

Scottish Eating Disorder Interest Group Newsletter

February 2002

Welcome all! As the newly appointed secretary of SEDIG, I would just like to say how fantastic the experience has been so far. This organisation appears to be full of wonderful people dedicated to improving the situation of sufferers throughout Scotland, and in some cases beyond. I feel heartened by your efforts and genuinely honoured to serve in my new role, although a little intimidated at the thought of living up to the phenomenal reputation of Christina Munro, who has achieved an amazing amount. What can I say? I will do my best.

Attached to this issue of the newsletter is the application form for the next meeting on Friday 8th March. The theme is Dual Diagnosis i.e. an eating disorder accompanied by one other diagnosis such as depression or O.C.D. for example.

Also, for those members who are now due fees, a reminder has been included.

Thanks,

Heather Marrison
Secretary

Agenda for SEDIG meeting on Dual Diagnosis (Fri 8th March)

This agenda is provisional and may be subject to change.

10-10:30am - Coffee and Registration

10.30-12.30pm – Eating Disorders and Self - Harm, organised by Dr Heather Gardiner, Adolescent Unit, Gartnavel Royal Hospital.

12.30-2.00pm – break for lunch

2.00 – 4.00pm - Eating Disorders and

Diabetes, organised by Dr Jane Morris, Acting Consultant Psychiatrist, Cullen Centre, Royal Edinburgh.

4pm finish.

Perth Closure

Despite Alex Yellowlees's considerable efforts, and SEDIG's letter of protest, Perth's eating disorders service remains set to close, an "unpalatable" decision made as part of the Tayside Trust's Financial Recovery Plan. However, SEDIG intends to contact other groups who may be sympathetic to our cause. Watch this space!

Services Opening in Inverness!

Thankfully, in sharp contrast to the unfortunate news about Perth, Yvonne Edmonstone - a psychiatrist based in New Craigs Hospital Inverness - is now able to devote four sessions per week to those suffering from eating disorders.

The Cullen Centre National Eating Disorders Conference Fri 10th May

Carlton Highland Hotel Northbridge, Edinburgh. Will provisionally include workshops on CBT and Self-Help, as well as a discussion on family interventions in eating disorders, presented by Dr Ivan Eisler, and a closing session by Dr Chris Freeman.

Eating Disorders Awareness Week

This event, now in its 3rd year, runs from 3rd-- 9th Feb 2002 and primarily aims to raise awareness about eating disorders, the EDA, and the Self-Help Network. In previous years the EDA have targeted press in England and Wales, but this year plan to launch a UK wide campaign under the theme of Carers Issues.

Eating Disorder Association National Carers' Conference 2002

The conference will be held in London - Friday 14th and Saturday 15th of June 2002.

Friday – Informal networking evening for carers and professionals.

Saturday – (9.30h – 17.30h)
Presentations by World-renowned Specialists, a Government speaker, and sufferers. Also, discussion groups and workshops.

Final details to be confirmed. For further information and booking forms contact:

The Conference Organiser,
Eating Disorders Association,
103 Prince of Wales Road,
Norwich NR1 1DW

Personal Reflections of Our Last SEDIG Meeting.

SEDIG meetings are always a good chance to meet up with kindred spirits and far-flung friends (perhaps even a few old enemies)= but I was less than usually enthusiastic at the prospect of the autumn meeting. For a start I was honour-bound to volunteer myself for the arduous post of secretary, and worse still, the topic was self help, and I'm still haunted by my first experience of self-help groups. In an early post as a junior psychiatrist I was asked to sit in on an alcoholics anonymous meeting in some dark haunt in the Royal Mile. I was the only woman in a circle of hardened grassmarketers who all recounted swashbuckling encounters with the demon drink. When it got to my turn, all I could say was "I'm Jane and I'm a psychiatrist". After what followed I expected every self-help group to be virulently anti-psychiatrist and quite often my expectations have been met – sometimes with good reason. I steeled

myself to turn up and was amazed to enjoy the day so much.

The topic of Self-Help was linked to the theme of our previous meeting – Families and Carers – by the presence of leaders of Carers' self help groups. The morning session was made up of talks from representatives of different self-help groups from Scotland and the north of England, so a delicious spread of accents flavoured the first hand accounts of struggles to set up self help groups and services, to find and hang on to suitable premises, to keep going in the face of isolation, transport difficulties and noisy chip-eating neighbours. I found this – for a variety of reasons – extremely moving.

We heard too about the umbrella role of the Eating Disorders Association in providing structure, supervision and publicity for the groups and individuals helping others for whom the NHS cannot provide enough – or indeed anything at all. In Edinburgh, where there is relatively strong psychiatric provision, the role of self-help movements is often to provide an alternative and an opposition to the establishment. This helps explain some of the hostility I've met, and it's healthy, if uncomfortable for professionals. But speaker after speaker told us that self help for eating disorders in Scotland and Northern England has grown up to plug a tragic hole in services, not as an alternative to unacceptable practice within conventional NHS clinics. This was a theme that recurred throughout the day.

An undoubted highlight was Heather Marrison's inspiring account of her own recovery, using the Edinburgh's Bonnington Road self help group while she waited on the notoriously long waiting list for treatment at the Cullen Centre. I was most struck by her account of learning to look after herself in all sorts of ways, and not "just" eating. I've passed on to some of my patients her anecdote about opening a window on a smoky bus to give herself air.

Heather now helps Pam Christie co-ordinate the Bonnington Road group. To my huge delight and relief she is also the new secretary of SEDIG, taking over from Christina Munro – a hard act to follow. SEDIG repeatedly shows me the generosity of people who have suffered from the effects of eating disorders and then have worked to put their experience at the service of fellow sufferers. Heather has offered to speak to our own carers' group, and we have co-opted her onto the committee preparing an integrated care pathway for the treatment of anorexia.

After lunch, our business meeting was memorable for Alex Yellowlee's fervent account of his despairing fight to save the Perth eating disorders service. Even those of you who were absent will have noticed his continuing battle in interviews with the press. SEDIG has added it's collective voice to the campaign to save the Perth service, and there are signs that we may be heard. I was so pleased to hear of Alex own triumph in being appointed Director of the Langside Priory. (I was happier still to hear his terrific Jazz trio – music lovers look out for him in a dark cellar near you. And hey, what about eating disorders and the arts as the topic for 2003?)

I then joined Harry Miller's excellent post-prandial workshop to join discussion of such questions as: what are the essentials for self help groups? What can self-help offer, and what should it offer? And (of particular interest to me) have professionals anything to offer the self help movement or must we accept that we are the establishment against which such groups rebel? Perhaps the best answer to all these questions is to keep on asking them, and to use SEDIG as a friendly and creative forum for doing so.

Jane Morris 14th Jan 2002.

This meeting was well attended and proved to be an interesting and motivating day for all involved – carers, those with personal experience of eating disorders, and a variety of professionals.

Unfortunately the agenda had to undergo some quite significant alterations, but it was impressive and also encouraging to see how this had been reorganised so successfully and at such short notice.

We started with an introduction to self-help groups and the work of the EDA by Ruth Taylor, followed by the undernoted presentations: -

1. Roy Beardsworth told us about his personal experience with his daughter, focusing on the involvement of himself and his wife in setting up self-help and support for relatives/carers' of those with eating disorders in their local area.
2. Yvonne Boughton spoke about her involvement with self-help groups in the Nottinghamshire area.
3. Harry Millar (consultant Psychiatrist) spoke fairly briefly about his involvement in self help groups in local areas.
4. Gráinne Smith, who has personal experience as a carer and with a telephone helpline, spoke of her involvement in a self-help group in Keith, which benefited from support and advice from Harry Millar.
5. Heather Marrison gave an incredibly strong, positive and informative talk on her own recovery from an eating disorder. Personally this gave me - and others I'm certain – an invaluable insight into an individual's point of view of what was most helpful in her own recovery.

After lunch we had a productive and speedy business meeting. The topics included discussion of a letter to the Tayside Trust voicing SEDIG's dismay at the inadvisable plans to lose Perth's Eating Disorder Service.

Christina Munro was thanked for her role as secretary of SEDIG over the past three years and the offer of Heather Marrison to take on this responsibility was welcomed.

We were informed of another fund raising opportunity – to do a sponsored cycle around Chile and, again thanked Chrissie for her great fund raising efforts in early 2001.

We then divided into workshop groups for an hour. This proved to be both stimulating and interesting – my group discussed issues for self-help in rural areas – followed by feedback from each group, with concluding remarks.

All in all, an excellent day which left me feeling enthusiastic, energetic and keen to collaborate with the two other participants from my local area, and to contribute to the process of re-establishing the Eating Disorders Self Help Group in the Montrose and Angus area. In addition, we came away with an immensely strong message about the vital and invaluable role that self help groups have in the support and progress of those with eating disorders and their carers.

Louise Hobbs – Clinical Psychologist.

N.B. The Bonnington Road Self Help Group in Edinburgh (sufferers and carers) meet on the 1st and 3rd Wed of every month from 7.30pm – 9.30pm at Bonnington Resource Centre.