



MEETING REPORT

MENTAL HEALTH: ADDRESSING CHALLENGES THROUGH BETTER SERVICES AND INCLUSION

Glasgow, 26-27 April 2017

On 26-7 April 2017 almost 20 participants from Eurodiaconia member organizations gathered to discuss mental health, with focus on the main challenges of care practice for people with mental health issues and ways to break down the stigma associated with them. The conference was hosted by our member the Church of Scotland and welcomed participants from Germany, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Serbia, Latvia and the UK.



Wednesday, 26 April 2017

Chloe Clemmons, Parliamentary Officer of the Church of Scotland, welcomed participants and stressed the key importance given by her organization to better services and policies for people with mental health issues. This priority is shared by CrossReach, as the social care arm of the Church. Next, Murdo Macdonald, Policy Officer at the Church of Scotland, conducted a devotion.

Alexander Elu (Eurodiaconia) then presented the agenda of the event and offered a broad overview of the main challenges linked to mental health in Europe today. Alexander highlighted that the meeting,





Eurodiaconia's first on the topic, represented a unique opportunity to share ideas, experiences and projects on mental health. It was also an occasion to build a Eurodiaconia agenda on mental health based on members' long history of practice in the field and, also, prior exchanges between some of our members. Most recently, the [10th International conference of the Visegrad Platform](#), held in September 2015 and gathering Eastern European members of Eurodiaconia, discussed a renewed approach to psychiatry and mental health.

After this general introduction, participants introduced themselves and their work on mental health and shared their expectations on the meeting.

Keynote address by Prof. Peter Kinderman, University of Liverpool and British Psychological Society



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Professor Peter Kinderman offered a keynote speech about the main challenges currently faced by mental health services in Europe, stressing the need of a new approach towards mental health. Prof. Kinderman called for a radical change in the way society, the media and health and social care services deal with mental health.

Prof. Kinderman advocated for an entirely new approach to psychiatric care that stresses therapy over medication, in line with the common sense appreciation that distress has more to do

with a natural reaction to life's challenges rather than with disease. Prof. Kinderman also discussed the relationship between biological, social and circumstantial factors and their role in mediating psychological processes that lead to psychological and social problems.

His contribution also touched upon the concept of social anxiety and the tendency to label a person affected by mental health issues as someone suffering from a pathology. According to such an approach, the concept of disorder would translate into an abnormal reaction to a specific stress or trauma. On the contrary, he claimed the need to understand how each one of us has learned to make sense of the world, and tailor help to our unique and complex needs - "*Don't ask what's wrong to me, ask what's happened to me*".

Study visits

In the afternoon the group participated to a study visit to the Tom Allan Centre in Glasgow run by CrossReach. First, John Macdonald offered an introduction to the work of CrossReach on Mental Health. Following this, Allan Marshall, Deputy Manager, and Katie Mazzoncini, Service Manager at CrossReach, gave presentations on 3 flagship services around mental health offered by CrossReach.

CrossReach Tom Allan Centre – Counselling, Postnatal Depression Counselling and training for Counsellors

Based in Glasgow, the Tom Allan Centre offers a general counselling service and a specialist postnatal depression services, the Bluebell Perinatal Depression Counselling Service, which begins in pregnancy or shortly after birth. The Centre also offers a fast-track counselling service with no waiting list, the COSCA



training in counselling skills and supervision, a volunteer counsellor, office support and crèche worker opportunities.

The staff of the Tom Allan Centre is composed by approximately eighty counsellors (all volunteers) and two doctors, while it usually receives three new clients per week. Most volunteers employed at the centre, which also represent almost the entire body of the service's counsellors, went through specialised university education programmes. Furthermore, in a few cases, counsellors were previous users of the centre who then became specialised mental health therapists.

Allarton – Residential service for people with complex mental health support needs

Allarton is a specialist mental health care home providing 24-hour care and supporting 12 adults with a “high needs” classification. The service works together with people who experience mental health problems, enabling choice, independence and providing practical support to help them achieve greater wellbeing, in particular in their relationship with their communities.

Allarton makes use of the *Mental Health Recovery Star Outcomes* approach to monitor and record service users' progress, while enabling residents to set realistic, relevant and useful goals and to accurately record and recognise progress made. The involvement of families and other carers is encouraged and care staff works hand in hand with them updating on changes on the service, progress made by their relatives, etc. Allarton has also close ties with the Riverside Resource Centre where Care Managers and Community Psychiatric Services are based. Moreover, the service encourages and supports residents to engage with a wide range of community-based projects throughout Glasgow such as [The Coach House Trust](#) and the [Concrete Gardens](#) project.

Morven Day Services – Community-based therapeutic and social support, enabling people to be part of their community

Morven Day Services offers support to adults aged 18 and over who have mental health difficulties through a wide range of quality day services. Through a “Your Service Your Way” approach Morven tailors its support to each user's needs. Each patient is also involved in the planning and development of services towards their recovery. Its services, which are based in various locations throughout East Ayrshire, include the *Morven Day Centre* (offering a personalised programme to support individuals to build their confidence and self-esteem, and to gain a focus to their daily lives), *Community Support and Involvement* (community-based outreach services supporting people to access and become actively involved in their communities), *HIVE* (group service supporting people to meet new friends, learn new skills and receive both professional and peer support), *Action For All* (a volunteer support project providing the personalised support and information necessary to perform volunteering activities) and TOPS (outreach service for adults over 65).

Most service users make use of Morven Day Services from one to five years and they usually get to know the service through referrals from doctors, GPs and other mental health professionals. Nowadays, an emerging issue is represented by the increasing demand of social care work targeting young people (under 16 years).



Thursday, 27 April 2017

The second day of the meeting was opened by a devotion offered by Rev. David McLachlan of the Langside Parish Church, where the event was taking place. Next, the meeting focused on campaigns and advocacy actions aimed to destigmatize mental illness.

Nick Jedrzejewski - The See Me campaign to end mental health discrimination in Scotland



Nick Jedrzejewski, Communications Manager of the See Me campaign, provided an overview of the actions undertaken by this initiative to end mental health discrimination in Scotland. People with mental health issues still face unacceptably high levels of stigma and discrimination, particularly in work, education, health care and within local communities. The See Me campaign is part of the See Me Programme, a project mostly funded by the Scottish government which also includes specific programmes as Education and Young People, Health and Social Care, Workplace and Social Movement. The initiative “See Me in Work” is aimed to explore the impact of mental health disorders on employment.

Nick Jedrzejewski, See Me campaign

One of the main aims of the campaign is to build strong partnerships with different actors, including employers, to support them in changing work practices and improving the working life of employees with mental health issues.

Similarly, the national campaign “Power of Okay” was launched alongside See Me in Work in order to raise further awareness on the issue and encourage sign up through a [video](#) and the “What’s on your mind?” survey. In that regard, the “What’s on Your Mind” package addressed youth and adults to help them build confidence when dealing with mental health and stigma, which has been piloted in schools across Scotland and is fully available for online download for all schools in the country.

The See Me campaign has emphasised the importance of building a close relationship with stakeholders and activists in the field, as witnessed by the creation of the See Me Community Champions Programme, the Media Volunteers initiative and the Young Volunteers initiative, all of them making use of real living experience to drive change. In this regard, the “See Me in Health” campaign was launched to establish stronger partnerships in the health and social care sectors to build social change on joint aims, while bringing the “See Me in Work” project in health care settings to improve policy and practice. CrossReach participants at the event confirmed the positive synergies established by the partnership in raising awareness against stigmatization. For instance, in connection to the projects implemented by See Me Scotland in this field, the Morven Day Services recently initiated a joint campaign aimed to fight against mental health stigma through a local awareness-raising campaign. The campaign reached 24 000 people in the local community through several initiatives, including art exhibitions and the publication of informative booklets.

Later on in the morning, members presented existing **projects and/or services** addressing people with mental health issues with a view towards mutual learning and transferability across the Eurodiaconia network.



Svend Aage Hjelm - Care and support services for people with mental health issues in Denmark (Council of the Danish Diaconia)

Svend Aage Hjelm next presented the general framework of care services for people with mental health issues in Denmark. Svend Aage first sketched the distribution of competences across government levels; whilst Danish regions are in charge of providing psychiatric treatment -and most often in hospitals-, municipalities offer a wide range of support social services for people with psychosocial needs.

However, the transition between the two levels is not always seamless. The lack of available beds in psychiatric hospitals is currently resulting in increasingly shorter admissions. Once patients are discharged, they are referred to municipalities for psychosocial support services.

In Denmark, social care services for people with mental health issues are integrated as part of every social intervention (education, work inclusion, etc.). Whilst this shows that mental health services are mainstreamed across all social services, this may lead to parallel interventions and lack of coordination of how mental health issues are addressed. In light of this, there has been progress towards 'coordinated plans of action for patients with double diagnosis', where case managers oversee social interventions in full, are aware of each service's actions and help users navigate the system.

Romana Dobšová - Rozumíme si: a service for people with mental health issues (Slezská Diakonie, Czech Republic)



Romana Dobsova, Slezska Diakonie

The project "Rozumíme si" (We understand each other) has been implemented by Slezská Diakonie since 2015 with the financial support of the Moravian-Silesian region and the Třinec municipality. The project aims to provide a quality social care service to people affected by mental health issues in the city of Třinec; the service is free of charge, operates on weekends and has a capacity for 20 adult users -most are aged between 35 and 50-. Most users are affected by such mental health problems as paranoid schizophrenia and depression.

The service Rozumíme Si offers individualised support to patients and its activities are also aimed to contribute to the destigmatisation of mental health illness in the longer term. The project included other initiatives such as the Conference "Rozumíme Si", which represented an opportunity for group training and a platform for volunteers employed in the area of mental health to share their ideas and experience.

Jackie Walker - CrossReach Confidential Connections (CrossReach, Scotland)

CrossReach Confidential Connections (CCC) is a project for a remote counselling service recently initiated by the Bluebell Perinatal Counselling Service of the CrossReach Tom Allan Centre in Glasgow. CCC is partly financed by the National Health Service and the service charges a fee only to users who can afford to pay for



them. CCC aims to use new technologies to pilot successful intervention for mothers with perinatal mental illness in a more direct and effective way.

The idea is to use innovative software to create on-demand access to emotional support and bring the transformative therapeutic power of counselling to all areas of Scotland. The next implementation measures include the production of an Integrated Project Plan for 2017-2018.

Tereza Najbrtova - Training volunteers to support people with mental illness (Diaconia of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren, Czech Republic)

Tereza presented the socio-therapeutic activities carried out at the Dobroduš social service centre in Prague. The centre represents a unique example of combination between social service and volunteering programmes. Its services are specifically targeted to individuals with long-term mental illnesses, living in isolation and in need of social contacts. The Dobroduš project was initiated by the crisis centre of the DECCB in Prague in 2005. The main aims of Dobroduš social services are to increase social contacts of people affected by mental illness and support them in building new relationships; to provide training opportunities on how to deal with the obstacles and pitfalls of everyday life; to help them deal with their interests and personal issues; to function as a bridge between the users and the social environment; to enhance individual skills.

Volunteers are at the heart of service provision. Specific criteria must be met by volunteers; for instance, at least 6 months of minimum engagement and attendance of a compulsory 16-hour training. The first evaluation of volunteers' engagement takes place after 2 or 3 months of activity, while regular supervision by a specialised psychotherapist takes place once per month and lasts about two hours. The training sessions for volunteers include regular face-to-face discussions with people who have previously suffered from mental health issues, but also with other volunteers sharing their experience, previous guests of the centre who discuss their personal experience with volunteers, and two current guests who present their views on mental disorders and psychiatric/mental health care. In general, volunteers participate to regular meetings with both their coordinators and the centre's guests, where they have an opportunity to discuss issues of common concern, plans, proposals, strategies and challenges.

Dr. Astrid Giebel - The triad of spiritual, existential communication and self-care in personnel and organizational development of (diaconal) care settings (Diakonie Deutschland)

Dr. Astrid Giebel provided a broad overview of the role played by Christian (and diaconal) values in the daily work of care settings, both in terms of personnel and organisational development. The presentation raised key questions such as "How are diaconal values and Christian faith experienced in care settings by employees and patients?" or "How can the care staff fulfil their vocation in accordance with diaconal values?". In that regard, she stressed that also within Christian or diaconal care services employees should be able to enjoy opportunities to grow personally (including spiritually) and professionally. However, such responsibility must be equally shared between employers and employees in order to work effectively in both directions.

Between January 2010 and December 2012, Diakonie Deutschland carried out the project "Existential Communication and Spiritual Resources in Care" funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) as part of the *Rückenwind* programme, which addressed employees working in the field of social economy. The project was aimed to provide adequate mental health support to the care staff and looked at the following elements: Spiritual Care, Existential Care and Self-Care. Regarding spiritual care, Astrid underlined the importance of finding an accurate definition of spirituality, which tends to have different meanings. In general, spirituality contributes to shape the physical, intellectual, psychological and social manifestations of a person's inner value



and motivation. At the same time, as the world of values adopted by an individual, the spiritual dimension also affects ethical decisions.

In terms of employees' mental health, it is crucial to acknowledge that, when working with people needing support and help, employees look for moments that can be experienced as meaningful, fulfilling and empowering. But in order to do so, they also need a supportive framework, which is linked to the concept of organizational development. Therefore, Astrid supported the inclusion of spirituality in care settings as an important resource to cope with difficult situations, including suffering and crises.

Jackie Walker - Employment Assistance Programme (CrossReach)

The Employment Assistance Programme initiated by CrossReach in Glasgow was initially conceived as an initiative offering affordable and quality counselling and psychotherapy services for employees. Organised on a for-profit basis, the service aims to increase the financial resources of CrossReach. The project was designed as a practical response to the widespread perception of many employees experiencing pressure and/or stress in the workplace that and the feeling that such pressure/stress affects their work performance. Similarly, it represents a valuable alternative for employees different from receiving mental health support from their employers, which very often lack the necessary resources and expertise.

Eurodiaconia then addressed a few concluding words, stressing the importance of members' input to steer and feed into the network's work on the topic of mental health. The Secretariat thanked members for their contributions and active participation throughout the two days.