

**Annual Report of The Croydon Association for Pastoral Care in Mental Health
April 2007 – March 2008**

From the Chair of the Trustees

On behalf of the Trustees it is a privilege once again to present the latest Annual Report of the Association for the financial year 2007-2008.

I am pleased to report that our many service users continue to be attracted by what we have been able to offer. Our over-riding aim is to support our members, helping them to be themselves and so live their lives to their full potential. Our main activities are the four weekly drop-ins, the creative programme, and training programmes targeted to raise awareness amongst the community and particularly amongst the faith groups of mental health issues.

The Association has played an active and critical role in the Croydon-wide consultation about the planning and provision of day care and I believe we have helped to mould the outcome in ways which will bring benefit to those who will want to use day services.

I want to thank the many people who unstintingly support the work of the Association and without whom we would not exist. Firstly thanks to my fellow trustees, whose commitment and support has been unstinting. Special mention must go to Fr. Andrew Wilson and Sue Albery and Helen Hamilton without whose hard work and enthusiasm very little of what we do would be possible. A particular vote of thanks is due to Helen who this year in addition to everything else she does for the Association, took on responsibility for our book-keeping and the preparation of the annual accounts; it has been an onerous and time consuming task magnificently achieved.

Can I also unreservedly thank our team of 50 volunteers, whose reliable and dedicated support for the Association is so impressive!

In conclusion I want to thank our partners in the Croydon Mental Health community, the Commissioners, staff at SLAM, and colleagues in the voluntary sector. Without true collaboration and joined up working, services will continue to fail users.

Terence Roberts

Project Co-ordinator's Report

(previously Development Officer's Report)

The Guiding ethos of APCMH is the promotion of the spiritual needs of all who are involved in the organisation. 'Spiritual needs' have become somewhat buzz words in mental health services and can mean everything and nothing. We clearly understand it to mean those things which give meaning and purpose to life. This may be religious faith and practice but also encompasses secular interests and activities.

At APCMH we try to meet people where they are and to help them to wholeness and healing on the path of their choosing. We have followed with interest the work of the NIMHE Spirituality project over the last few years and have participated in their workshops and discussions through the National Spirituality and Mental Health Forum.

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During the year 2007/8 Croydon APCMH has been involved in creating opportunities for dialogue between mental health services and people within the faith groups. We have facilitated the development of the Mind and Spirit Group which meets by kind permission of the Bishop of Croydon at St Matthew's House. The meeting brings together senior staff from the CMHTs and people from Churches and other Faith groups. Through the work of Revd. Barry Goodwin we are able to link this work with Faiths Together in Croydon.

APCMH was fortunate to receive a grant from the Mental Health Promotion Steering Committee to provide mental health awareness workshops for faith groups from the BME communities. This proved quite difficult but during 2007/8 two workshops were arranged for Black-led Churches and a follow up training session for The Organisation of Jamaican's UK was planned for delivery later in 2008. Contact was made at the end of March 2008 with a Hindu women's organisation to plan a day workshop for them. At the same time some preparatory contacts were made with women's groups at two of the Mosques. In this work APCMH has sought to work in partnership with the Community Development Workers located at the BME Forum and Off the Record.

We have promoted our approach to mental health through awareness of spiritual needs in sessions for the Southwark Mind User Conference, The BME Staff Group in Croydon SL&M and the Open University Christian Student Group.

APCMH sees mental health promotion as a key area of activity and is involved with statutory and voluntary partners with such work to increase mental health and well being in Croydon.

The provision of community based services which promote social inclusion and recovery has been an issue in Croydon for some years. We have played a role in the review and recommissioning process through membership of the Commissioning Partnership group and the Mental Health Forum. While these discussions have been in progress APCMH has continued to provide its core drop-in service and women's group drop-in, the latter without additional funding. The drop-ins continue to attract approximately fifty people each week across the three drop-in venues, with a small number of people using all three on a regular basis. The Women's Group drop-in attracted about eight regular members.

The Healing and Creativity project based at St Andrew's Church hall has continued to grow. In September 2007 when this venue became unavailable the project moved to St Mildred's Community Centre in Addiscombe. APCMH would like to thank both church communities for their welcome and support for our groups. We would like especially to thank Leander Garner, the manager of St Mildred's, and Paul Bradbury the caretaker for their unfailing support and kindness to all involved with APCMH at St Mildred's.

This project has attracted a regular attendance of about 35 people per week to the three workshops. The workshops provide opportunities for relaxation, complementary therapies, creative writing and art and have become an important part of the lives of many participants. We would like to thank all our workshop facilitators and support volunteers for their hard work and commitment. During the year 2007/8 this project became entirely supported by funds from the APCMH reserves. The bequest from Margaret Baylis has been designated for the support of this project. While attempts have been made to obtain additional funding from other sources this has so far not been successful.

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APCMH has had a long association with the Residential Rehabilitation Unit at Westways. During this year the New Horizon's project continued with fortnightly visits to a local café supported by volunteers. We would like to extend special thanks to Andy King, Alan Gills and John McNiff for their faithful support of this group during 2007/8.

During the year training was offered both to new and potential volunteers on the training courses in May and October 2007 and also through Saturday support and training workshop sessions for current volunteers. It is intended that the training being offered to our volunteers will be updated during 2008.

APCMH is dependant on an army of volunteers to provide the services it offers. They come from all sections of society and give of their time and energy unstintingly. We particularly value the contribution made by people who have had their own experience of mental distress. In July 2007 the organisation showed its appreciation of the volunteers with a convivial meal attended by more than 30 of the team. Thanks to all of you on behalf of all our members - APCMH would not exist without you.

APCMH particularly values its close relationships with Hear Us user group and other user and carer representative groups and with other voluntary sector partners. We value the support of CVA and were pleased to be involved in the celebrations of their 100th anniversary. The important role of voluntary organisations and the cooperation between them in the support of people in mental distress is a source of strength in the Borough.

We thank all our partners the Commissioning Team at the PCT/Social Services for their unfailing support for our work our partners in IAMHS and the voluntary sector. Personally and on behalf of all our members and volunteers I would like to thank our Trustees and especially Terry Roberts our Chair for all that he does for the organisation and Andrew Wilson for his tireless support and guidance. Finally but not by any means least debts of gratitude are owed to Esther McCalden, whose consistently kind and supportive presence does so much to make the evening drop-ins the positive environments that they are and to Helen Hamilton who, as well as the considerable administration she was already doing, has taken over the bookkeeping for the organisation and during the year 2007/8 worked to computerise and manage our accounts. The quality of her work and her commitment is evidenced by the accounts presented today in this report. Thank you again Helen and Esther.

In APCMH we look forward to the future as an organisation which provides in our services a context for supportive friendship. Our services in the community strive to be open welcoming and safe places where people are treated first and foremost as individuals with their own personal histories and where there is support to build their futures.

Sue Albery

From Andrew Wilson
Borough Chaplain for Croydon

Last April saw me spreading the good news of our ways of working in Croydon in APCMH, when with two other Chaplaincy volunteers I travelled to Camberley to speak to a group wanting to set up support for people with mental health problems in their area. Later that

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month Sue and I spoke at a conference arranged by Southwark MIND. Finally we had a Saturday Volunteer Workshop at Bethlem. This seems to be the best way of offering ongoing support and training to Volunteers, and we have continued to meet in this way.

Every two months Sue and I meet with people from the Community Mental Health teams and representatives of some other faiths. These 'Mind and Spirit' groups set a target to provide a meeting with Faiths Together in Croydon. I have met with Steve Davidson, our Borough Director, to raise concerns about patient care and keeping their spiritual and pastoral needs on the agenda. With the Trust Imam I have been working at creating a website on the work of the Chaplaincy, and guidelines about faith communities. At Bethlem we have had several people on placements again this year, as they train for priesthood or work as pastoral auxiliaries. Hopefully this gives them insight into ways of working sensitively and effectively, and at least two of them have decided to return to work in the Hospital after their training is finished. Another volunteer, a counsellor in training, has spent this year seeing a couple of clients, and sharing in the work of counselling that I continue to do with APCMH members and others.

In May and again in October we provided our Volunteer Training Course, after which we decided that we needed to look again at a format we had used for many years. We are now in the process of doing that. October saw the 760th Anniversary of the founding of Bethlem and we celebrated with the Bishop of Croydon in a day that looked at the theme of 'Sanctuary'. In November I attended the Mental Health Chaplain's Conference in Nottingham where we looked at working in 'The space beyond words', and how we could be more creative. I facilitated three sessions, one of which had chaplains making masks and doing their bit with glitter and feathers and glue and paint! One workshop explored a project run by MIND and a chaplain in the Midlands to help people find their own spiritual resources. This bore fruit in my own 'Exploring Spirituality' Course at St Mildred's during Lent of this year.

Julia, a fellow Chaplain, and I went to a Retreat Centre in Oxfordshire towards the end of the year to a course provided by the Janki Foundation, which has created a training pack which encourages an approach to health-care which emphasizes spiritual values. We have already used some of this material very successfully within Trust Staff Training and it will also help us to revitalize our own Training.

I have enjoyed sharing in the Well-Being Group on Mondays at St Mildred's, leading meditation sessions sometimes. In February I supported APCMH in Merton by taking part in training for their volunteers on their befriending scheme, and with Sue provided two Saturday Workshops for Black-led Churches. All of this is intended to raise awareness and better networks of care for people. The year ahead will mean yet more changes in both hospital and community care. Our Birthday Celebration marking 20 years of APCMH Croydon sees us placed at the heart of local mental health care. Long may it continue!!

Andrew