arguing, laughing, joking, about anything and everything from politics and philosophy to soap-operas and supermarket prices, not to mention the mess: paints, paper, brushes, bits of card, pencils, crayons, all the paraphernalia of art scattered over every inch of available space.

But it also occurred to me that if our visitors were to look carefully, they would notice that a whole other world was appearing as if by magic on the cluttered tables and crowded walls, a world full of fascinating people, of glorious landscapes and exhilarating seascapes, deep forests, snowy mountains, fast-flowing rivers, mysterious castles, busy towns and cities, charming flower-gardens with birds and butterflies, fantastic creatures ranging from phoenixes to dragons, and other strange and wonderful images more dream than reality. They'd realise then that the men and women who are creating this imaginary world, unlike

some whose work we saw in the **Tate**, are true artists, for even as they are enjoying each other's company they are making beautiful and stylish objects many of which openly and with great feeling say things about their makers' experience of life that words alone can't say: and isn't that what art is supposed to do? Our visitors would not be surprised to learn that when this art is exhibited at the **Potteries Museum** every couple of years it is always well-received; it earns the liking and respect of every-one who sees it, both because it is done well and because it is done honestly, from the heart, simply for the joy of doing it.

(Would you like to try your hand as an artist? Join us at The Observatory on Tuesdays, 10.00.a.m. - 1.00.p.m., or at The American Clubhouse on Thursdays 9.30.a.m. - 4.00.p.m.. And look out for the next 'Hidden Talents' exhibition)

Richard Snell

Clubhouse Christmas Party!



Join us on Wednesday 16th December at The American Clubhouse between 6.30pm - 10.00pm for our fantastic Christmas party!

There's a free buffet, raffle, disco and lots of fun!

All members are welcome, just pay £1.00 on the door

Exhibitions

The Observatory Gallery - various artists

The Observatory café - Laura Hadley - Cats

Street services and base58



Thanks to all of you for your feedback about the new leaflet and name of the project. We have taken your ideas on board and hope you like what we have come up with!

We held the launch of the **base58** to celebrate the merge of young women, young men, schools work and street outreach. The young people are enjoying our workshops and have recently attended the **WORTH** course which addresses self-esteem and some have already signed up to a smoking cessation workshop leading up to Christmas.

We also hope that as many of our customers as possible will be attending the Christmas activities and Christmas party on 16th December. Thanks to all those who attended our five week sexual exploitation workshop (every customer participates in this either on a 1 to1 basis or in a group)

Congratulations to **Serena** who has had a baby boy, **Ethan** on 1st November- **Lucie** and **Jayne** were there at the start of the birth but unfortunately missed the delivery! We have a new and exciting activity programme leading up

That's champion!

Brighter Futures now has a team of **customer involvement champions**. The team is made up of

A big thank you to **The Catering Network** who provided a wonderful 'afternoon tea' for the launch of 'safe and sound'.

The team supplied us with delicious cakes, biscuits and finger sandwiches which were all displayed amazingly!



to Christmas with craft, cookery, Christmas lunch, hair and beauty which our customers were involved in planning. We are holding an **International day to end violence against sex workers** event again on December 17th as it was so successful last year. This will include free hair cuts, beauty treatments, crafts, cookery, a free buffet and gifts for those attending.

Pedal Power!

We have been awarded £5000 by the council to buy bikes and equipment for **90 Hope Street** to promote health and fitness. We will be busy buying bikes, helmets and even a bike shed over the next few weeks. Watch this space to find out how we get on and if you would like bikes for your scheme please speak to your support team member or contact **Fabio** on **01782 683168**.

Having your say

Customers of **Community Housing** met recently to talk about the scheme and to tell us what they would like to make the service better. Lots of ideas were put forward and the team is now busy working on answers to be fed back at the next meeting. One customer suggested that he would be happy to speak to potential customers about his experiences of using the service so Jon, (Community Housing's customer involvement champion) is working with him and **North Staffs YMCA** to develop the idea.

support team members who have a special interest in developing involvement within the scheme in which they work. They have already come up with some brilliant ideas to help you have your say and to be more involved in your scheme. If you have an idea or want to find out more then speak to your support team member or your champion: **90 Hope Street - Diane and Andy; Community Housing - Jon; Partnership Housing - Mark and Jenny; Clubhouse - Amanda; Adult women's - Adele; Adult and Young men's - Carl; young people - Lizzi; Catering Network - Sue and Dave; Hopwood House - Liam; smartmoves - Sue and Sarah-Jane; Community Inclusion Team - Carol**

Hope from Hopwood

My experience at **Hopwood House** began on 8th August 2008. The **Rough Sleeper's Team** advised me to try to get in Hopwood. I knew the place existed, but I'd never thought about moving in there, even though I was on the street and had got a drink problem.

In my 53 years of being in various places for accommodation reasons and drink too, this is without a doubt the best place I've been in for me personally. I need the discipline and the homely feel of this place. Don't get me wrong it's not been easy, at times far from it. But for some reason this place has worked for me where other places have not - and it's not always been the other place's fault.

I'm not the easiest of people to get on with but Hopwood has taught me a lot about myself. Some, I admit, I do not like and some I do. I have had problems with the staff but they have always had time to listen to me. I thank them for that; **Pam Stewart, Helen Smith and Pauline Hulme**. I've even got used to the new staff now **Claire and Liam**. I know they will make good support workers because like the other staff they all have one thing in common, their hearts are in their jobs, because they do care.

Best wishes to you all and God bless you always.

Carl Hodgson xx

P.S. I mean what I've written from my heart.

New start at The American

Cheryl, who is a resident of 24/7. is moving on into newly refurbished accommodation at The American.

Cheryl moved to Hillcrest in Feb 2008 as her first step towards becoming independent. She wanted to say thanks to the support team and asked if I would bake her cake for them to say thank you. I talked to her and we agreed that she would bake the cake and one evening she and I would ice it. Guess what? She did the whole thing on her own, what an achievement!

Cheryl says, ' Since I have been at Hillcrest I have learnt what it is like to work, make friends and have renewed contact with some of my family, including my son.

Most of all I wanted to find out about me. I wanted to please myself and not others all the time, and I am doing that day by day.

I'm moving into The American and I'm so excited. It's brand new and lovely. I know I will have less support but I think that is a good thing. I know I can always call someone for help.

For the future, I am learning to stand on my own two feet and in the New Year there is a chance that I might get some work with a family member in a shop and this will be the start of my not depending on others for everything.'

Brian Johnson

The Catering Network Manager

We live at **90 Hope Street** and thought we would just let you know what we did on **Bonfire Night** this year. We decided to put on a barbeque for all the residents here but as you know every **Bonfire Night** the heavens open and put a dampener on everything you've set up.

But we didn't let this dampen our spirits, so we decided to put on a massive buffet including hot-dogs, burgers and chicken, that we would have done on the barbeque. After we had all put a stone on we chilled out for a bit with our top buttons un-done then we helped tidy up ready

for the fireworks that the staff had supplied. We all went outside to the back yard to watch the display which consisted of all the usual rockets and bangers.

We would like to thank all of the staff and residents who helped to put on this spectacular night which showed us that even though times are hard, we can still enjoy ourselves.

*Thank you everyone
Paul and John*

WHY DON'T YOU WANT TO HELP ME?

I DO WANT TO HELP YOU.

WHY DON'T YOU WANT TO BE WITH ME?

I DO WANT TO BE WITH YOU.

WHY DON'T YOU CARE ABOUT ME?

I DO CARE ABOUT YOU.

WHY DON'T YOU LIKE ME?

I DO LIKE YOU.

WHY DON'T YOU LOVE ME?

I DO LOVE YOU.

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND ME.

THAT MUCH WE CAN AGREE ON.

WHY DON'T YOU - R.A.SNELL 2006

It's wonderful to see the thought and emotion that goes into your poems and stories. Please keep writing them and if you would like one to be in the next newsletter, give a copy to your support team member or send it directly to Emma Robertson at The Dudson Centre (see page eight for details)

A Recipe for Success

Take eight men and four women of various ages and characters. Put them in a house, taking great care to keep them separate.

Next, check that you have the correct equipment to hand: An office manageress or manager, some key workers and most importantly some complimentary ingredients to use: Adsis, a CPN, Medical Services, Nursing staff - if required - use more if you wish according to taste. The list is endless.

Regularly treat the men and women to ensure they are healthy. Twice a day is fine for most but check more often if you are not sure.

Use your key workers to make sure the men and women are doing well; using the ingredients as and when required. Don't be afraid to use other ingredients that may come along.

Keep the men and women in the house and watch closely. Leave in the house as long as required. When they are ready, serve to the public and let them enjoy another Hopwood special!

Martin

The Wonders of Life

Life is full of many different things
 You never know when something is going to happen or when it's not
 But you will never know what's going to come within your life
 Life is a mystery and it's a gift
 The reason it's a gift is 'cause you have the chance to live
 That's the wonders of life
 Life is the best gift to ever have
 It's the best present a person can have
 It's an opportunity to make the best of your life
 It's an opportunity to try and do something good
 You only get one chance to good things
 So don't mess it up.

Mark

'I Don't Need Want a Drink!'

You'd think it was easy, to sit down and write
 About drinking, my war, my battle, my fight
 Not so, I'm afraid; not finding it easy
 If you'll pardon the pun, I feel a bit queasy!

Eighteen years old to the day and not a day more
 Cos drinking before, would be breaking the law!
 Two years I'd been working and not touched a drop
 Anything before was nothing but pop!

Quite a late start, I'm sure you'll agree
 I kid you not, a good boy, that's me!
 A responsible job and I played loads of sport
 You know the type, you've met the sort

'A drink after work?' - you're having a 'larf'
 All right then, go on, I'll have a quick half!
 How many times, did I utter that cry?
 Too many, for sure, I think with a sigh

Years they progressed, drinking was easy.
 Controlled it I did - stayed nice, bright and breezy!
 To Shropshire I went, with work, to get tested
 Promoted, got married, two kids and invested!

Too good to be true, that's said by some
 But life's got a habit of 'biting yer bum'!
 Redundant at 40 - disaster you'd think
 Me, I'm alright, with my mate - the drink!

I think that I said, the drink I controlled
 But thinking right now, my statement was bold
 Worked hard in the day, drank hard in the night
 Dependent I was, yes you are right

I've now come to realise, the drink hated me
 Drank more and more, it controlled me, you see
 One job I had lost, to economic decline
 The others, I know, the fault was all mine

Still talk to my wife (ex) the kids they are fine
 But they're victims too, of my boozy decline!
 I tried many times, to detox and stay dry
 The last one, my worst, they thought I would die!

That's quite a long tale and I'm nearly done
 A look back in time, has not been much fun
 I'm back in Stoke now, with Pam and her team
 No looking back; forwards my dream

So in Hopwood, I am and things become clear
 Drink's not my mate, I've lost all I hold dear
 I've been given a chance, a lifeline, a break
 I'm taking them all, I'm alive for 'f's' sake!

Martin

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Your Story

This issue read about how **Jon** came to be a **Brighter Futures** customer and how his life has changed since using our services.

*Talk to me about your life before **Brighter Futures**.*

Basically I did not have a life before I became involved with **smartmoves**. There was just no light at the end of the tunnel and everything I seemed to do and everything I was going to, I just always seemed to come to a dead end.

*What did you think would change when you became involved with **Brighter Futures**?*

I was hoping that I could get motivated and try to get on with my life once more. I was hoping that the help I have always been in need of could be given to me

What has changed?

My life since I have been given a **smartmoves** support worker is changing. I am now beginning to see light at the end of the tunnel and when I get up in the morning I now know there is someone there guiding me and who is able to see that my life is worth living again.

Was anyone else involved?

The only other people that have been involved are **Changes**. **Changes** are a mental health group that I go to where I can speak with other people who are in a similar boat to me. This is the only form of social life I have and it helps me get through the day when I attend.

*What do you think would have happened if you hadn't come to **Brighter Futures**?*

I think without my **smartmoves** worker I think I would have eventually got that down and probably wouldn't have got back up again. I may have ended up committing suicide.

What are your hopes and plans for the future?

My ambitions are to continue to see life as worth living and continue to understand and accept that people like me are worthy of support that you are giving me. I hope I can start to get my confidence back and I am sure with the great help that I already receive from your service I now believe I can achieve this. **Smartmoves** has been the best thing to happen to me since my daughter was born some 27 years ago.

If you would like to have your story in the next issue please talk to your support worker - ER

If I was you

If I was you and you were me,
Oh, how happy we would be;
But I am me, and you are you:
Sadly, that will have to do.

R.A.Snell

HELPLINE

worried? isolated? feeling low?

0808 800 2234

FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL
you talk, we listen



Emotional support for
people concerned about
their mental health or that
of someone they know

Staffordshire Mental Health Helpline
Supporting and promoting emotional and mental well being
www.brighter-futures.org.uk

brighter futures
creative support, housing and employment