

26 July 2010

“LET’S SING” COMMUNITY CHOIR

The Borders *Let’s Sing Community Choir*, which is a unique Scottish health initiative, held its summer concert on Friday (23 July) when it performed a selection of favorite songs.

The Choir delivers a valuable service to people in the Borders who experience on-going mental health problems in a creative and meaningful way. The group is facilitated by music therapist, Clare Gillespie, as well as Karen Smyth, community support worker and Karole Redburn, occupational therapist, who provide support to people from the mental health rehabilitation wards in hospital to attend the Choir, as well as people living in the community.

The Choir was originally established in October 2009 as a short-term pilot with NHS Borders ‘Community Mental Health Rehabilitation Service’ and has been running ever since. The group has clear objectives which are in line with the Scottish Government’s Mental Health agenda as set out in ‘Delivering for Mental Health’. Some of the key aims of the Choir are to increase motivation to participate in groups, to enable people to develop community living and life skills and to provide opportunities for people to develop their musical skills and to maximise their creative potential.

Clare Gillespie, Lead Music Therapist said: “The Choir provides a safe place, within a neutral, non-stigmatising community facility, for people with mental health problems to come together on a weekly basis to sing and to socialise. Singing in Choirs has gained considerable popularity over recent years through the media, where the public have seen people from all walks of life, spanning different generations and cultures, coming together in vocal harmony. Singing has the potential to bring people together and has specific potentials for providing important emotional experiences”.

The Choir performed at a Carol Concert in Galashiels last Christmas, which proved popular and they produced a CD as a result. Feedback from the Choir members, ward staff and team members indicate that the group provides an important, beneficial therapy in the community that is promoting mental health, has a significant role to play in ‘recovery’ and has a positive impact on ward atmosphere and patient/staff morale.

Calum Campbell, Chief Executive said: “I am delighted that the Choir is a success and is enabling people in the Borders to regain a sense of self-confidence, self-esteem and self-identity that may have been lost through years of illness”.

Dr Ruth Solomon, Consultant Psychiatrist (Community Rehab Mental Health Team) said: "There is increasing academic evidence of the effectiveness of music therapy for people with schizophrenia. On hearing the choir this is self-evident."

The Choir meets every Tuesday in Jedburgh and it is hoped that it can continue to flourish. The Choir is keen to encourage people who have or have not previously had contact with mental health services or who have experienced social isolation to come along and join the group. People do not have to be formally referred, attendance is encouraged as and when people feel able to participate. If anyone would be interested in joining the Choir they can contact the Rehab Team office on 01896 664424.

Ends

Contacts:

For further information, contact Public Involvement & Communications on 01896 825591 or 825589