



For better
mental health

Folkestone & District Mind

Mind Resource Centre
3 Mill Bay
Folkestone
Kent CT20 1JS

Tel/Fax. 01303 250090
contact@folkestonemind.org.uk
www.folkestonemind.org.uk

Reg Charity No: 1089472

ANNUAL REPORT 2011

There will be many at this meeting who will expect the theme of this report to be cutbacks and economies, given the fact that so many organisations are facing difficulties with their budgets. Looking back over the past year, however, I find the mood optimistic and the story one of exciting new developments.

A very recent survey of membership, for example, revealed an overwhelming appreciation of Folkestone Mind. Members told us that they rated the staff's friendliness, courtesy and efficiency very highly. Membership made them feel more supported, more confident, more independent. They enjoyed making friends and engaging in a wide range of activities both in the Centre and in the wider community and they valued all the practical help on offer.

A brief survey of a year at the Centre will give an insight into why we all value the work done here so highly. The Kent County Council Mental Health Commissioning Team has promoted 'inclusion and citizenship' as one of the means by which a feeling of well-being is increased. We certainly agree. Just as important is to enjoy oneself at the same time. A glance at the programme of the twenty or so activities organised outside the Centre reveals how we have achieved the balance. A particularly popular activity has been, for example, the 'Let's Grow' project- a joint initiative of Folkestone Mind and Kent Wildlife Trust at Romney Marsh Visitors' Centre, funded by the 'Ecominds Grant', a £7.5 million funding scheme managed by National Mind on behalf of the BIG Lottery Fund. Ecominds involves people with direct experience of mental distress in environmental projects that improve their mental and physical health, as well as their local community. Another favourite is horse-riding. Both help to promote physical and mental good health and both are hugely enjoyable. These are just two examples from a list that includes dog-walking, and trips to places like Sandwich and Rye.

The development of our work has depended very much on the generosity of outside bodies. The Treasurer will tell you more about them but we are very grateful to all those who have contributed to our work, from the K.C.C. and corporate bodies to charitable trusts and individuals.

One development that has enabled us to widen our scope is the refurbishment of the social room, funded by the BIG Lottery Fund Awards for All Grant and the Brook Trust. This had a splendid opening in October at which the Monday jamming group from our new music room played and John Jackson from Kent Community Foundation cut the ribbon.

The improvements to the social room make it easier for us to welcome other groups to the Centre. Rethink continues to meet here and Shepway Open Forum, The Counselling Team and now, too the Local Planning and Monitoring Group for Mental Health.

The use of that room shows us working *with* other groups and the statutory sector to promote the well-being of all those who suffer from mental health problems. We have established a collaborative working agreement with 'Aspirations'- a local organisation that helps people who aspire to be back in the world of work. Many such community links have been formed during this year. We have had speakers and visitors, for example, from the PCT, from Age – UK and the Greyhound Rescue Charity and we have helped other charities such as

Homestart and Find a Voice with advice. A very welcome development has been the arrival of young police officers who have come to Mind as part of their training. At the end of their placement they had to give a talk- to which Helene and I were invited- to senior officers on what they had learned from the experience. We were moved by how much one young man felt he had been given a much more positive attitude to mental health problems. He had really enjoyed his time here.

Folkestone Mind certainly widens the experience of the staff and Trustees as well as the members. They go here and there to courses, meetings and training sessions. I was rather intrigued by a kind of speed dating session organised by local GPs to identify unmet needs but perhaps the most interesting invitation was to Folkestone Academy to broadcast a slot on their Kent wide radio telling people about Mind. This gave us excellent publicity. Communications are always something we seek to improve. The Newsletter has been invaluable in this respect and we thank all those who have been involved in its production.

Meanwhile the everyday work of the Centre has continued. We forget in well-run organisations just how much hard work and skill go into administration and the things we take for granted such as insurance and employment law, health and safety and property and shop management. Many thanks to *all* the staff for their dedicated work.

I cannot really pick out individuals for the staff at Folkestone Mind are very much a team, but I would just like to mention one particular success. This year Rose became a fully accredited counsellor. Congratulations.

This is the moment when we think of the work of two of our most dedicated and long-serving supporters who retired this year- Heather Murray who ran the Wednesday evening Pop-In and Sheila Revell who managed the Dove Shop. We will miss them both, as well as Heather's husband Chris, and we hope they will visit often.

We have also said goodbye this year to three other very valued staff and volunteers: Mary Cook who volunteered at the Dove Shop prior to and after becoming a Support Worker on Centre; and Dove shop volunteers, Maureen Saunders and Ann Hill. We have also lost Michael Lake who came as a fundraiser and stunned us all with his energy and capacity for new initiatives. We thank them all for their dedicated service and wish them well in the future.

Ten new volunteers have come to Folkestone Mind during the past year. This interest in the work of the Centre and the shops must surely reflect a mark of confidence in what we do here. We hope they are enjoying their new roles.

A warm welcome also goes to three new staff members: Kerry Duncan, Christina Graham, our Dove Shop Supervisors, and Ekrem Dobardzic who has taken on a variety of roles from cleaner and kitchen assistant to shop volunteer.

The A.G.M. this year comes at an exciting time in the life of Folkestone Mind for we await another visit- that of the National Mind Quality Assurance Team. Not only must good work be done; it must be seen to be done. This has involved a great deal of preparation of paper work by the staff which I am sure will be rewarded by success. Many of us will be involved and I am confident it will be an enjoyable and worthwhile experience.

I began with the membership survey. In it members also made suggestions about what they would like to see happen at Mind in the future. I would like to assure you that we take all your ideas very seriously and we would very much welcome more members as trustees. Finally a very warm welcome to all who are here tonight. We hope you enjoy the evening and especially the buffet to come.

Norma Smyth Chair: Folkestone and District Mind