

Positive Steps 2015

Well the weatherman predicted rain all day. Which shows how much he knows! Whilst we did get a little sprinkling of the wet stuff it didn't dampen the spirits of everyone involved in this year's Mind in Croydon Positive Steps Walk. Now in its third year Positive Steps is all about raising awareness of mental health, bringing down some of the barriers people face but mainly to have fun and feel good.

On the day we had over 20 willing volunteers to man the stewarding points, register walkers, generally move, carry and organise, and at one point even hold down the gazebo while we tried to secure it in what felt like a hurricane. Our volunteers were joined by 52 walkers, 30-40 supporters and well-wishers and thanks to a bouncy castle and face painting, generously supplied by Croydon Heart Town, a lot of passing families - although it was at times difficult to remove Mind in Croydon staff from the bouncy castle in order to let the smaller children have a go.

“I have walked positive steps for the last 3 years – everything I do is a positive step in the right direction, everything I do is a step in the direction towards my goals. Positive steps sums everything up for me.”

(Positive Steps Walker)

Once we had everything laid out, put up and tied down the day began

with a passionate talk from Kevin Day. His honesty and emotion when talking about the challenges his family have recently faced moved everyone assembled but he still found the time in his introduction to be very funny.

The following drum and dance workshop provided by Mango Tree Fit got everyone in the mood for the day. I can definitely recommend a bit of drumming to raise your spirits and loosen the muscles.

And then they were off, our hardy walkers ranging from twins aged five to a Mind in Croydon volunteer aged 74 set off to cover 15km of Lloyd Park cheered on by the gathered crowd. The walkers supported each other as well as receiving encouragement from the stewards dotted around the course and other people out enjoying the park.

Barely an hour later the front runners (or rather walkers) passed the 5km mark and embarked on their second lap. With people joining after the official start it was sometimes difficult to tell who was where but as it wasn't a race that really didn't matter. In a very respectable time the last of the walkers passed the 5km mark, some opting to continue, and some retiring having reached their personal goal. The wonderful thing about splitting the 15km into 3 laps is that people who perhaps are less agile or marshalling children can set their own target, receive the coveted Positive Steps medal and feel that sense of achievement.

And then all too soon it was over, all the walkers safe and accounted



Peter Rogers, Richard Pacitti and Kevin Day at Positive Steps

for, stewards back at base for a welcome cup of tea, last few members of Mind in Croydon staff removed from the bouncy castle and plans for next year already being discussed.

With huge thanks to Croydon Council, Croydon Heart Town, Mango Tree Fit, Striders, LV, Veolia, Cheap Leaflets, The Radio Company and Kevin Day. But the biggest thanks must go to all of the volunteers who make this event possible and all of the walkers for helping to end mental health stigma

See you next year?



25 Years at Mind in Croydon

As Richard Pacitti, Chief Executive, celebrates his 25th year at Mind in Croydon we asked him a few questions about his time here.

How has the nature of volunteering at Mind changed over the years?

We currently have the largest number of volunteers we've ever had. We also have categories of volunteers we didn't have when I started. For example, our Counselling Service operates because we have a team of thirty-plus trainee/volunteers. Because we are running more shops now we have a bigger team of shop volunteers. One of the things that is different is that we have a lot more users of our service who are now actively volunteering and many of them are using these opportunities as a stepping stone into paid work.

How has Mind expanded during your time?

When I started here in 1990 our income was approximately £300k, it is now £1.5 million. The range of services we provide has grown. We used to own 3 properties we now own 5 properties and together with our head office operate over six sites. Owning our properties has given us a level of independence and a level of financial security that many other charities don't have. However, managing the properties and all the activities that go on within them is demanding on resources in a way that simply renting premises would not be. There is no such thing as a free lunch! This means we have to have an ongoing programme of repairs and maintenance and ensure the buildings are modern and fit for purpose.

What is the most enjoyable aspect of your job?

The best thing is the variety. On any given day I could be talking to service users, helping to organise a fund-raising event, developing a new partnership with people from all walks of life or writing a funding application.

How have the challenges to a local charity changed since you started?

At present we're seeing more people than we've ever seen and the needs of many of them are greater and those people are getting less support from other sources than

they used to. This is all happening at a time when, although our resources have remained constant for around five or six years, the effort required to raise those resources is at least 100% greater. We are having to work harder to raise funds but the back office resource that we have is the same as it was ten years ago.



What have you learnt in your 25 years about leading a charity successfully?

You have to listen to the people that are coming to you for help and ensure that the services you provide are really meeting those needs. No one has to come to any of our services yet all of our services are over subscribed, some with waiting lists, which I think indicates that we are doing something right. You have to look after the staff and volunteers within the organisation, if you don't look after them then how will they be able to provide the services that people need? Finally, you have to understand the money. If as a Chief Executive you don't understand how to cost things, how to ensure you are getting good value for money, and ensure you are providing good value for money you won't last. We can only spend the money that we've got.





Mind in Croydon chosen as one of the Mayor's Charities

We were very pleased to learn that the new Mayor of Croydon, Councillor Patricia Hay-Justice, has chosen us as one of her charities.

There will be a number of events to raise money for us during the Mayoral year. Of equal importance is that the Mayor wants to use her year to promote the issue of mental health and we will work closely with her to achieve this.

To find out more:

More information is available here <https://www.croydon.gov.uk/democracy/themayor/events>

We are not in a position to spend money that we don't have.

Would you like to say something about partnerships?

During my time we have been very fortunate to have a good relationship with our colleagues in the London Borough of Croydon and the local NHS. The services that we deliver to them under contract are essential to us and I believe they know that we are a trustworthy and high quality organisation that understands the people with whom we work. Over the years we have developed many other useful partnerships for example, with local businesses, other agencies, schools, colleges and sporting organisations. These partnerships reflect how we are trying to help people live well in their local community rather than rely on the mental health community. In the past a lot of our relationships were with mental health professionals, and these are still very important. However, as we have focussed on good mental health rather than dealing with mental health problems, the range of people that we have developed partnerships with has increased and broadened.

12-hour video stream raises £6k for Mind in Croydon

Huge thanks to Stacey Rebecca and all her friends and supporters for their fundraising event on the 1st August.

Stacey and others from the Cosplay Community organised a 12-hour video stream to raise money for Mind in Croydon and raise awareness of mental health issues. The event, in memory of Stacey's friend Lucy-Rose Michalak, raised £6,460.

We are really pleased to have been able to work with Stacey on this event and look forward to exploring how we can work more with on-line communities to promote good mental health and highlight how such communities provide mutual support.

To find out more:

You can view the video made for the event at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYQC04cRaNc>

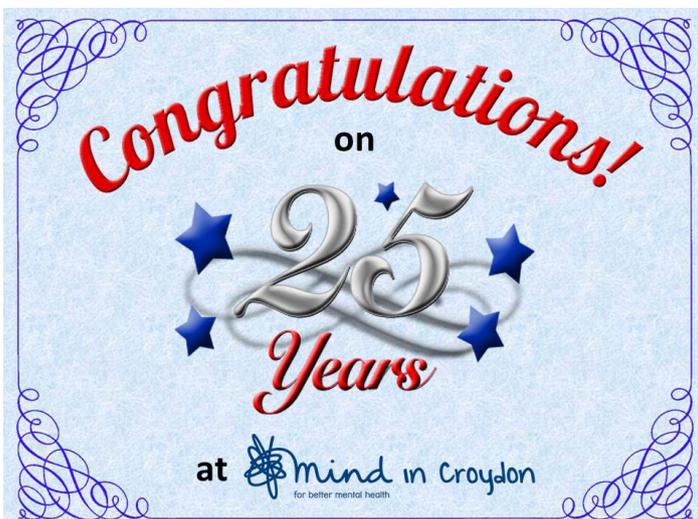
Donated goods raise thousands

Musical equipment and other items generously donated to us by Bernie Sullivan have raised several thousand pounds for Mind in Croydon.

One item in particular, a 1973 Gibson Les Paul Deluxe guitar, sold for £1,418. We would like to thank Bernie for these generous donations. It goes to show that there are lots of ways that people can help to support our work.

Thank you!

We would like to thank Annie Grimwade, one of our Trustees, for walking the Thames Path Challenge and raising over £1000 for Mind in Croydon.



Success for Partnership working: "When you have no one, you rely on the system to help, if it doesn't what do you do?"

Daniel was referred to Mind in Croydon by South London and Maudsley's (SLaM) Reablement Service with whom Mind's Welfare Benefits Service have been working for 2 years. This is his story:

Daniel had been living in another borough, but following a relationship breakdown he came to Croydon. He was working here and supporting himself in a tenancy. However, he was made redundant and overnight his circumstances changed. He lost both his job and the tenancy and became homeless. He sought help from his GP, as he was becoming dangerously depressed. They referred him to the Community Mental Health Team and ultimately he was seen by the Reablement Team.

The Reablement service team found that Daniel was due to be street homeless. They got an extension on his hostel place and referred him to Croydon Rent in Advance Scheme (CRIAS) who supported his home search and did a deposit guarantee. They also gave him gym membership, food vouchers and bought him basic bits for his new flat i.e bedding, pots and pans, plates and mugs and plastering tools which he needed for work.

Reablement then referred Daniel to Mind in Croydon's Welfare Benefits Service (WBA) to check he was receiving the correct entitlements.

Daniel told WBA that he was struggling to meet the rent as there was a shortfall in what the council would pay. He was seriously worried that he would lose this

tenancy and become homeless again! WBA checked the amounts he was receiving and these were correct. They made an application to the Council's Discretionary Housing Payments Department for help with the rent shortfall. Initially, this application for assistance was turned down. The reasons given were that Daniel's mental health was not going to improve. WBA asked them to reconsider this decision as they were not fully acquainted with Daniel's circumstances and of his determination to return to the workplace. They were also aware that he was looking for work and that the difficulties he was experiencing were due to both his mental health and his requirement to repay a social fund loan. However, this would be paid off, within the next couple of months, allowing him to budget for the shortfall at that point. WBA also were able to issue a food voucher from the Salvation Army. Croydon Council then revised their decision to meet the shortfall for a given period, with some arrears paid. This decision was valuable in giving Daniel some breathing space to continue his efforts to find employment. It also eased the stress which was exacerbating his poor mental health.

During this same period, Daniel was referred by the Reablement team to Mind in Croydon's Employment Support Service. They assisted Daniel with preparation of his CV, as he had lost his previous one. They encouraged and supported him in his search for work, again being able to stop and chat and encourage his search for employment. They, in turn, referred Daniel to Mind in

Croydon's Active Minds Service. Daniel had expressed how socially isolated he felt he was becoming and that he needed to be doing something. He joined Active Minds Table tennis group and football group, where he made friends and began to feel socially included again.

Daniel also spoke to the service user group Hear Us, who again he found to be of immense support. They were also able to issue food vouchers for the Purley Food Hub and offer time to chat. They also made an application for a freedom pass for him.

Daniel now has a full time job with a housing association: he is a qualified tradesman. He has been given both a van to use and a mobile for work purposes. His self-esteem has begun to return and his mental health has hugely improved. He is so relieved and excited about a future that had seemed so dark but now seems full of hope.

He is incredibly appreciative of the help he has received from all those mentioned in his story.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

We need more volunteers to help us out at our Enterprise Shop in Upper Norwood and also on our reception desk at Orchard House.

Please contact us if you would like to help!

Enterprise Shop
Manager: Colin
Tel: 020 8771 5950
Email: colin@mindincroydon.org.uk

Orchard House
Tel: 020 8253 8200

Charity no: 1073880

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