

HEAR US ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20



**CROYDON'S MENTAL HEALTH
SERVICE USER GROUP**

HEAR US ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

**CHARITY NUMBER 1135535
COMPANY NUMBER 06891337**

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CHAIR OF HEAR US STATEMENT

Working as Interim Chair since November 2018 I am very privileged to be voted in as Chair formally at our last AGM. I would like to thank all the staff and trustees for all their hard work and commitment this year in helping us to secure funding for the coming years.



This is a milestone in Hear Us's aim to diversify its funding sources. In the past year we have been very focussed on continuing our commitment to secure funding for Hear Us for the next 3 years so that we are no longer vulnerable to the instability of funding sources. We have increased our knowledge and skills so that now we are in a much better position to achieve this. I am looking forward to reaping these benefits in the coming year.

This could not have been done without the work of everyone in the organisation and our supporters and partners. I would also like to say a huge thank you to all our volunteers and link workers for their passion and commitment to making sure that the voice of service users is heard loud and proud in Croydon. I'm excited about the year ahead and I look forward to working with you all.

Angela Mitchell (Chair)

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www.guide-hear-us.org

Company # 6891337
Charity # 1135535

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S STATEMENT

This annual report provides a summary of our Hear Us' activities during 2019/20

Hear Us is a Croydon based mental health charity, we are unique in that all our 50+ staff, volunteers and trustee are people living with our own mental illnesses. Hear Us, deliver a peer support services that helps Croydon's mental health community to navigate, statutory and voluntary services the welfare benefits system, and to give our community a voice and to be heard in the commissioning and delivery of mental health services.

Over 2019 we have been developing a new 3-year Business Plan and a funding strategy, taking stock of where we are and where we wish to be.

We had a number of goals, which included being less financially dependent upon our funders the CCG and Croydon Council. We developed an internal business steering group which consisted of our Chair Angela Mitchell our Company Secretary Abeline Greene, our Development Manager Eleanor Yates, myself, and Claudia Demuth from Demuth Consulting Ltd. Between us we have been planning our growth, our project direction and an organisational funding strategy. Which has come to fruition in 2020/21 with a number of new funders supporting our projects

2019/20 was a difficult year, but we needed time to draw up plans for the coming years whilst continuing to deliver all our projects, reaching over 3500 Croydon people affected by mental illness.

I am very proud of working at Hear Us, working alongside all my staff, trustees and volunteers. Each of us work hard and are all are extremely committed to delivering a peer support service.

Tim Oldham

Chief Executive Officer

THANK YOU TO ALL

I would like to thank all my staff: Al, Barbra, Carmen, Cheryalin, Claire, David and Eleanor, for all the support they have given me during the past year and the help they have given to make Hear Us stronger and more dynamic and thank the following for all the work they have put into making Hear Us brilliant:

The Welfare Benefits Surgery Team currently being managed by David and Cheryalin, with support from Caz, Susan, Gita, Claire, Juliet, Ruth, Jonathan, Chantelle, Sharon and John, for keeping us healthy

The Linkworking Team led by Barbra: Abby, Adrian, Andy, Balaji, Ben, Calbert, Carmen, Claire, Duncan, Emma, Frances, Horace, John, Jonathan, Letitia, Lorraine, Michael, Michelle, Rose, Richard, Sharon, Sherlene, Teresa, Tim, Tony & Veronica

The Reachout Team led by Barbra: Adrian, Andy, Calbert, Caz, Claire, Eleanor, Elliot, Emma, Jeremy, James, Jonathan, Leroy, Letitia, Marie, Martine, Neil, Richard, Sharon, Tim & Tony

A massive thank you to everyone involved over the past year in making our Mental Health Open Forum such a success from all the guest speakers to the Hear Us staff (Al, Barbra, Carmen, Claire, David, Eleanor & Shellie & Tim) and volunteers (Caz, John, Nemone, Mark, Martine, Richard & Sinclair who all help in the smooth-running of the forum. And of course, thanks to everyone who attends the forum, asking thought provoking and sometimes difficult questions and contributing to some lively debates.

I would like to thank all the Trustees that have helped steer the organisation: Abeline, Angela, Caz, David, Jonathan, Josh, Karen, Ruth & Ovie. Finally, I would like to thank everyone that has helped Hear Us grow over the years and blossom to become the charity it is today.

WELFARE SURGERIES PROJECT

Many people experiencing mental health difficulties are reliant on benefits to survive and our project aims to help people with support needs who are looking for support and help to navigate the welfare system.



David Ashton
Welfare
Manager

We might be a small charity but we have a big heart and we work hard supporting vulnerable people from the start of their benefit problems right to the end, including representing people at Social Security Tribunals. We also encourage and empower service users to become more financially independent by giving them the knowledge and understanding to feel more confident about managing their benefits claims with the aim of becoming a more resilient community

People find us in different ways, through word of mouth as well as through third sector, local authority and NHS services and we work with a very broad range of people, of all ages and backgrounds.

This year has seen a continuing need for our project with most claimants facing regular renewals and assessments for their benefits as well as more people finding themselves having to make claims for Universal Credit; a benefit replacing a number of other benefits, including Employment and Support Allowance and housing benefit, with an online system unfamiliar to the majority of claimants.

We are always grateful to the organisations who provide us with funding to enable us to deliver this much needed support to the



**Cherylin
Wilfred**
Welfare Advisor

community.

We can support you with Employment and Support Allowance(ESA) money if you cannot work because of illness or disability, Personal Independence Payment(PIP) replaces Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Universal Credit (UC) is replacing 6 other benefits with a single monthly payment

We can assist by; seeking supporting letters/evidence from GPs and mental health teams. Accompanying people to their assessments and, where necessary, Tribunals; supporting people to ask for a Reconsideration if they receive an unfair DWP decision. Applying for Freedom passes and other concessionary transport schemes.

Applying for grants to help with utility (water, gas and electricity) debts – we have successfully had dozens of utility debts written off in the past 3 years.

We have successfully applied to Croydon council to help people who are in arrears with their rent, avoiding eviction in several cases (via the DHP scheme) and to acquire essential items for their homes via the CDS (Croydon Discretionary Scheme).

If you are struggling with forms and assessments contact the Hear Us Welfare Surgeries Project.

David Ashton: Welfare Surgery Manager
Cheryalin Wilfred: Welfare Surgery Advisor

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LINKWORKING PROJECT



The Linkworking Project has gone from strength to strength this year, with 22 Linkworkers providing 18 sessions a week across 12 Croydon wards/ services at the Bethlem Hospital and in the community. As Peer Supporter Workers, Linkworkers engage well with service users, providing a listening ear, supporting and signposting, and are able to share lived experiences, which inspire service users with hope during difficult times.

Linkwork Champions continue to fight for service users' voices to be heard and take their main areas of concern beyond the ward/ service to high-level meetings in order to push forward changes/ improvements. They regularly meet with senior service managers, management committees and other trust-wide governing groups. Over the past year Linkworkers have continued to play a crucial role in reviewing SLaM trust policies, strategies, quality priorities and are many are actively involved in the community services development design groups.

Some of our Linkworking achievements this year

1. Linkworkers reported that service users found music helpful in their recovery so as a result, Bethlem staff started a weekly music group for inpatients.
2. Linkworkers reported that lack of access to fresh air and hot drinks could be an issue for patients across all the wards, and supported the inpatient teams to improve practice, with one Linkwork Champion joining the local Reducing Restrictive Practices Committee to help keep this and other key areas of concern on the agenda.
3. Linkworkers reported that service users at Jeanette Wallace House were being issued medication unwrapped and staff now supply suitable bags.

4. Linkworkers also reported overcrowding and long waiting times in Jeanette Wallace House on particular days. As a result, some changes were made and improvements seen. Now staff and Linkworkers are working together to monitor, in order to guide further improvement



Barbra Davison
Linkwork
Manager

Towards the end of 2019, we started working on the National Psychosis Unit, which has proved to be very successful. We also started Linkwork Training, with four delegates in attendance, but unfortunately had to bring it to an abrupt halt due to Covid-19 in March 2020.

I would like to thank all those who contribute to making the Linkworking project such a success, this includes all the Linkworkers and those unseen heroes who keeping the data flowing, enabling reports to be sent to our commissioners, and thanks to our allies within SLaM who understand the invaluable contribution a service user perspective can give to services.

Barbra Davison
Linkwork Project Manager

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MENTAL HEALTH OPEN FORUM

The Hear Us Mental Health Open Forum is a place for service users to meet other people and find out about services or activities going on in the borough and across SLaM (South London and Maudsley Mental Health Trust). It is an opportunity for service users to ask questions and debate with those who commission services and service providers themselves – particularly important when changes are taking place. The forum is primarily aimed at service users but of course we welcome carers, volunteers, staff and anyone with an interest in mental health to discuss the issues that affect us all.



Claire Hawkes
Chair of the
Open Forum

In the last year, we had numerous guest speakers from the CCG and SLaM talking about and seeking views on Croydon's Mental Health Service Transformation. We held focus groups on peer support, future plans for Hear Us, and restraint and control on SLaM wards. We held workshops on 'Looking After Your Emotional Wellbeing' run by Croydon IAPT, 'Medication' run by the SLaM pharmacy, and 'Understanding Psychosis' run by OASIS. In addition to many different statutory service guest speakers from SLaM, Croydon Council, and the Croydon CCG (Clinical Commission Group), we were also joined by the voluntary sector. We welcomed Mind in Croydon, Imagine, the Recovery College and many more.

Currently with the Covid-19 crisis the open forum is being held online. Visit www.hear-us.org/event/next-open-forum to register

If you are interested in joining us at the Open Forum please feel free to come along or contact:

Claire Hawkes; Open Forum Chair

Tel: 020 8681 6888 Mobile: 07749 156 828

Email: forum@hear-us.org Webpage: www.hear-us.org/forum



THE OPEN FORUM

HEAR US: POSITIVELY TALKING MENTAL HEALTH

THE REACHOUT CHALLENGE

The Reachout Challenge is Hear Us' project fighting discrimination of mental illness, and 'flying the flag' for reducing stigma in our community. Made up of a team of dedicated volunteers all with our own lived experience, we support each other to speak about living with our mental health diagnoses, so others can gain a better understanding and be equipped to support us when we are in crisis.



The Reachout Challenge continues to provide support to the Metropolitan Police crisis negotiation courses at Hendon and Maidstone Police Training Colleges. We run an interactive training session about mental health and wellbeing and offer the participants a unique opportunity to have conversations about our diagnoses and experiences.

This year we have run information stalls at several Co-Op stores around Croydon and were able to talk to members of the public and encourage them to think about their own mental health. With the help of customers, the Co-Op managed to raise over £9000 of much needed funding for Hear Us to enable us to continue to grow and offer open and honest conversations about challenges we sometimes face living with a mental health diagnosis.

'It's OK to not be OK'

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in such a worthwhile campaign, giving up their time for free, often travelling across London in challenging circumstances supporting others to overcome their anxieties and to enable them to contribute both giving and gaining on their road to recovery.

Barbra Davison, Project Lead

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SERVICE DEVELOPMENT & FUNDRAISING

During the financial year of 2019-2020 I focused on developing a business plan and fund-raising strategy to prepare us for developments in the organisation and formed a project to deliver a business strategy to support our members and service users over the period 2020-2023.



Eleanor Yates
Development Manager

We formed a project development team made up of Angela Mitchell, Abeline Greene, Tim Oldham and myself to act as a steering group for the project.

In March 2019 we held a number of development days for trustees and staff which started the process for evaluating and implementing the future structure and service provision models for Hear Us for the period 2020 to 2023. We involved service users through focus groups at the Open Forum in the summer of 2019, which also fed into strategic planning for 2020-2023. We had invaluable support from Claudia deMuth from Croydon Voluntary Action who supported us through the process and continues to support our organisational development and fund-raising activities. As a result of this project, we developed an in depth business strategy and business plan covering all projects and services which ensured we had a clear and complete specification of how we move forward in the future.

We then undertook a review of funders which whittled down a long list of over 340 potential funders to a more manageable list of about 120. Having identified potential funders we prioritised them to enable us to apply for funders which would be the most likely match.

Due to staff sickness we were unable to start applying to funding grants until January 2020 and of course as soon as we started, the pandemic started as well which meant that we had to move to remote working which has continued for the rest of this year. The pandemic also meant that funders either put on hold their funding grants application process or changed their criteria so that the support available was for COVID-19 pandemic/lockdown related funding. We

have been very successful in winning grant funding since then – more detail available in next year’s annual report.

I also participated in Co Op hosted Reachout events in their supermarkets which raised over £9,000 for Hear Us over the period January 2019 to November 2019 from Co Op members and customers.

Eleanor Yates, Service Development Manager

Hear Us

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Webpage: www.hear-us.org/donate/

WEBSITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA



Hear Us currently host two websites: www.hear-us.org which is our “home” website, meaning the website covers services offered by Hear Us, and the main page has more general news and mental health related news and events etc, and opportunities for service user involvement etc. Hear Us other website: www.guide-hear-us.org is to help promote services run by other organisations local to Croydon as well as some national charities.

We are still fine tuning the online guide to be more consistent with the areas and organisations we promote and information available, as well as being as accurate and up to date as possible. It’s a similar idea to “The Hear Us Guide to Croydon’s Mental Health and Well Being Services” published in physical form in 2015.

Al Carparelli Website and Social Media Development Manager

Tel: 020 8681 6888 Email: webmaster@hear-us.org

Website: www.hear-us.org and www.guide-hear-us.org

EXTRACTS ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Current assets	2020	2019
Debtors	£226	£7,295
Cash at bank and in hand	£93,540	£110,580
		£117,875
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	£1,298	£1,106
Net current assets	£92,242	£116,769
Total assets less current liabilities	£92,242	£116,769
Net assets	£92,242	£116,769
Funds of the charity	£92,242	£116,769
Unrestricted funds		
Total unrestricted funds	£92,242	£116,769
Total charity funds	£92,242	£116,769

During the year our principal funding sources were:

Croydon Clinical Commissioning Group £90,998

London Borough of Croydon £12,038

Maudsley Trust £12,200

Reachout Challenge £11,671

Total £129,141



Maudsley Charity
Health in Mind

CROYDON

www.croydon.gov.uk



Croydon
Clinical Commissioning Group

HEAR US GOALS FOR 2021

Goal # 1

To ensure Hear Us has financial stability to continue delivering quality services, meeting the needs of Croydon's most vulnerable people.

Goal # 2

To expand our Linkworking Project, giving more people in mental distress a voice

Goal # 3

To campaign for improved and more responsive mental health services in line with physical health services

Goal # 4

To secure funding for our Reachout Project in order to challenge health inequalities in society, bringing about wider understanding about mental health and fighting the stigma, discrimination and ignorance towards people living with mental illness

Goal # 5

To develop our Welfare Surgeries by supporting people with a mental illness to feel empowered and in control of their own finances, by helping them to make their own claims for benefits, maintain their own entitlements and where needed supporting them at tribunals

Donate & Support Our Great Cause

Living with a mental illness can smother your motivation. It can peel away the layers of life's possible pleasures and melt away the wonders of love. Mental illness can isolate your existence and exclude you from having friendships, lost before they have even begun.

At Hear Us, all our staff and volunteers know these feelings and adverse emotions as we have walked the same path. That is why Hear Us make, not just one small step, but one giant leap for all our vulnerable communities' needs and hopes.

Hear Us actively makes contact with over 3500 people suffering the anguish of mental distress each year. Our Linkworking

Project supports those that feel they are without a voice or an opinion, to have their voice and issues heard. We help them to gain respect during crisis and despair and we help them to navigate their chosen path through mental health services on their journey to recovery.

Your donations to Hear Us can help to support and empower people who are suffering mental illness, many of whom have learning difficulties or are struggling with addiction problems. These people are Croydon's most vulnerable. Our society is being pulled apart for the benefit and gains of the selfish few, whilst failing to give support to those in need and deep desperation.

New welfare reforms, particularly Universal Credit, are driving people further into poverty. Our welfare benefits project supports people with mental illness to make claims for disability benefits, and we support them with assessments and where necessary, represent them at appeals and tribunals.

Hear Us continues to represent and act as the voice of people using local mental health services in Croydon to service providers and commissioners. We actively campaign with service users on issues raised by service users themselves, to advance education about mental health for public benefit, in Croydon and the surrounding areas, with the object of creating awareness and reducing the stigma attached to mental health.



CAF Charities Aid
Foundation

Each donation helps Hear Us to support people with mental illness live healthier lifestyles and improve wellbeing. You can give to Hear Us in a number of ways:

You can make a secure online payment to Hear Us through our website: www.hear-us.org/donate and click on the CAF Charities Aid Foundation Logo. Here you will be able to make a regular payroll contribution to Hear Us

If your employer has a Payroll Giving scheme, simply nominate Hear Us as your chosen charity, and make a tax-free donation each month.

You can also make a donation in memory of a loved one or leave Hear Us a gift in your will.

Please be assured, any money we receive goes directly towards helping people with mental illness live more fulfilling lives. If you would like more information, please have a look at our latest annual report and accounts. Other ways to raise money for Hear Us would be through holding or taking part in a Community fund-raising event, such as the London Marathon. A less tiring way to raise money might be by having tea and cake fund-raising parties

We would like to thank you for all your support – it makes all the difference to someone suffering the isolation of mental distress.

£3 per month

Will help us run our websites and social media to enable us to help attract more members and supporters

£8 per month

Could put our leaflets in Croydon GP surgeries, helping people to be aware that they are not alone and that there are services in the community to help them

£12 per month

Could answer a call to our Croydon office, providing someone with vital support and information about help in Croydon

£21 per month

Could support our peer support services, helping people engage with Croydon services where they can connect and feel less isolated

£31 per month

Could support our peer welfare benefits workers in helping people of Croydon access support in getting the Welfare Benefits to which they are entitled

£50 per month

Could help our Linkworking Project campaign for better mental health services from the Croydon Clinical Commissions Group (CCG), Croydon Council and the South London and Maudsley NHS Trust (SLaM), so that more people get services that meet their needs

Equal Ops Monitoring: These tables show the number of people that Hear Us have supported over the past year compared to our membership

Post Code Areas	Total	%	Members	%
BR3	33	0.85%	3	0.99%
CR0	1409	36.43%	144	47.68%
CR2	140	3.62%	28	9.27%
CR3	9	0.23%	2	0.66%
CR4	24	0.62%	1	0.33%
CR5	64	1.65%	11	3.64%
CR6	15	0.39%		
CR7	201	5.20%	31	10.26%
CR8	75	1.94%	15	4.97%
CR9	4	0.10%		
SE19	61	1.58%	11	3.64%
SE25			23	7.62%
SM5			1	0.33%
SW16	49	1.27%	9	2.98%
Homeless	133	3.44%		
Out of Area	162	4.19%	12	3.97%
Prefer not to say	1489	38.50%	11	3.64%
Grand Total	3868	100%	302	100%
Age Groups	Total	%	Members	%
16 - 18	39	1.01%	1	0.33%
18 - 20	7	0.18%	1	0.33%
21 - 30	474	12.25%	22	7.28%
31 - 40	596	15.41%	30	9.93%
41 - 50	736	19.03%	56	18.54%
51 - 60	634	16.39%	84	27.81%
61+	276	7.14%	48	15.89%
Prefer not to say	1106	28.59%	60	19.87%
Grand Total	3868	100%	302	100.00%

**HEAR US
TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT - YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020**

Gender	Total	%	Members	%
Female	1261	32.60%	163	53.9%
Male	1698	43.90%	123	40.7%
Transgender	5	0.13%	2	0.66%
Prefer not to say	904	23.37%	14	4.64%
Grand Total	3868	100%	302	100%

Ethnicity	Total	%	Members	%
African	101	2.61%	9	3.0%
Any other Asian Background	13	0.34%	8	2.6%
Any other Black Background	20	0.52%	4	1.3%
Any other Ethnic group	134	3.46%	2	0.7%
Any other Mixed Background	84	2.17%	2	0.7%
Any other white Background	81	2.09%	3	1.0%
Asian	53	1.37%	3	1.0%
Bangladeshi	1	0.03%		
Black British	584	15.10%	18	6.0%
British	177	4.58%	3	1.0%
Caribbean	84	2.17%	16	5.3%
Chinese	8	0.21%	1	0.3%
Indian	13	0.34%	14	4.6%
Irish	7	0.18%	6	2.0%
Pakistani	16	0.41%	3	1.0%
White and Asian	5	0.13%	2	0.7%
White and Black African	2	0.05%	2	0.7%
White and Black Caribbean	24	0.62%	2	0.7%
White and Chinese	1	0.03%	1	0.3%
White British	1217	31.46%	153	50.7%
White European	5	0.13%	2	0.7%
Prefer not to say	1238	32.01%	48	15.9%
Grand Total	3868	100%	302	100%

Support Hear Us by becoming a member - the more members the stronger our charity - See page 21

BECOME A SUPPORTER OF HEAR US

Support Hear Us and get involved in the work Hear Us does in all sorts of ways. There's no pressure to do anything, but if you are keen to take action we'll support you every step of the way. Potential opportunities include:

- Becoming a Peer Support Worker with the Linkworking Project and supporting other service users whilst helping to improve our mental health services
- Coming along to our monthly Open Forums to join our campaigns to have your voice heard
- Joining our Reachout Challenge Volunteers and help fight sigma and discrimination
- Helping fund raise to support the work of Hear Us

Supporting Hear Us is suitable for people with a mental illness, parents or carers and professionals living or working in the London Borough of Croydon. You'll receive regular invites to our events exactly how you wish to receive them, either through regular mail or email.... You choose.



BECOME A SUPPORTER OF HEAR US

I am a resident in London Borough of Croydon

Have a recognisable interest in mental health service user issues in Croydon

Have had emotional, or psychological problems, or, some form of mental illness

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Email:

Age & DOB:

Gender:

Marital Status:

Sexuality:

Ethnicity:

Religion:

Disability:

Please tick how you wish to receive correspondence

Post

Email

Phone

Mobile

Text

Hear Us will not use the information you provide for anything other than distribution of invitations to meetings.

I would like to become a supporter of Hear Us, and to receive information about local mental health services
Please read the form thoroughly and check that the information you have provided is correct before signing.

Signature:

**OUR MISSION: TO PROMOTE,
EDUCATE, COMMUNICATE AND
EMPOWER, FOR THE BENEFIT
AND INTEREST OF PEOPLE
AFFECTED BY MENTAL
HEALTH ISSUES**

**WE ❤️
HEAR
US**



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Charity # 1135535

Company # 6891337



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www.hear-us.org



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hearusmentalhealth



hearuscroydon



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