

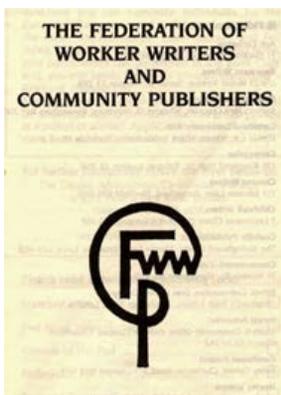
Mental Health

Tensions between empowerment and stigmatisation of those suffering from mental distress is a concern of the *Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers/ TheFED*. Numerous writing groups contribute to the discourse about mental health. Genres range from poetry and memoirs written by patients of mental institutions, to newsletters that provide resources for those released from the system and looking for community.



“Mental Health Word Cloud” by GDJ is licensed under CC BY 2.0

One organisation, Survivor’s Poetry, is made up of dozens of groups that work to enable “survivors” of the mental health system to use creative writing as an outlet for self-expression. Other publishing groups work with similar intentions of rewriting the narrative of mental health stigma and marginalisation throughout the UK.



And the World Really Had Changed

Leeds Survivor Poets,
1996

FWWCP/03 Y 03

Leeds Survivor Poets had been called “the most active writing group in West Yorkshire.” *And the World Really Had Changed* is a collection of 99 poems written by the group created to help members recover from ‘mental health system involvement.’ The collection confronts the pain and stigma of their pasts, but mainly dwells on joy, irony, and “belly laughs.” It is their first publication as a group, and it features poems from as early as 1973.

Keywords: empowerment | institutionalisation | love | mental health | poetry

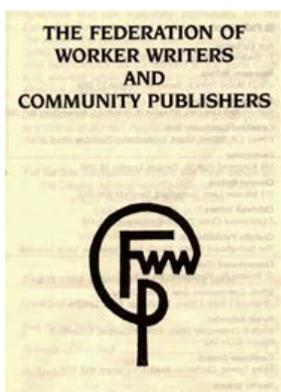
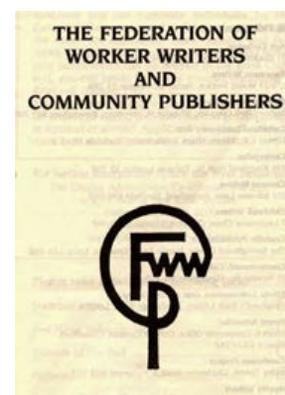
In and Out of a Psychiatric Unit

S5 7AU, 1990

FWWCP/03 Y 04

The book has two parts: in Part 1, “Let the People Speak”, survivors of the mental health system explore their experiences of rehabilitation and stigma through poetry, prose, opinion pieces, and newsletter articles (several are borrowed from other newsletters and publications). Part 2, “Help Yourself,” describes resources meant to benefit the mental health community in Sheffield.

Keywords: mental health | poetry | prose | Sheffield



Shut Up and Hear What I've Got to Say!

Jenny Dixon, 1998

FWWCP/03 Y 03

Jenny Dixon’s collection of poetry was supported by Leeds Survivors Poets. Dixon, who struggles with manic depression, set up Doncaster Survivor’s Poetry in 1995 to create an avenue of self-expression for those, who, like herself, struggle with mental distress. Although she is not afraid to tackle melancholy subjects with sincerity, she addresses most of the topics with a great amount of humour.

Keywords: depression | Doncaster | empowerment | mental health | Yorkshire



Southwark Mind Newsletter Issue 67: Let's Put the Fun Back in Dysfunctional

Southwark Council, 2003

FWWCPC/08 L 08

The publication aims to raise awareness for disorders and illnesses, empower through poetry, and serve as a resource for local support groups and organisations. Much of this issue is devoted to advocacy and literacy as government forms are difficult to fill out for those with mental health issues. A 'Community Noticeboard' helps readers connect with advocates and allies. The newsletter concludes with some short prose.

Keywords: advocacy | community noticeboard | mental health | poetry

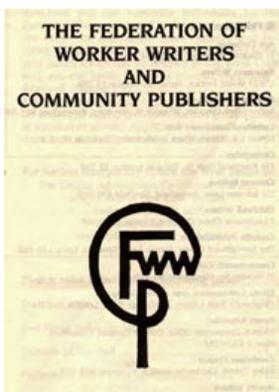
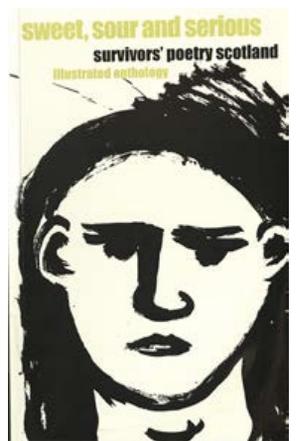
Sweet, Sour and Serious

Survivors' Poetry Scotland, 1996

FWWCPC/10 S 01

Survivors' Poetry Scotland defines a "survivor" as "a person with current or past experience of psychiatric hospitals, users of tranquillisers and other medication, users of counseling and therapy services, survivors of physical and sexual abuse, and other survivors who have empathy with our experience." This anthology features poetry and illustrations from survivors all over Scotland. Though certainly framed by it, most of the work included isn't really *about* mental illness.

Keywords: empowerment | mental health | poetry | Scotland



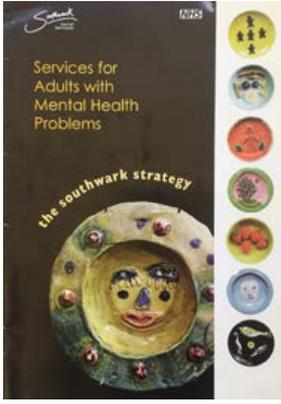
The House that Hope Built

Richard J. N. Copeland, editor, 2002

FWWCPC/08 L 11

Published in 2002 by the Stevenage Survivors poetry group, *The House that Hope Built* is a collection of poetry from Vale House, a drug and alcohol treatment centre in Stevenage. The poets don't hold back their thoughts about addiction and substance dependence. Reflecting upon their lives on and recovering from drugs and alcohol, residents of Vale House often come back to a sense of hope that allows them to truly find themselves in their writing.

Keywords: addiction | healing | poetry | recovery



The Southwark Strategy: Services for Adults with Mental Health Problems

Southwark Social Services, 2005

FWWCPC/08 L 08

Services for Adults with Mental Health Problems was written as a resource for those in Southwark who may be affected by mental health problems. Published in 2002 by the Southwark Council, it contains twenty-three chapters that address concerns in the mental health community: employment, education, suicide prevention, etc. Most chapters end with an “Areas for Strategic Development” section that offers some suggestions to (and from) members.

Keywords: community planning/strategy | mental health | resource

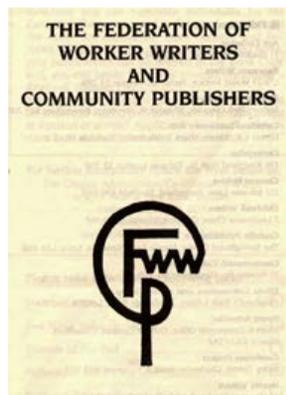
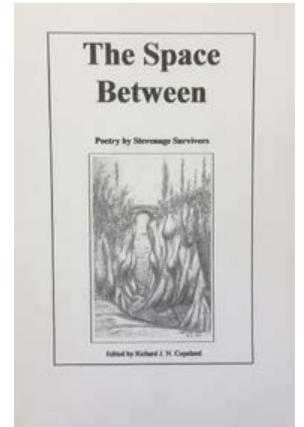
The Space Between

Richard J. N. Copeland, editor, 2002

FWWCPC/08 L 11

After publishing the poetry of Vale House earlier in the year, Stevenage Survivors Poetry decided to print some of their own poems. Writers describe tensions between pain, institutionalisation, and empowerment. Many of the poems explore the beauty of nature, love, and the ability to write. Truly, this is just ‘regular’ poetry written by those brought together by life’s many traumas.

Keywords: emotional distress | love | mental health | poetry



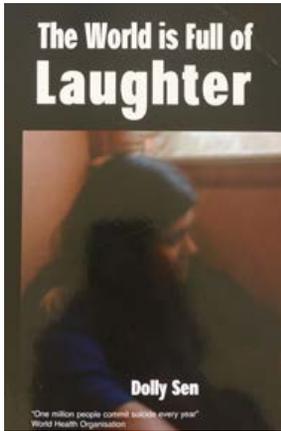
The Whirlwind Continues: Users Perspectives of Mental Health in Words and Pictures

Brendan Wilson and Sav Kyriacou, 1996

FWWCPC/08 L 12

Through interviews and photographs, the text documents the lives of people in the psychiatric system. Brendan Wilson and Sav Kyriacou encourage people to tell their stories how they want to tell them. To get access to these stories, it seems the creators, Wilson and Kyriacou, ‘snuck in’ to some facilities to get ‘guerilla interviews’ with patients. Despite the questionable ethical methods, their actions yielded a personal look into the lives of those afflicted with mental distress.

Keywords: interviews | mental health | mental institutions | photography | storytelling



The World is Full of Laughter

Dolly Sen, 2006

FWWCPC/08 L 11

The World is Full of Laughter is a memoir about Dolly Sen's experience with psychosis and manic-depression. The story describes Sen's troubling relationship with her drunk and verbally abusive father, a life complicated by auditory hallucinations, and raw, personal accounts of suicide attempts. However, Sen comes to terms with her personal troubles, fuelling her creative heart. Recurring themes include mental health, self-doubt and contentment, writing, and family troubles.

Keywords: abuse | hallucination | memoir | mental health | suicide

Further Reading in the FWWCP Collection:

Am I Safe Yet?

Multiple authors. Women Asylum Seekers

Together, 2008.

FWWCP/01 NW 10

Out of Mind Out of Sight

Multiple authors. Yorkshire Art Circus, 1996.

FWWCP/03 Y 07

Psychopoetica Vol. 27

Multiple authors. University of Hull

Department of Psychology, no date.

FWWCP/03 Y 12