

22nd June 2011

Penumbra

Self-Directed Support Event



Proud mother Noreen with her twins, Anne and Tom



Many of our bookings come from someone seeing us on the road and this one was no different. The enquiry came from Penumbra, a mental health charity, a few months back, and we kept sight of it firmly until the day approached.

“Penumbra is a mental health charity organisation and they are committed to empowering people to look forward to mental wellbeing with recovery focused support. They understand that self-directed support can give people more choice, control and flexibility to live the lives they want to live. Penumbra empowers people to look forward to mental wellbeing with recovery focused support and individually set and managed goals.



T0131 475 2380 or Email enquiries@penumbra.org.uk

The principles of hope and recovery are the foundation of our way of working. We see the whole person, not just mental ill health. Penumbra promotes mental wellbeing for all, prevents mental ill health in those at risk and supports those experiencing mental ill health.”

Penumbra help people with mental health conditions to manage their own support budget to make the choices that best suit the individual e.g. a person may see the need to have assisted shopping once a week and can use their budget for that purpose or want to go swimming twice a week but need help in doing that.

And so Buddy Beat was asked to take part in a day event in Glasgow at the St Andrews in the Square Church in the Saltmarket area. Running from 10-2.30, the aim of the day was to look at how people can use Self-Directed Support creatively to meet their outcomes and improve their personal sense of inclusion, satisfaction and wellbeing. Representatives from community groups and projects would also be attending to provide information about their services and to help facilitate the event. The event included workshops, music, art, drama, comedy, information, lunch and was a chance to meet people.

Buddy Beat was given a 45 minute spot just after lunch. A lot to fill perhaps, but we have enough armoury in our war chest to swish that aside! We were given

permission to have our stall there for the day so Allan and Hazel got there early to set up.

The Buddy Beat seemed as keen as ever to sign up for this and they were-

- *Jane Bentley*
- *Marion Bisland*
- *Allan Borland*
- *Hazel Borland*
- *Tom Chalmers*
- *Anne Dowie*
- *Mary Graham*
- *Connor Muir*
- *Eileen McGrory*
- *Jackie McDowall*
- *Christine Robertson*
- *Noreen Young*

The members had the choice to turn up anytime but everyone agreed to make a day of it and soak up the event as a whole. Tom travelled from Paisley on The Buddy Beat Express train with Marion and Mary doing similar and coming via Barrhead's BB Express, Anne and Noreen, with all five meeting up in Glasgow's Central Station. Christine was driver once again and took along Eileen, Jackie and Connor.



St Andrew's in the Square-A majestic venue



Programme

10.00 - 10.30am	<p>Registration</p> <p>Tea/coffee on arrival</p> <p>Sign up to workshops and massages, information stalls, raffle tickets, welcome music</p>
10.30 - 10.45am	Welcome and Introduction by Fiona Tall, Penumbra West Area Manager
10.45 – 11.15 am	Nigel Henderson Corinne Scott
11.15 – 11.30	Glad to be Mad – some stand up from the comedy group
11.30 – 12.15pm	Workshops Universal Comedy, SDSS, WRAP, Kathleen Peter Tenant, GCIL
12.15 – 1pm	<p>Lunch</p> <p>Feel free to investigate the stalls, information table, and art works, put your wish on the wishing tree, thoughts on the thought wall and view Universal Comedy's DVD.</p>
1pm – 1.45	<p>Buddy Beat</p> <p>Find out more about the percussion group and take part in creating music.</p>
1.45 – 2pm	Presentation of outcomes prize, raffle, closing thoughts and Thank you.
2-2.10pm	ARBD Band
15.10 - 15.30	<p>Networking</p> <p>Tea and coffee, feedback and evaluation</p>



Pop music's next big thing Mazza B arrives for the big event



Jailbirds Anne "Fingers" Downie and Noreen "Knuckleduster" Young anxiously await their day release permission to allow them to join BB for the big day

The event began just after 10am with almost 150 people filed into the impressive church venue and Fiona Tall, Penumbra West Area Manager, gave a short presentation on Penumbra and it's good work and outlined what she hoped the day would bring- good fun and information to help people move forward with Self Directed Support. Penumbra works across 6 local authorities in The West of Scotland, supporting around 180 people. Overall, Penumbra works across 15 local authorities in Scotland.

Fiona then introduced the first speaker of the day, Jen McCole of the Long Term Conditions Alliance Scotland, LTCAS, which supports and strengthens the many organisations working in Scotland who support and represent people living with long term conditions, their families and unpaid carers. This presentation focused on community projects that LTCAS has supported- one was a community art group and another a community kitchen and using photographs she spoke of the need for people to get into their communities to help reduce feelings of isolation and also how these groups provide excellent peer support. Wow, this just summed up everything that Buddy Beat is all about!

Next up we had Corinne Scott, a Self Directed Support Advisor with Penumbra. Corinne and her fellow advisors are known as "Champions" and they all wore distinctive Champion/Penumbra white tea-shirts to make them stand out in the crowd. As easy to spot as The Buddy Beat, in their own radiant colours! Corinne spoke about her experience as an Advisor and her thoughts on the services provided, and she made some terrific comments, one being "Self Directed Support shifts the power from the state to the individual" which in itself is very empowering and also "Self Directed Support gives freedom to the individual enabling them to go in the direction they want to." Corinne's talk ended with all the Champions rising from their seats, amid huge appreciative applause from everyone around.

Fiona Tall then introduced the next segment in the programme, stand-up comedy called "Glad to Be Mad". Two ladies were presented to ourselves- Gillian Grant and Linda McGee. We were informed that the Glasgow East Regeneration Agency, based in Easterhouse ran a ten week course with the help of Glasgow's Universal Comedy. Universal Comedy help people with mental health problems or illness' to look at the funny side of their lives, helping increase self-confidence, meet new people and learn

new skills. When this ten week course ended, the members kept going, writing their own material and have performed at comedy festivals in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Linda McGee was first up and she opened by telling everyone that she has been bipolar since 2000. Her main story was of the time when she was having an "episode" and she fancied pizza so she strolled to the nearby pizzashop. She made her order and the gentleman asked for her money. She said she made a meal (no pun there!) of getting her cash out, all the while telling the increasingly agitated owner to "just get it in the oven". Both of them exchanged words and Linda kicked his shop window in, an act which saw her locked up in a police cell over the course of the weekend. To battle the boredom in her cell she began to sing the Barbra Streisand song "As If We Never Said Goodbye". At this point Linda actually sang this song and she had a marvellous and powerful voice. In her story Linda finished singing & the ladies in the adjacent cells asked for requests and she sang as much as she could, most of which were ABBA songs. Linda told all her surrounding cell-mates that the next time a policeman came around they were all to sing "Please Release Me" which they duly did and Linda found herself released on the Monday morning. A year later, her court case came round and Linda was supported by her sister who stood at the back of the courtroom. Linda's lawyer questioned the pizza shop owner and asked him to point out the lady who smashed his shop window and he looked to the back of the hall and pointed straight at Linda's sibling, and the lawyer immediately asked for the case to be dismissed and all charges were dropped! Linda ended her five minutes by singing, with great aplomb, that Beverley Sisters classic "Sisters".

Her friend Gillian Grant was up next and she began to say that since she first became ill in the 1980's she has had every name thrown at her- a bit mad, fruitloops, away with the fairies, bats in the belfry. She recalled that when she first visited a GP and was asked the question "Do you ever feel suicidal?" to which she replied "Yes" and she instantly received a prescription for 100 antidepressants. She took them all at once and was rushed to hospital to have her stomach pumped out. When she got back home she revisited her GP who posed the same question as before and gave her another prescription for 100 antidepressants. Gillian quipped- "It was like he was giving me a map!" Gillian then spoke about her first time being hospitalised up in Inverness and poked gentle fun at some of the side-effects of certain medication, which certainly struck a chord with members of the audience. We laughed as she posed the question- "When you are hospitalised, do the staff get the patients clothing from the local circus?" and reminisced about hospital discos with bottles of lemonade and packets of digestive biscuits. Gillian said that she was then "good" for years but suffered a setback and was this time taken into the hospital at Parkhead in Glasgow. Gillian said that she knew something was wrong when the white goods in her house began talking to her. The fridge was okay and the washing machine kindly, but she could not trust the microwave which spoke Japanese to her. To resolve the matter she took the tinfoil from her curtains and filled the microwave. She switched it on and closed the kitchen door only to hear a loud bang

some minutes later. On opening the kitchen door she saw that her microwave had exploded out the open window and catapulted down 18 flights to the ground below! Gillian ended by calling Linda back onto the stage and they both received a terrific round of whistle-filled applause and Gillian shouted "Please sign up for our workshop!"

Fiona then informed everybody of the various workshops about to take place- Universal Comedy with Linda McGee and Gillian Grant, and we were warned that this would be interactive; 2 different massage workshops: a Self Directed Support fun quiz with prizes to be won; a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) workshop; The "P" Factor" which investigated Personalisation which basically is the services co-produced for a person's individual needs; Glasgow Centre for Independent Living Workshop which would look at people using Self Directed Support, a Paths Workshop and also spoke about the Wishing Tree and Thoughts Board, inviting people to add their comments.



Anne, Eileen and Tom almost merging into one line of custard

Everyone moved into their designated areas for the next 45 minutes or so.

Connor took part in the comedy workshop and said he had enjoyed himself, Eileen was heard to say that her massage was very good and gave her a lift, Jackie found the WRAP workshop interesting and Hazel found the "P" Factor informative.

It was now time for lunch and trays of sandwiches and home-made soup was on offer, while Allan and Hazel found themselves with plenty of interested visitors to the stall. After the BB gang had munched down their lunch, we all helped Jane set up our gear on the stage and fifteen minutes before the restart we had a fresh-air run-through of our performance pieces. Yes, or the first time, we were going to showcase two of our musical numbers- a sure sign of the group's progress!



Jane took control of the microphone and introduced herself and Buddy Beat, giving a little background to our story. We began with "Funky Lunch" and ran through this number effortlessly and we sure packed a punch, as was evidenced by the crackling round of applause.

We all looked pleased as Jane moved onto the next part of our "spot" and that was a Question and Answer" segment. Jane posed three questions and the microphone was passed around Buddy Beat for those wanting to speak. The first question posed, and they were all more than relative to the day's proceedings, was "How did you feel when you first came to Buddy Beat?" and when Jane looked for a volunteer to answer, our Eileen stretched for all she was worth, almost popping her shoulder out, to get at the microphone, showing the world her eagerness! Eileen spoke about seeing Buddy Beat perform and loved them, never thinking she would one day be one of the gang and that when the chance came to come along to our group she was nervous and unsure and just started to bang away on a drum, but soon settled in & fell in love with the music. Connor took the microphone next and spoke candidly about his illness and how joining the group after last year's Mental Health Arts and

Film Festival has helped his confidence. Hazel spoke about being invited by former member Lesley King and that it took her three or four months to pluck up the courage to come along and try and now she is more than glad that she did as the music helps her escape her worries. Christine then mentioned that when she was invited into the group it was still very small with just Anne and Tom and a few others and that helped her settle in, but realises that joining a large group can be an anxious thing to do, but the positives to be gained far outweigh any negatives. Second question from Jane came in the shape of "What does drumming do for you?" and again the microphone was passed around with contributions from Eileen and Connor once more, who spoke about increased confidence and the learning of new skills while Tom spoke about the sense of friendship, which was backed up by Christine who spoke of the real sense of "camaraderie" within the group. Jane's final question was "What would you say to someone else who was thinking of joining a group?" and Hazel commented on how worthy it can be with benefits such as increased confidence, making new friends and giving a focus and purpose. Mary spoke too adding that the best thing is to go along and try it out, be brave! What was also lovely here was how the audience applauded each person after they had spoken, showing their appreciation for our words. Uplifting! Marvellous! The general group consensus was to "Do it!" and just try the first session of a new group to see how you feel, or take someone with you to help you get "through the door" and Allan rounded it off by simply stating that when you begin to drum, all your troubles and woes ease away for a precious couple of hours.

Jane opened it up to the audience and one chap, who sat close to the stage shot out of his seat and declared "You lot sure know how to bang those drums! How do I join?"

Jane then informed everyone that we would perform our second piece, "The Weather Report" and gave a little background to this number. We rattled through the rainstorm, the thunder and lightning, the rowing segment and the arrival at the shore, managing to keep our feet dry before charging it back up with three nautical themed rifts and then finally and peacefully came back to the sandy shores where Christine gently rotated the Ocean Drum for a few seconds before stopping and immediately the audience broke into huge applause!

It was now time for audience participation and when Jane pointed out the bags of coloured Boomwhackers in front of the stage, there was a real sense of excitement around the hall. Noreen, Christine and Connor helped Jane pass Boomwhackers around the nattering hall and in no time at all everyone was armed and dangerous. There then followed a truly wonderful ten minutes of tuneful notes filling the church as Jane played with each coloured section, charging their excitement as she taught them their individual notes and then, with Buddy Beat giving a gentle background beat, each coloured section played their notes and the hall tingled with music. It was a joy to watch as the audience were very much up for the challenge and Jane played with them, switching from colour to colour, cheekily reducing the time on each turn. The noise built up and then Jane took it down a few notches, and that's when Buddy

Beat took out their hand-chimes, adding little odd chimes as and when. Jane turned her attention back to the throng and got them going with gusto once more. After a few minutes she reverted to us and we played several notes in unison, before Jane turned back to the audience and brought the whole thing to a great finish! Brilliant!

The round of applause was terrific and Fiona Tall took to the stage once more to give us hearty thanks and we received many compliments as we picked up our gear and moved away to the front door area of the church to pack things away. Back on the stage, Chairman Nigel Henderson gave his thoughts on the day before Fiona Tall and Corinne Scott drew the raffle and handed out prizes that had been won.

Tom won a Noreen in the raffle



Mary saves a penalty as The Yellows cheer her on

*Gerry and Marion-
coming soon to a
theatre near you....*

*Last on the agenda
was a live band from
Penumbra's ARBD
service, My Mate
Jake. My Mate Jake
totally rocked the
church for the final
fifteen minutes. They*

started with "House of The Rising Sun" and they were assisted by the gentleman who had earlier told us that we knew how to "batter those drums". Jimmy Mac McCree, as he is known, stood in front of the stage with his tambourine and danced around until he was presented with a microphone and we were all stunned when he asked our very own Marion to join him and they duetted the remainder of the song. Well, that was certainly not in the program but it went down very well indeed!

My Mate Jake then sang a stirring version of Chasing Cars by Snow Patrol and everyone was singing along. Lastly they performed "Gloria", which was marred by the power cutting out a few times, but nevertheless toe tapping stuff. A great way to end a great day!

This was a splendid event for Buddy Beat to be a part of, and was enjoyed by everyone, Buddy Beat made a bit of their own history by performing two musical pieces at the same event for the first time. At the group's regular weekly meeting the following morning Jane asked for comments on the day itself. Eileen said it had been "brilliant" and that she was nervous at first but that feeling soon disappeared when we began to play. Mary thought that it was a terrific event to be part of and said that she found the tone of it different in that the audience were so keyed in to making music together. Connor said that the highlight for him was our Question and Answer session, which was new experience for a lot of the members. Connor was right- it was rather special and is a very useful exercise that we could take to other conferences and events.



Hazel reported that the stall had seen a lot of visitors and many purchases were made, adding that there had been loads of brilliant feedback. One lady stopped Tom and effused; "You were all totally fabulous! I had seen you before at the Lothian Recovery Network in Edinburgh in February and you were brilliant then. I have told everyone I could how good Buddy Beat is, but today you were totally fabulous!" And as she walked away, she repeated- "Totally fabulous!"

No-one can deny that what was on show at this event via the two lady comedians, Buddy Beat and live band My Mate Jake, that a very powerful message was delivered. We all demonstrated to the max what can be achieved by joining a community group or project and showed that despite having mental health issues, it should never hold you back. To quote a fan, "Totally fabulous!"



We were lucky to have some pillars of the community with us



Later Noreen was locked back in her cell, only just realising that Anne had made a solo bid for freedom. "Free The Buddy Beat One!"

Words and pictures (with a little help from Noreen and Eileen) by Tom Chalmers

