



VOLUNTEERS FOR MENTAL HEALTH

IMPACT REPORT

2016-2017

"When we go out of the hospital, we feel free. Like birds."

PATIENT

CONTENTS

Our vision	01
Foreword	03
Our team in Romania	04
Key achievements	06
How things work in the UK	08
Our team in the UK	10
Case study	12
What's next	Back cover

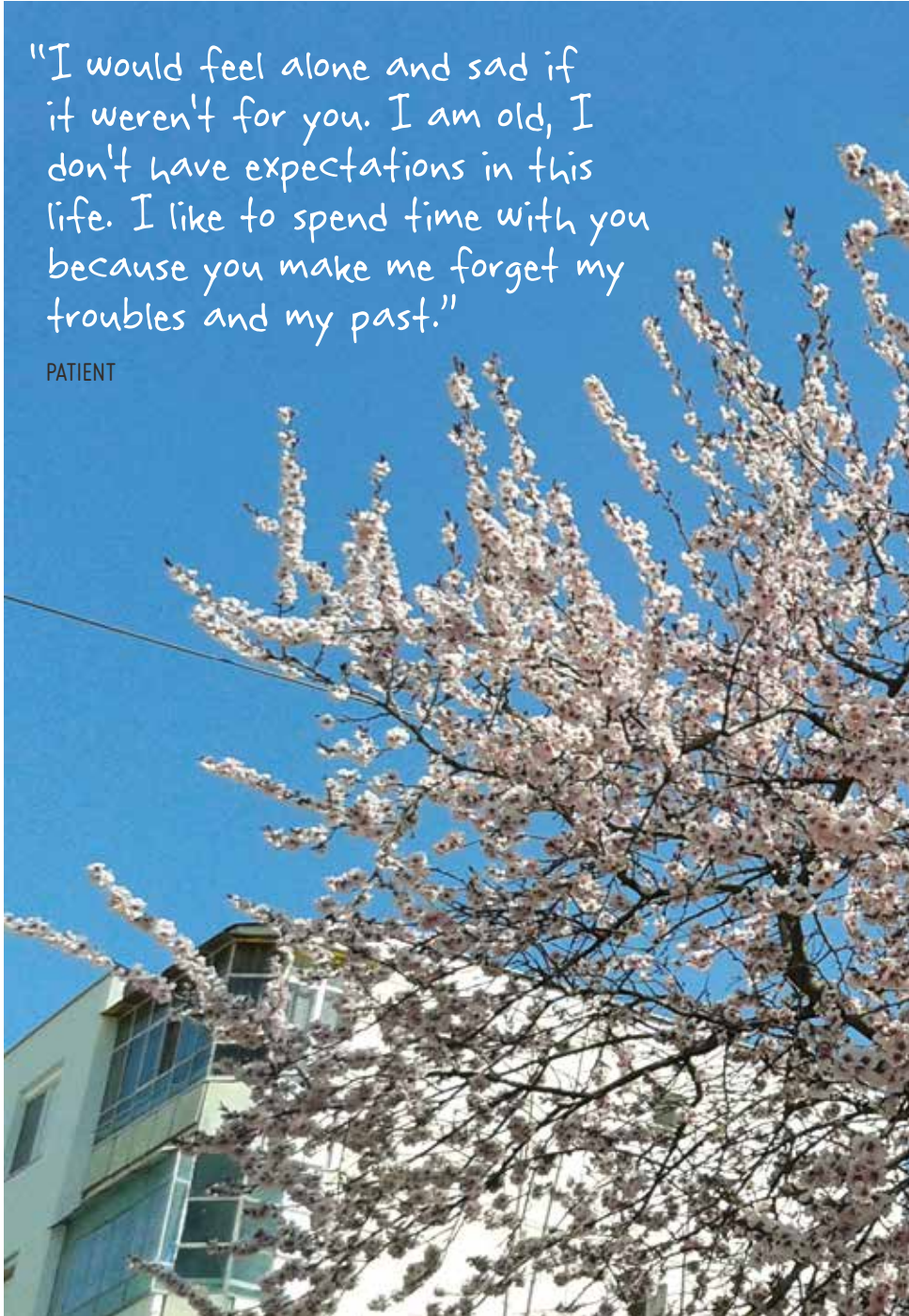
Our vision

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.

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

"I would feel alone and sad if it weren't for you. I am old, I don't have expectations in this life. I like to spend time with you because you make me forget my troubles and my past."

PATIENT



Foreword

We are very pleased to introduce our Impact Report covering the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. This report replaces our usual Annual Report to give readers an easy to digest picture of our key achievements for the year. We are committed to measuring our impact in order to build on our considerable knowledge and experience. In doing so, we hope to improve the service that we can offer our partners and beneficiaries in Romania.

Compiling this report has allowed us to truly appreciate how far we have come in the last year. As we approach our 25th anniversary, we can look back on a year in which local people have become meaningfully involved with the work of VfMH. This feels like a real turning point in our future direction.

Our frontline team is the heartbeat of our work in Romania. Without their passion for what they do day in day out, VfMH would struggle to make an impact. It is only through listening to what they have to say about their experiences that we are able to direct the work of the organization. You will see examples of the range and diversity of work that they have undertaken in the last twelve months and through them, you will hear the voices of patients.

Compiling this report has also allowed us to appreciate the challenges of operating the UK based part of our organization solely through the goodwill, expertise, time and energy of a team of volunteers. VfMH have no paid staff in the UK so the continuation of its work is dependent on the focused energies of individuals finding ways to work together for a common purpose. An insight into what this involves can also be found in the following pages.

Whilst we are proud of the work that we do, we are acutely aware of the challenges that still remain – for ourselves as an organisation, for mental health services in Romania and for the addressing of mental health needs worldwide. As a team, we are optimistic and committed to being part of the continued drive to improve people's experiences of accessing mental health services.

The Volunteers for Mental Health team

Our team in Romania



ALEXANDRA DEMETER

"I decided to apply for the VfMH job with no idea how working with adults with mental health problems would be. But I learned... and in the past year, with the help of a great team that I helped put together we developed projects and activities that have had a significant impact on patients' lives, bringing them joy and making them feel a part of something nice."

"Working for VfMH has been challenging but wonderful. I have met over 100 people with different life experiences that taught me invaluable life lessons. I also learned a lot about myself and developed abilities that will be very useful along the way."



RADU VIRCA

"I was looking for a job when I saw the VfMH job offer online. I thought it would be interesting to work with people that have mental health problems. And I wasn't wrong. I learned so many things! The beginning was challenging. My colleagues and I went through great and also difficult experiences."

"This past year we managed to build great relationship with the patients. We earned their trust and we communicate very well with them. We do community outings on a weekly basis – they are very successful"



ESTERA LEPADATU

"A neighbour told me about the job opening with VfMH so I applied. I used to work with elderly people with mental health problems so it wasn't something completely new for me. I always loved working with people, helping them as much as possible and seeing them happy."

"The big difference was that I had never worked inside a hospital. The conditions that patients live in has had a great impact on me. I am happy to say that I now know all the patients names and their stories. We communicate very well and the relationship with them is based on trust."



Key achievements



165 PATIENTS SEEN PER MONTH

WHICH TOTALS 1,980 PATIENTS OVER THE YEAR

64

VISITS TO THE CLOSED WARDS



TO MAKE CONTACT WITH PATIENTS WHO CANNOT ATTEND SESSIONS, MEET WITH NEW PATIENTS, AND TO OFFER SUPPORT TO PATIENTS AND STAFF.



LIFE IN THE COMMUNITY

54 PATIENTS TAKEN INTO THE COMMUNITY, TO PARTICIPATE IN AND ENJOY COMMUNITY LIFE. EVERY ACCESS VISIT REQUIRES DETAILED PAPERWORK TO BE SIGNED OFF BY DOCTORS AND ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM VARIOUS HOSPITAL STAFF.

53 ACTIVITY SESSIONS DELIVERED PER MONTH

WHICH MAKES 636 SESSIONS DELIVERED OVER THE YEAR



PATIENTS ARE OFFERED A WIDE VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES INCLUDING:

LANGUAGE LEARNING, WOMEN'S CHOIR, CHESS GROUP, CHURCH SERVICES, SPORTS ACTIVITIES, CRAFTS AND KNITTING; LIFE STORY WORK, PERSONAL CARE AND MAKEUP, BOARD GAMES, ART, MUSIC MAKING



GLOBAL NETWORKS

STAFF HAVE ATTENDED NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES, AND NETWORKED AT EVENTS LOCALLY & NATIONALLY. OUR PROJECT MANAGER ATTENDED THE UK AGM, PRESENTING A REPORT TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES.



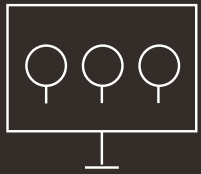
1ST

INTERNATIONAL ARTS AND MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT DELIVERED IN TARNAVENI WITH 3 ROMANIAN AND 1 UK PARTNER/S. WE HELD A WEEK OF WORKSHOPS, AN EXHIBITION AND A PROGRAMME OF TALKS WITH INVITED SPEAKERS.



How things work in the UK

6



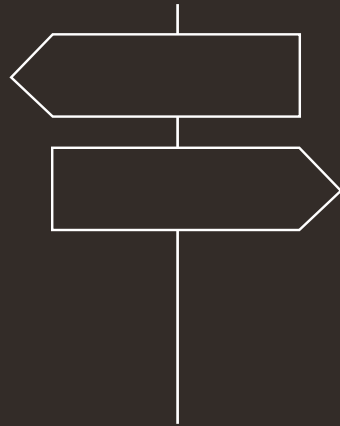
SKYPE BOARD MEETINGS

3 MEMBERS MEETINGS

IN VENUES ACROSS THE UK ATTENDED BY UP TO 20 MEMBERS/TRUSTEES. TWO OF THESE MEETINGS WERE FULL WORKING WEEKENDS.

UK OPERATIONS

OUR TRUSTEES ARE SPREAD RIGHT ACROSS UK: EDINBURGH, BIRMINGHAM, EXETER AND LONDON SO MOST BOARD MEETINGS ARE HELD VIA SKYPE. MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS ARE ALSO SCATTERED ACROSS THE COUNTRY SO VFMH HAS NO LOCAL VISIBILITY.



22 NEW ACTIVE MEMBERS

IN OUR NETWORK WHO ARE ACTIVE IN THE WORK OF RUNNING VFMH — UTILISING THE SKILLS OF UK BASED VOLUNTEERS.

15 FORMAL SKYPE MEETINGS

WITH STAFF IN ROMANIA — AS WELL AS NUMEROUS INFORMAL SKYPES.



4

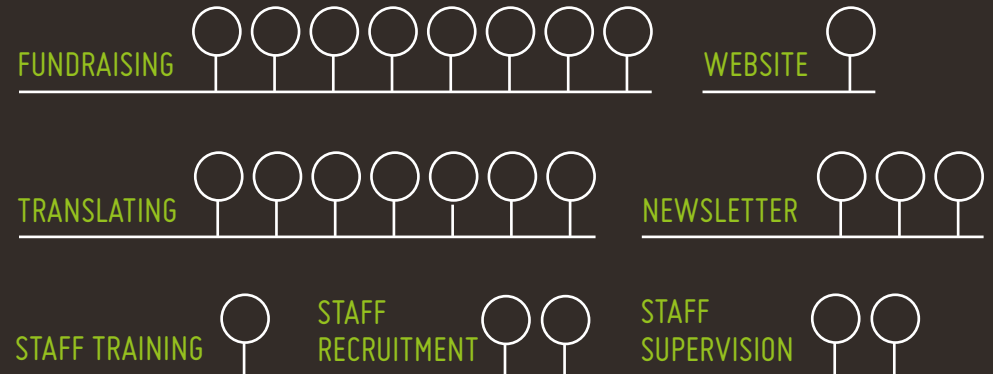


VISITS TO ROMANIA BY DIRECTORS AND MEMBERS TO SUPPORT STAFF.

MENTORING

WE HAVE SET UP A PROGRAMME WHERE A UK OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST SHARES EXPERTISE WITH ROMANIAN STAFF VIA SKYPE. SESSIONS ARE TAILORED TO LEARNING NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY STAFF.

OUR UK VOLUNTEERS



Our team in the UK

OUR TEAM IN THE UK IS MADE UP OF A BOARD OF TRUSTEES WITH SUPPORT FROM 'ACTIVE MEMBERS', MANY OF WHOM COMPLETED PLACEMENTS WORKING IN THE HOSPITAL AS VOLUNTEERS IN THE YEARS BEFORE VFMH WAS ABLE TO EMPLOY PAID STAFF.

WE HAVE NO PAID STAFF IN THE UK WHICH MEANS EVERY PENNY DONATED TO VFMH GOES DIRECTLY TOWARDS SUPPORTING OUR FRONTLINE SERVICE IN ROMANIA.

THOUGHTS FROM THE VFMH TEAM

"Being an active member of VfMH reminds me of all the wonderful relationships I developed with patients in Romania and what they taught me about humility, gratitude for what most of us can sometimes take for granted, as well as the compassion and love shown to strangers like I was."

"Being an active member means I can contribute to and concentrate on a specific piece of work which I hope will benefit the patients, the team and VfMH in general."

"I care about the future direction of VfMH. Being a trustee enables me to participate in decision making and safeguarding the charity's objectives."

"For me being a trustee is a way to give something meaningful to the society. Being a part of something bigger than myself and helping others to change the world. It is a responsibility and a privilege and a chance to work with amazing people that drive the change in society"

"Volunteering with VfMH was life changing, a defining experience in terms of my identity and life path."

"Being a Trustee is a privilege and an honour to play a part in developing supportive Romanian communities and breaking down stereotypes for those with mental health problems."



Left to right: Back row – Caroline Bailey, Trish Hext, Victoria Mansfield, Judith Harcus, Clare Rose, Sam Kennedy, Fiona Hanlon, Rebecca Hall; Front row – Paul Rees, Mary Bowles, Alexandra Demeter, Anna O'Donohue, Rachel Wright, Laura Thomas, Niki Amey

"Being an active member in VfMH is a privilege as I have the opportunity to work alongside some truly amazing people. It has created an opportunity to develop skills, confidence and knowledge around areas of interest. It is a joy to be part of such a fantastic charity."

"Being a VfMH trustee is both a challenging and immensely rewarding experience. It gave me a huge sense of pride to be involved in this amazing charity and be part of such a committed group of people."

"As a VfMH trustee I feel privileged to belong to a community past and present deeply connected by our shared experiences and entrusted with a vision of the future."

"As a former volunteer, it is impossible to forget those living in the hospital. Being a trustee helps me feel connected to them and able to contribute to the important work that VfMH does to make a positive impact on their lives."

"My role as a trustee is to support the local team in learning what VfMH has been doing for the last 20+ years whilst ensuring the future is led by local people with the patients at the heart of all activities and decisions."

"I like the atmosphere you create. You make us feel like family." **PATIENT**

Case study

COMMUNITY ARTS IMPROVES WELL-BEING

VFMH IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BEARPARK ARTISTS' CO-OPERATIVE (COUNTY DURHAM) DELIVERED A WEEK OF WORKSHOPS, AN EXHIBITION AND TALKS.

The project aimed to promote inclusion and participation through community arts practice; it produced some exuberant and joyous pieces of collective art and some great collaborative moments.

Key achievements:

We had fun, made new connections, discovered amazing talents and raised mental health awareness within the community of Tarnaveni.



"This experience was a great challenge to me. I realize that through dedication and hard work people can do great and wonderful things together."

PARTICIPANT

"The friendship and support from the VFMH team was amazing. They worked incredibly hard and helped us in so many ways."

ARTIST

"I learned you don't need language to communicate with people. There are a million other ways."

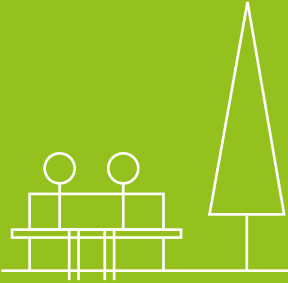
PARTICIPANT

"We have made these pieces of work which transcend age, status and ability. They are proof of the capacity of people to work together despite all their cultural differences."

ARTIST

What's next

THINGS WE PLAN TO FOCUS ON IN THE NEXT YEAR:



DEVELOPING COMMUNITY WORK...

and a local partner to take ownership of VfMH's work in Tarnaveni.



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS...

in the wider community including schools and local business.



DEVELOPING OUR HOSPITAL SESSIONS...

with specialist Occupational Therapy expertise and training input.

Thank you to:

OUR PARTNERS

PRO VOBIS

National Resource for volunteering.

www.provobis.ro/en

BEARPARK ARTISTS' COOPERATIVE

Independent group professional painters.

www.bearparkartists.co.uk

CATHARSIS, COLEGIUL TEHNIC

Our Arts project partners in Tarnaveni.

OUR SPONSORS

ST JAMES PICCADILLY, PCC LONDON

www.sjp.org.uk

ST CHAD'S, PCC SUNDERLAND

www.stchad.co.uk

CONNECTIVE CARE

www.traininghealthcare.com

ST. ANDREW'S, STEWTON LINCOLNSHIRE

(regular giving by congregation)

www.standrewsstewton.co.uk

And thank you to all our donors who give via monthly direct debit.

This guaranteed income is invaluable.

General enquiries: info@vfmh.org.uk

www.vfmh.org.uk

We are a registered charity (no: 1082385) and a company limited by guarantee (no: 3562166).

