



HUG
ACTION FOR MENTAL HEALTH

HUG (Action for Mental Health)

Speaking out to improve rights and challenge stigma

Member Bulletin

Celebrating our collective voice across the Highlands

Spring Issue

Announcement

Since the start of the Pandemic, we have not been able to meet face to face regularly and, as our staff have worked from home, our office at Cromwell Villa has stood empty.

Cromwell Villa is very important to staff and members alike. It has been our home for a long time now and offered a safe and comfortable place for us to meet and be welcomed and accepted for who we are. We have a great affection for Cromwell Villa and the many friends we have met there.

As we move out of lockdown and we hope, the threat from Covid -19 recedes, we have begun to consider how and when we can meet up again. We have had to accept that Cromwell Villa is unlikely to meet our needs for a safe, socially distanced place to meet in the future.

In October, we had a conversation about this at our Advisory Group meeting and we have discussed the issue more generally with our members over the last year. Sadly, we have decided that in order to allow us to return to face to face meetings with our members we need to give up Cromwell Villa as our office. It is true also, that cost has been part of this decision. Working from home will mean a significant saving and that will allow us to hire venues that are more suitable for meeting with each other in a safe way.

We want to reassure you that we are absolutely committed to continuing to work with you as members. We are all desperate to return to face to face working and we are examining how best we do that as we move forward out of lockdown. There is no desire to move away from face to face meetings, indeed this decision will allow us to find spaces which we can use safely and which are more accessible right across Highland, without being tied to Cromwell Villa.

We are not looking for a new office space at the moment. That may change if our funding situation changes but for now we are looking to a future where we can meet with as many of you as possible, free from the constraints that our office places on us. A future where more of you can engage with us and where we can keep each other safe, both mentally and physically.

Alan Bithell Sue Lyons

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Colin Murchie - in memory

It is with great sadness that we have to tell you that a long standing HUG member and friend Colin Murchie passed away recently. Colin was involved in HUG for many years and was a 'weel kent face' for many organisations working in Mental Health including VOX and BiPolar Scotland where he was a long standing director.

Graham Morgan and Ken Porter remember Colin for us:

I met Colin so long ago that I cannot remember when it was, he was a wonderful man and a man of his own type. I remember our indignation when he kept quoting articles to us from the Daily Mail and I remember his warmth and his humour. I remember his stories that he wrote in the Biscuit Tin writing group which we were sure were about him but which he refused to confirm or deny. I remember his memory of being in the IPCU in Craig Dunain, his times of homelessness and hopelessness. His joy that places like Cairdeas Cottage were able to replace the library as a place to go out of the rain and gain company when community care was even more a travesty than it is now. I think of Colin with fondness and affection, someone happy to be who he was, despite his difference or if not happy, someone who made my step lighter when I saw him.

Graham Morgan

If I had to describe Colin in a single word, it would be plainly and simply 'likeable'. Behind his sometimes gruff and larger-than-life exterior lay a very sociable man. Thoughtful and quiet, but always ready to share his ideas and views with others, of our sometimes challenging world. His streetwise exterior sometimes concealed, too, a gentler, wittier and more refined side to his character. We always enjoyed what he brought to our meetings, and he articulated his thoughts with precision, open-mindedness and clarity. And, of course, we were most grateful to Colin for taking HUG's Highland 'voice' and its regional-specific issues to Scotland's influential Central Belt, through his role as a board member of VOX (Voices of Experience). Thank you, Colin. We'll all miss you.

Ken Porter



VOICES OF EXPERIENCE

**VOX Virtual AGM -
Thursday 20th May 2021
@ 5.00pm**

In Highland, HUG Action for Mental Health works with you to raise awareness and change what isn't working for you and your communities. Come along to the virtual VOX AGM and find out more.

Hear how they are expanding and what they have achieved so far for everyone who lives with Mental Illness in Scotland.

Register here - <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/voxs-annual-general-meeting-tickets-152369730967>

Thursday Think-In

Our HUG Think-In remains online every second Thursday. Being online has meant many more people from across Highland can join the discussions. It is great to hear such broad stories about living with mental ill health and sharing of experience of what works in your local community and what doesn't.

Send your stories to hug@spiritadvocacy.org.uk or join us. Details on Eventbrite by following HUG (Action for Mental Health) or on our Facebook page @HUG (Action for Mental Health)

www.spiritadvocacy.org.uk

Email - hug@spiritadvocacy.org.uk

HUG'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY

Celebrating 25 years of Collective Advocacy in Highland



HUG (Action for Mental Health) is 25 this year! We are keen to reach as many of our members as possible and to hear your anecdotes from through the years - from the initial days of setting up the first ever Collective Advocacy for Mental Health in Highland right up to the present day.

Contact us on 0300 365 9366 or by email at hug@spiritadvocacy.org.uk

We are also compiling a celebratory calendar, see below for further information

HUG's 25th Anniversary celebration Calendar!



HUG is producing a calendar for 2022 to raise awareness and funds. Each month will be a picture of our members dressed up as a famous album cover from 1996. Sound like fun?

Ever fancied ransacking a theatres wardrobe department? WHO HASN'T? I am looking for lots of people who would like to do this!

Prefer to write instead? I need 12 people to create a Haiku for each month as well.

Please contact Gill or Joanna on this page to add your name and what you would like to do, or, g-paton2@hotmail.co.uk jhiggs@spiritadvocacy.org.uk

Lockdown

I lie here in the dark
When I should be sleeping
And dreaming dreams of far off
Places or of the ordinary.
It itself it's extraordinary
This Silence
The world holds it breath
As I hold mine.
Yet still, I can hear the beat
Of my own heart as it taps out
It's anxious rhythm.
The only place I allow
My fear to be given its space
To run and dance and whirl
Through my veins
It could almost be joyous.
My face is calm
But my red blood cells,
Little corpuscles of oxygen,
Are partying hard.
So that when there is no sound
In this lockdown world
I can still hear I am alive.

CHANGES

You will have seen the announcement on the front page. In light of this, there are some changes that you will be seeing over the coming weeks.

You will see the first one in the survey that is coming along with this newsletter. We now have a freepost address to allow you to get in touch with us easily if you don't want to or are unable to do that online.

Freepost SPIRITADVOCACY allows you to send information, replies and creative writing to us without charge. You simply write "**Freepost SPIRITADVOCACY**" on the front of your envelope and pop it in the post box - no stamp required. These will be delivered to us as if a normal letter.

The next change will be to our office address - we will of course lose the ability to collect post from Cromwell Villa so we will be using a Post Office Box address. You will be notified of this in due course.

The office number will also change to reflect the fact that we are no longer in the office. The number will be **0300 365 9366**. This number will route to the mobile phones of our staff or you will be able to leave a message.

Remember also that our facebook page remains active, you can use messenger to contact us there. In addition you can email us on hug@spiritadvocacy.org.uk

I hope this helps to reassure you that you will be able to contact us just as you have always done.

We always look forward to hearing from you.

SMHAF HIGHLAND

Lots of you may be wondering what's happening with SMHAF this year! With a huge thanks to Graeme at Mikeysline and Johanne at Clay Studio, the Highlands has an online festival to see and take part in. With some laughter yoga thrown in the mix to keep you all awake and full of beans. To find out what, where, when and how to join in pop along to the SMHAF Highland facebook page [@SMHAFHighland](https://www.facebook.com/SMHAFHighland) or see all events and booking links on the new website - <https://smhafhighland.wordpress.com/events>



HUG Survey

You will have found a short survey enclosed. We are keen to hear from you about the things you think are important. It would be great to hear from you. If you have more to say than the space allows please add a note to the survey and return it all in the envelope provided. You don't need a stamp. You can also complete the survey online at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/2K9F58L>



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