



## Volunteers for Mental Health

ANNUAL REPORT  
2014-2015



*Working together for positive change*

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Volunteers for Mental Health is a registered charity (no.1082385) run entirely by volunteers.



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## CHAIR'S REPORT

I am delighted to introduce the charity's annual report as the new board Chair and to take the opportunity to reflect on another amazing year for VfMH. As always in this small but dynamic charity it has been an eventful 12 months and a dedicated group of trustees, volunteers and supporters have achieved a great deal. Here are the highlights for me but you will find more detail from others in the following pages of this report.

VfMH has been so fortunate to have had another 12 months commitment from our volunteer Development Director, Laura Thomas – her drive and tenacity has ensured consistency and incredible progress 'on the ground' in Romania. With a background in senior management Laura has been able to forge a meaningful relationship with Hospital Management, gaining their respect and trust in order to influence improvements over the last 2 years.

Laura has been pivotal in the wider achievements of the charity this past year and particularly in developing productive partnerships with like-minded organisations to further our aspirations to make positive changes to the mental health system in Romania. As I look forward to 2015 -2016 I know that the fruits of these labours will be realised in order to improve the lives of current and future psychiatric patients.

Recruiting volunteers is always a challenge and as people feel less secure in their paid work in the UK it takes someone quite special to offer their time and efforts for no financial recompense. Despite these challenges we have had an unprecedented 7 VfMH volunteers on placement in Tarnaveni in the last 12 months. This invaluable human resource has enabled us to deliver a full programme of activities to benefit patients for the whole year so a huge "thank you" must go to Anna B, Bex, Naomi, Joe, Hazel, Anna O'D and Mary.

These volunteer teams have coordinated 3 very successful community events in Tarnaveni raising awareness of our work and challenging the stigma of mental ill health. These showcase events have drawn on Laura's remarkable networking skills as well as individual volunteer's skills and interests. Staying in touch with our operations is key to the role of charity directors and we have had 3 different trustee visits to Tarnaveni in order to support these activities.

In June 2014 VfMH trustees had a board away event with external facilitation from Lisa Hopkins and over the course of the weekend the trustees produced a new vision, mission and goals supported by a comprehensive delivery plan from Laura for 2014 and beyond. In turn this led to the engagement of a bid writer, Dominique Webb, to support trustees to explore funding opportunities with one successful bid already achieved.

The launch of a re-vamped newsletter, website, new VfMH logo and strapline is imminent and for the first time the newsletter will be available in Romanian. The ongoing creative and committed fundraising efforts of volunteers, members and friends of VfMH have ensured that we can deliver our core activities as well as more ambitious plans for the future. I would like to acknowledge all those who have contributed in so many ways to the work of VfMH over the last year, it is a true testimony to our new strapline ...

*Sam Kennedy, Chair*

## LOOKING FORWARDS

The trustee group spent a weekend updating our vision, mission and goal statements, to reflect our developing priorities. We are becoming more ambitious as an organisation and are looking for ways of using our resources to provide a greater impact, by linking in with other organisations and sharing knowledge and capacity. Our volunteers' work directly with patients will be continuing, with volunteers now having the opportunity to do shorter, more project focused placements.

## VISION

A society where all people have opportunities to develop, live and participate as equal citizens who are able to exercise power and choice in their lives.

## MISSION STATEMENT

We strive for positive change within the Romanian mental health system. We also seek opportunities to promote personalised support and community-based services for inpatients with intellectual disabilities or mental health problems at Tarnaveni psychiatric institution, Mures County. We will achieve this through volunteering, exchanging knowledge, community engagement and working in partnership.

## VALUES

We believe in:

- **Progress** – always striving for better outcomes and improving through learning
- **Human Rights** – everyone having equal human worth
- **User involvement** – putting people at the centre of all decision making about their lives
- **Integrity** – demonstrating our vision, mission and goals through our language, actions and behaviour.
- **Collaboration** – working together through listening, understanding and influencing to achieve positive change

## STRATEGIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES 2014-2017

1. Improve the lives of patients in the psychiatric institution which is part of Tarnaveni hospital  
We will seek to uphold patients legal and human rights, to increase the quality of care and treatment provided to psychiatric inpatients in Tarnaveni hospital, and to ensure a positive relationship between VfMH and Tarnaveni hospital management.
2. Enable people to have choice and control to live where they choose with whom they choose and to have access to community based services.

We will seek to prevent isolation and segregation from the community by promoting inclusion, participation and presence. We will work in partnership to promote the development of community based support services.

3. Influence attitudes, understanding, and awareness in order to raise expectations of, and for, patients to enable inclusion. We will increase local community engagement, raise patients' expectations of community inclusion and increase the positive perception of people with mental health issues and learning disabilities within Tarnaveni.
4. Influence local and national policy in order to promote equal citizenship and human rights. We will seek to foster good relationships with key stakeholders, share and disseminate best practice information, and seek to influence the implementation of the EU deinstitutionalisation agenda and the Romanian Strategy on Disability.
5. Ensure VfMH is a professional and competent charity with strategic and operational capacity to manage and achieve our objectives. We will ensure that trustees are responsible and accountable for efficient and effective governance of the charity. The Board will have a full complement of required skills and ensure trustees are knowledgeable, up to date, and competent. We will seek to ensure that VfMH has the necessary funds to achieve our aims and objectives.

## VFMH PEOPLE

This year VfMH has benefited from the skills, experience and commitment of some new people and new roles in Tarnaveni, which has changed the way we have been able to work and progress. After completing a year's placement as a volunteer on placement in the usual sense, Laura Thomas went on to use her wealth of skills and experience in managing and developing services in the UK, to become our Development Director based in Tarnaveni. This was a new role for our charity, with the purpose of overseeing and developing the volunteer programme, building relationships and networks with other organisations within Romania, and helping us to progress with the goals of our delivery plan. Laura's report below describes some of the fantastic work she has been involved in, and the achievements.

We have also welcomed two new Romanian members of staff, Anca Pacurar and Ioan Velcherean, who joined us in March as Community and Volunteer Support Workers. They will provide us with much-needed continuity with our work in the hospital, as they provide a continued presence in the hospital, working alongside each new set of volunteers to provide therapeutic sessions, ward visits and advocacy for the patients. Having Romanian staff "on the ground" is a new and exciting way of working for us, and would not have been possible without support from our colleagues at Pro Vobis (the Romanian National Centre for Volunteering), and a grant from the Van Neste Foundation.

## DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

VfMH in 2014/15 witnessed significantly high levels of activity based on a number of development projects we undertook and relationships we forged both in the UK and Romania.

The relationship between VfMH and the senior management and personnel of the psychiatric institution is very positive. Communication is open and transparent and collaboration is proving to benefit patients directly.

Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 we had 7 UK volunteers, all undertaking a number of key projects with me as Development Director whilst I was in the second year of my volunteering placement in Romania. In July, a delivery plan was created with 5 strategic objectives. The following projects were successfully undertaken to meet these objectives:

### RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH AND THE LIVES OF PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS

VfMH volunteers alongside myself organised four community events/exhibitions to raise mental health awareness in Tarnaveni local community alongside supporting patients from the psychiatric institution to participate and have a voice. These events had media coverage and were as follows:

- *'See Me, Hear Me'* (May 2014) – a photographic exhibition undertaken by volunteers Anna Boam, Rebecca Hall and Naomi Fitzpatrick;
- *'This is Me'* (October 2014) – an exhibition held in Tarnaveni's Casa de Cultura, to celebrate World Mental Health Day. The exhibition had an emphasis on living with schizophrenia, and was organised with the support of volunteer Joe Alexander and chair of VfMH, Sam Kennedy. This exhibition also involved two local organisations supporting other vulnerable people;



*'This is Me': Exhibition for World Mental Health Day*



*'Keep Fit, Stay Well': community bike ride in Tarnaveni*

- *'Keep Fit, Stay Well'* (October 2014) – a community bike ride organised alongside Joe Alexander and Sam Kennedy, which involved over 80 members of the local public, alongside the mayor of Tarnaveni and his family, and two local businesses who helped promote and host all participants. This event was to highlight the direct relationship between physical and mental health and wellbeing;

- *International Volunteers Day* (December 2014) – an event involving volunteer Hazel Danby, and supported by VfMH trustee Judith Marcus, brought together local associations, charities and individuals working with vulnerable groups in the community to celebrate the role of volunteering. VfMH were awarded a diploma of excellence by the local mayor on this day for the commitment they demonstrate to the patients of Tarnaveni institution.



## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND NETWORKS

- It was a surprise but also a pleasure to be personally awarded a certificate of recognition in a public event at Christmas by the General Manager of Tarnaveni institution, for commitment and dedication in my volunteering role in the hospital;
- Positive relationships between VfMH and four organisations in Tarnaveni have been developed: two charities working with Roma children and young people, an association working with adults with learning disabilities and the local school that support children and young people with learning disabilities. We hope to continue and develop collaboration with these organisations for the good of the local community and the people we all support;
- VfMH successfully developed a formal relationship with Scottish NGO, Penumbra, who have chosen VfMH as their charity of 2015. The CEO, Nigel Henderson, travelled to Tarnaveni in February 2015 to visit the institution and personnel in order to understand better the work VfMH are doing.

## DELIVERY PLAN PROJECTS

We have gained support from Romanian people who have committed themselves to supporting VfMH. With enormous thanks to Mircea Poeana, Amelia Muntean and Ioana Parau, we have had numerous articles, documents, exhibition information and newsletters translated from English to Romanian, for free. Their expertise and skills in translation and interpretation have enabled VfMH to communicate to a wider audience.

Specific projects achieved by volunteers with support of the Development Director:

- ✓ The creation and completion of a patient matrix by volunteers Joe and Anna O'D, which enables VfMH to profile all patients they work with, with important information to help direct the right therapeutic programmes and activities in a person centred way;
- ✓ The creation, by volunteer Anna O'D, of a resource manual for all hospital personnel on key information to help improve quality of support;

- ✓ The development of a family and friends strategy by volunteer Mary, which has identified barriers to patients having relationships and an action plan created to address these issues;
- ✓ A profound piece of work was undertaken by volunteer Hazel, called 'Restoring Dignity'. This piece of work engaged with patients and hospital personnel to identify serious issues affecting the human rights and dignity of patients as a consequence of institutionalisation. As a consequence of this work, the Development Director, alongside the board of trustees, is extending the remit of this work to undertake a project that will encompass all areas of the psychiatric section, in order to identify ways in which VfMH can help to improve hospital conditions and the treatment of patients;
- ✓ The continued running of club sessions which patients access regularly to undertake therapeutic activities. For the second year, all patients have celebrated their birthdays and many people have accessed the local community for the second year running;
- ✓ A trip was undertaken with 5 patients with complex needs in a minibus kindly loaned by a local charity. These patients had not been on a trip for many years and the experience for us all was profound;
- ✓ In this year, VfMH visited three other Romanian psychiatric institutions, two service providers, and an (ex) user led mental health organisation in Romania to enable us to assess the current quality of mental health provision and build a network of professionals to work alongside;
- ✓ The creation of a new VfMH website, with particular support from volunteer Anna B on her return from Romania, has demonstrated the passion and enthusiasm people have to want to make a difference even when they return to the UK;
- ✓ A redesign of our newsletter by volunteers Bex and Naomi have enabled a more professional document to be circulated in both the UK and Romania;
- ✓ VfMH are now members of Mental Health Europe and have had direct contact with the president and representatives of MHE based in Brussels about how VfMH can support a de-institutionalisation agenda and promote quality community based services

My placement ended on 31<sup>st</sup> March and I returned to the UK after volunteering in Romania for over two years. I will continue to work with VfMH as Development Director and support future volunteers in their projects, line manage local Romanian staff, and continue to drive forward the strategic objectives of VfMH.

*Laura Thomas, Development Director*



## PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION: SEE ME, HEAR ME

To give a flavour of one of the projects completed by our volunteers, the volunteer team ran a photography project with twelve patients. The project aimed to give patients a photographic voice and an opportunity to explore their own narrative. It concluded in an exhibition at the Casa de Cultura. This is what the volunteers said:

“Through exhibiting the photographs within Tarnaveni we hoped to challenge stigma and demystify the hospital for the local community. The process began with initial group meetings with our translator to support patients to explore ideas and produce a starting point for their photos. Around half of the patients wanted photos of themselves rather than to take photos. Having little or no possessions and no photographic record of themselves we found this to be particularly poignant. Others wanted photos in specific locations or of specific things- photographs of a church during their very first visit to a church or photos of the sky to remind them of a time when they could travel or were free to be in nature.

Each photo session was unique, some lasted for little more than ten minutes and some for several hours. As sessions were patient lead we were there to provide technical and moral support and to make suggestions if participants became stuck and wanted some thoughts on how to further explore their ideas through photography.

The results are twelve sets of very individual photos that really reflect the personalities and experiences of their creators.”

Here is the exhibition displayed in Tarnaveni’s Casa de Cultura:



Here are two set of photos and accompanying text by two of the project’s participants:

**Sandor**

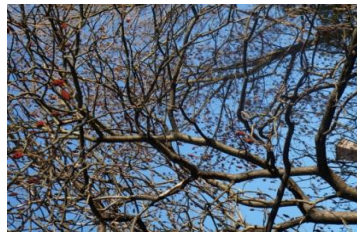


“This was my first time inside a church and the first time I have used a camera. I think the photos look very beautiful, they remind me of many passages in the bible. I have been in hospital for a very long time, before this I was in an orphanage. I don’t want to die in this hospital. I want people to know that I am capable of painting and that I like to live. My religion is very important to me. The bells are like silver, so beautiful. The sound of the bells are very fine. Sometimes I can hear them from the hospital, during Easter they rang out more often.”

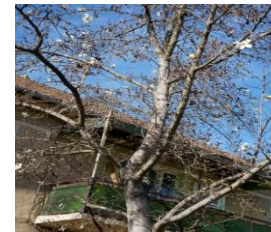
**Imola**



**I was golden rain**



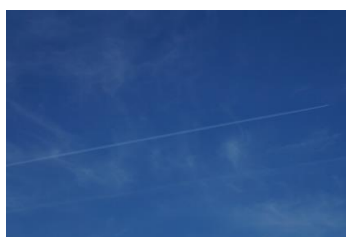
**I was a tree growing up to the sky like roots in the sky**



**I was in blossom**



**But I was cut away**



**I was high up in the sky**



**But I was enclosed**

## TREASURER'S REPORT

### Financial Review 2015

	£
<b>Income</b>	
• Donations and fundraising	14,108
• Gift aid income	1817
• Private trust fund income	7048
	<b>22,973</b>
<b>Administrative expenses</b>	
• Premises costs	1914
• General administrative expenses	5414
• Legal and professional costs	5956
	<b>13,284</b>

**Income** this year was £22,973, an increase of £10,246 on the previous year. This success has been largely due to an increase in fundraising by volunteers going on placement and by a sevenfold increase in awards from private trust funds. Currently our main source of income is through individual giving and fundraising by members and supporters.

**Expenditure:** Our expenditure this year has increased from £10,410 to £13,284, in order to fulfil our ambitious strategic plans developed during the year. For the first time funding was allocated to secure the services of a full-time unpaid Development Director by meeting her expenses for a further year and to facilitate the project work of volunteers. Additional funding was made available for translation services and a part-time volunteer support role.

We invested in extending our networks in Romania and in membership of Mental Health Europe, which has the potential to provide longer-term benefits and, to raise much needed funds, we obtained the services of an independent consultant to assist with bid writing. Our ongoing expenditure relates to maintaining the volunteer programme and facilitating direct work with patients. We continue to come under budget in most areas of expenditure, and work hard to make a little go a long way!

**Reserves Policy.** The policy requires that the charity holds unrestricted reserves amounting to a maximum of six months operating costs which has been adhered to this year.

**Our banks:** HSBC 97 Alcester Road, Birmingham B13 8DF  
The Co-operative Bank PO Box 101, Balloon Street, Manchester M60 4EP

During the course of the year the Directors agreed to close the two Cooperative Bank accounts and one HSBC account and retain two accounts with HSBC.

#### **The accountants:**

Atif Butt  
Back Office Support Solutions Ltd  
Chartered Certified Accountants  
Unit 23 Canalot Studios  
222 Kensal Road  
London W10 5BN

## HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT US

### VOLUNTEER WITH US

We are always interested in hearing from those who would like to volunteer with us. More details about our volunteering opportunities can be found on our website: [www.vfmh.org.uk](http://www.vfmh.org.uk).

For more information, please get in touch by email: [recruitment@vfmh.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@vfmh.org.uk).

### DONATE

VfMH rely on donations to continue the work. As the organisation is run entirely by volunteers with expenses covered by members, all funds raised go directly towards enabling our volunteers to work with those living within Tarnaveni Hospital's psychiatric institution. If you would like to donate to VfMH then we'd love to hear from you.

Donating online is easy, quick and safe. To make an online donation, please visit <https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/volunteersformentalhealth>

A standing order form is available for those who would like to donate regularly. Please contact [treasurer@vfmh.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@vfmh.org.uk) for a form.

Cheques can be made payable to 'Volunteers for Mental Health' and sent to: Estera Wicher at Flat 2, 33 Westbere Road, NW2 3SP

### FUNDRAISE FOR US

If you would like to fundraise on our behalf then we would love to hear from you. Please email us at [info@vfmh.org.uk](mailto:info@vfmh.org.uk)

### WHO'S WHO IN VFMH

Many of our trustees are returned volunteers who continue to devote time, energy and commitment to the continuation and development of our work in Tarnaveni. The trustees meet formally three times per year and hold monthly Skype meetings. The trustees, in collaboration with the volunteers on placement, manage the day to day running and development of the project. Many trustees carry out additional voluntary roles such as; phone support for volunteers, creating the newsletter, treasurer etc. As a small charity we have no paid staff in the UK. Our Trustee Board are:

Sam Kennedy (placement 2013) – Chair  
Rachel Wright (placement 1999) – Secretary  
Clare Rose (placement 2004) - Treasurer  
Victoria Mansfield (placement 2009) – Training  
Judith Marcus (placement 2002) - Recruitment  
Jen Dixon (placement 2005) – Communications  
Fiona Hanlon (placement 2005)

## MANY THANKS TO EVERYBODY WHO HAS SUPPORTED US

Our work would not be possible without those who support us financially. Our grateful thanks to all those who have helped us to raise much needed funds by sponsoring or taking part in events, by giving up time to run, swim, bake and busk for VfMH. We could not continue this vital work without your support and encouragement. Thank you!

### **Many people have helped us to keep going this year but special mention to:**

Sharon Williams and Ceri Meloy and families

Dimensions Cymru - service users and staff

Phoebe Ravenhall and friends

Victoria Mansfield

Nicola Hall

Lauren Emmerson – our very own Fruit Fund “Angel”

Mike and Kay Sked

Mrs Margaret Hanlon

Jenni Colman and staff at Samuel Barlow Primary

Anna Boam

Rebecca Hall

Naomi Fitzpatrick

Joe Alexander Hazel Danby

Anna O’Donohue

Mary Bowles

Laura Thomas

Jeremy Chadd, St Chad’s PCC and parishioners

Van Neste Foundation

Paul Trodden and Co, Chartered Accountants

Lisa Hopkins

All our regular donors who quietly make sure we survive from day to day

We could also like to thank Mircea Poana, Amelia Muntean and Ioana Parau for their wonderful translating work.

VfMH is a registered charity (no: 1082385) and a company limited by guarantee (no: 3562166).