

Service user updates

The Service Improvement Group (SIG) is made up of current and former Second Step service users and works with staff to check the quality of the organisation's services. Currently SIG is preparing to interview service users who are using a new version of Second Step paperwork, namely the Recovery Plan and Safety Plan. The new version is being piloted until the end of March, in four Second Step services. We will ask people about their experience of using the new paperwork and use this to suggest further improvements.

The Stepping Forward Group (SFG) is made up of Second Step service users. We meet to discuss issues that are of common interest to us and to the organisation. We help write and review policies and work with the organisation to develop better services.

Since November four people have joined the group. Currently, we're helping Second Step to:

- put the finishing touches to a new Move-On Policy
- write a 2 year plan to develop service user involvement in the organisation even further

Hellos and Goodbyes

Starters, since January this year

Sarah Webber, Peer Support Assistant, ITS
Rosalind Moreno-Parra, Peer Support Assistant, ITS
Emma Mould, Peer Support Assistant, High Support Services
Tanya Kershaw, Team Administrator, North Somerset
Jane Lomax, Senior Health Link Worker, Health Link Service
Tina Dunne, Psychological Therapist, Wellbeing Service
Kerry Vernon, Operational Business Manager
Sabrina King, Operational Business Manager (maternity cover for Kerry Vernon)
Bryony Campbell, Service Delivery Manager, Corporate Team
Chris Arnold, Director of Resources, Executive Team

Leavers

Leanne Thomas, Support Worker, High Support Services
Jerry Williams, Senior Support Worker, Community Supported Accommodation
Rebecca Snell, Senior Volunteer Coordinator, Positive Step
Alison Williams, HR Coordinator

SecondStep
Working for Recovery and Wellbeing

The shock of being sectioned

Lucy Kettle, one of our service users, recently shared her experience of being sectioned with the Bristol Post. She is determined to fight the discrimination associated with mental illness and also help to increase understanding of how frightening it is to be forced into hospital.

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In pictures >



Second Step took to the airwaves...

Pictured (from left to right) Terry Starr, Jacqui Walstra and Lucy Kettle

Second Step took to the airwaves on Monday 20 January – officially the most depressing day of the year. Service users Lucy and Jacqui, and our very own Terry Starr, spoke to BBC Radio Bristol's John Darvall about dealing with depression. They were dressed up in the most colourful best – in support of Mental Health UK's Blooming Monday awareness day – helping to raise awareness of a difficult time of the year.



Multi-Faith Forum event...

The Right Honourable Lord Mayor of Bristol, Councillor Faruk Choudhury discusses Second Step's services with Fatouma Mohammed and Cliff Jones from the Floating Support Service at our stall at the Bristol Multi-Faith Forum event at St. Werburgh's Community Centre in February.

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To receive future newsletters via email text us for free on 80800

More than 500 people were detained by police under the mental health act in the Bristol area last year. And Lucy was one of them. To her, the news that doctors thought she was so unwell she needed to be compelled to a stint in a psychiatric hospital came as horrific surprise. She had visited her GP to discuss a chest infection but less than an hour later she was being told by the crisis team that she could either take some pills and go to hospital herself, or be picked up by police.

An emergency medical panel was called in to decide whether she should be sectioned and, following an hour-long meeting, a van turned up to escort her in.

Lucy, who is 23, said: "The first night of being sectioned was the most frightening night of my life. Everything just felt surreal. It felt like I was in a living nightmare that I couldn't wake up from. It was really awful.

"I was so shocked as well. I didn't realise I was so ill. When the doctor

said I would have to go to hospital I was really cross – I didn't want to go because I thought I was doing fine."

Doctors diagnosed Lucy with bipolar disorder and said she had been suffering from it for years.

"When things got really severe I would have hallucinations and I would get really anxious. Just leaving the house would be really hard but then I would really struggle being around people, so it was like being between a rock and a hard place.

"I had suicidal moments but it was the thought that I would be hurting my family which stopped me."

Lucy has been in contact with mental health teams since she was 19, but no one picked up on her illness. She was prescribed a variety of medications and she believed the problem had been solved until her relapse at the age of 22.

Following three intensive months in hospital, at Callington Road in Brislington and then at Southmead,

Lucy was discharged.

She said: "I had become accustomed to hospital; I had got used to the routine and never being on my own, so it was quite scary at first."

She has also become involved with the charity Second Step, which has taught her steps to realising when she is becoming unwell again so she will be able to stop circumstances spiralling out of control.

Ms Kettle said: "Not being able to sleep is a huge sign. You tell yourself 'it's OK, I don't need to sleep' but it is really bad for you."

Since her illness was diagnosed Ms Kettle said things had become much easier with her family, who live in north Bristol.

"Before someone is diagnosed, no one knows why you are acting the way you do but once you are, it really helps them."

stock photography used to illustrate this story

Welcome to your new newsletter



A note from the editorial team

Welcome to the first edition of Second Step's new-look newsletter – for both staff and people who use our services. Currently I am putting the newsletter together with our Peer Support Officer Amanda Headley-White. But ideally we would like to form an editorial group with two current or former service users. If you're interested in getting involved, please do get in touch.

As you can see Second Step News aims to be newsy and informative – giving a snapshot of what is going on in the organisation. For our more creative and discursive writings, art and photography we will be producing a twice yearly magazine following in the footsteps of the Step Ahead newsletter. If you'd like to contribute to it, please let me know.

The best way to contact us for this – and for any other comments you may have about the newsletter – is to use our free text messaging service. Text us on 80800 starting your message with the words Step News. We look forward to hearing from you.

Jane Edmonds
PR & Communications Manager



Benefits Street

stereotype or insight?

Benefits Street, the Channel 4 documentary, has caused a media outcry. The series showed life on a Birmingham street on which the majority of residents claim welfare benefits.

Vulnerable

There were two main problems with the series. First, that it represented some extremely vulnerable people who may not have been capable of giving their consent. Second, the series focused on stereotypes. So, rather than challenging popular assumptions about benefit claimants, it chose to represent negative stereotypes. There is not a standard benefit claimant. I know many claimants who have worked in all sorts of areas from medicine to warehousing, from teaching to administration.

Welfare benefits and the people who receive them is a topic worthy of discussion. But rather than creating a documentary, with 'characters' rather than real people, there needs to be an exploration of how people find themselves on long-term benefits and the impact this has on their lives.

Austerity

Some serious questions should be asked about a society which allows its poorest and most vulnerable to take the hardest cuts in austere times. In my experience the common response to the current round of benefit cuts is one grief, stress and frustration, forcing people to cut essentials such as heating or food to make ends meet. For many people benefits are a cul-de-sac, a bleak experience, offering very little hope of escape. The last thing that is needed in this situation is stereotyping and judgement.

Did you watch Benefits Street? What are your thoughts? Text us for free on 80800 starting your message with Step News

Second Step and me

My name is Amanda Headley-White and I am the Peer Support Officer at Second Step.



In my teens I experienced severe mental health problems and decided I would put this to use and work in mental health. I hadn't heard about peer work but I was passionate about using my lived experience to help others. I'd met a couple of people who worked for Second Step and I loved everything I heard about it. In 2009 I decided I would work for Second Step and narrowed my job search accordingly! As luck would have it, I got the first job I went for.

I started off in what I now think of as the nursery slopes of Intensive Tenancy Support (ITS). ITS works intensively with some incredibly challenging service users, but it was a great team to start in as there was a tremendous feeling of mutual support. The team was close knit and many of the visits were done with two workers. It was a great way to learn. I worked in ITS for three years, but I'd always known I didn't want to work in the front line long term and when the post of Peer Support Officer came up I went for it. I love taking a lead on peer work and never cease to be inspired by those I teach and supervise. The past few years have been tough for the sector, but peer work is growing and that is exciting. I teach for over 40 days of the year. The Peer Support Training course is my favourite to teach and I love seeing people gain hope and grow in confidence.

If you are on a recovery journey with mental health and would like to take part then get in touch. Amandaheadley-white@second-step.co.uk | t: 0117 9096630

We'd like to make 'Second Step and me' a regular slot. If you would like to share your experience of Second Step, please contact us by text message on 80800 starting your message Step News.



Second Step is one of 107 organisations who have signed up to the Who Benefits Campaign which is trying to change the tone and content of the debate around benefits. Run by five charities – The Children's Society,

Crisis, Gingerbread, Macmillan Cancer Support and Mind – the campaign hopes that by using people's stories and experiences the nature of the benefit debate will change. If you have a story of your time on benefits please share it with us – and with the campaign. Find out more at www.whobenefits.org.uk/page/content/front

Text us for free on 80800 and tell us your benefits story starting your text Step News.



Second Step is now on Twitter

We have been tweeting for just a few weeks now but already have 163 followers (as of 19 March). There is a dynamic group of social media activists in Bristol, Bath and beyond who are interested in mental health issues and so the conversation is often interesting as well as fast moving. Please do join the discussions – follow us @wearesecondstep and tell us what you think. Also, if you have something you would like us to tweet about please let us know via our free text messaging service. Simply text 80800 starting your text Step News. Thank you.

Surviving hate crime

The Wellbeing Therapies Service is running courses for survivors of hate crime. If you have experienced any kind of hate crime, you are welcome to attend – though there will be an assessment prior to enrolment. The course will give you some tools to help manage the emotional aftermath of your experiences in the safety of a supportive group led by our Black and Minority Ethnic Wellness Advisor Kanteba Gilling. The first course, which is run with SARI (Stand Against Racism and Inequality), began with a taster session on 25 February and is due to run for six weeks.

Please contact Kanteba on 01179 096630 or 07730656891 for more information.

New mental health partnership for Bristol



Second Step has been instrumental in forming Mental Health Bristol, a partnership of 10 Bristol-based organisations, including Avon and Wiltshire NHS Partnership Trust (AWP), who are bidding to run some of the services currently being recommissioned in the city.

Second Step is part of four bids in the tender process and these are: community mental health services; community rehab; employment; and assertive engagement services. Two services, the Wellbeing Service at the Compass Centre and TSAR team within AWP, are part of the re-commissioning and re-configuration of services. Outcomes of the tenders will be known in May after site visits and interviews.