



## **Introducing Professional Practice**

*A mental health service user's perspective*

### **Gill Chatfield**

My name is Gill, and I've really had links with Mental Health services since I was a teenager really. Manic depression is what I am now told that I suffer from, but it's taken a quite a long time to get to that stage of finding out really what was wrong and why I couldn't function very well at certain times, and at others, I was really functioning quite well. I went along to Relaxation, and to the Assertion, and various other groups, and eventually was allowed to run my own group, and that was a very worthwhile experience for me, and was, I think, with a lot of people had quite a lot from that. And that seemed to be a very good idea, to allow people who are getting better, and wanted to do more, to take on a group of their own interest, a few people did that and really got a lot from it.

I have a social worker who I've been working with, oh I don't know, twelve years or more, and who really has been wonderful. Seen me through a lot of problems and difficulties. Everybody goes through some but, I seem to have had fair few in the last few years, and that has been a wonderful link. Probably on a three weekly basis, but I know I can always phone in. With this particular lady, if I could say mutual respect I feel is very important, and empathy. I appreciate, the sound common-sense approach, I get from her. You're treated with dignity, and I I'm very much onto this one in, within the Mental Health service. I think, people need to be treated with some dignity. She was the one I felt who gave me the chance to run a group of my own, that really made a big difference.

There are some people in this world who I do feel give such a lot to their jobs. They give beyond, and I have found somebody who's like that. When I look back, at one or two social workers who just sort of turned up, this makes me realise how good the one I'm talking about is. If I catalogue what we'd been through together, for me really, but equally she was having bereavements etc, and so, there was a certain amount of help from either side which is nice when it can happen like that, as I think it does with quite a few people. You don't have to be too familiar with people to know that, when they're in difficulties and, sometimes you can help them as much as they're perhaps helping you. I've known that there's always somebody there who I could count on, and that's made, it's help me tremendously.

I also had this, a similar relationship with my consultant psychiatrist. They both treat people with respect, they seem to me to be very caring people, but not to the point where it's silly. I would always try to keep a line between the professional and me, if you like, because I think you do need to have a line drawn.