



Working for Health

Surviving mental healthcare

Narrator

Steve Craine is an expert in mental healthcare having experienced the system at first hand. His treatment led him to join with others in confronting the Royal College of Psychiatrists, and when this film was first broadcast on TV there was a reaction from the Royal College, who felt this exploration was biased and requested it to be either withdrawn or at least balance by material they would provide. Throughout this sequence, there are examples of different kinds of radical action, including demonstration, political lobbying and performance art.

Steve Craine, (All Wales User/Survivor Network)

I first encountered the mental health system when I was eighteen. It was a really traumatic experience. I remember being held down and being forcibly injected. That experience isn't unique really. More often than not the kinds of services that are being provided are doing people more harm than good. I'd like to think of myself as a survivor of mental health services.

I think people with mental health problems have been quiet for too long really, considering the past forty years of treatment: insulin shock therapy, carbon monoxide inhalation therapy, pig brain cell injection therapy, wrapping patients in cold, damp sheets to induce fever – all have been sanctioned by psychiatric practice, sanctioned by medical science, sanctioned by the medical model as being safe and defective. The last time we were outside The Royal College of Psychiatrists was to hold a vigil to campaign against the use of electro-compulsive therapy, ECT.

Protest

We delivered a letter of protest calling for a total suspension of electro-compulsive therapy shock treatment until such time as independent research has been carried out to ascertain its safety and effectiveness.

Steve Craine

Are you listening to us? I suspect not. The Royal College of Psychiatrists is the main governing body of psychiatry in the UK, is in a sense the main propagators, the main perpetrators of that medical model within psychiatry, and the problems with the medical model is that it locates the issue within an individual, you know, you've got a neuro-chemical or a biological problem, and that problem's firmly located within you. The User and Survivor perspective has borrowed a different model from the disability movement, it's called the Social Model of Disability. It's not so much my emotional distress that's the issue, it's how society responds to, and deals with my emotional distress that's the bigger issue as far as we're concerned.

In 1620 a petition was presented to the House of Lords by the poor distracted people in the House of Bedlam, which seems to indicate that as long as there's been psychiatric institutions, there's been resistance by the people for us to endure treatment within them. Lobbying and direct action both have their place in the wider scheme of things, direct action can produce immediate results, whereas lobbying is a much more drawn out, painful, political process.

Pat Butterfield, ECT Anonymous

We're very concerned, in particular about the review of the Mental Health Act. We're on the periphery, we're not really a voice, but in fact there is a mandate there, we have a voice, we

are a large number of people. We, you know, we are a body of evidence that ECT can cause damage. It's got a severe psychological effect on people, it has severe psychological effects upon people, it affects their health, it affects the way that they interact with family and friends, so the person who's having ECT may well suffer on all counts really.

Pat Butterfield with David Drew, MP

I had a call from a family that were very concerned that their 86 year old mother was going to have to have ECT. The whole family said no, the mother said no. They went ahead and did it; she's now in a coma, and she's dying.

Pat Butterfield

The thing that's really worrying about this that it's not being listened to by The Royal College of Psychiatry in particular, who still maintain it's safe and effective. It's not being listened to by the Government.

Steve Craine with David Drew, MP

These are people who've been on the receiving ends of particular forms of coercive or invasive treatments.

Pat Butterfield

I don't know if it's still going to be a possibility to do it politically. I think it may well have to be direct action, and that's certainly what we're considering.

Steve Craine

One of the best ways to challenge that whole problem of stigma is for those people who use mental health services, who experience emotional distress, to come out in a public way and say yes, I am a user of mental health services but I still have a full right to the full citizenship of the society.

Julie McNamara

I think, and I might be wrong, there are a couple of other people here tonight, but I'm the first Mental Health Co-ordinator to be sectioned by the police on a 136.

Julie McNamara (recites poem)

Prozac princess. They worried me mind till I'm weary, drowned me in drugs to despair. Oh yes I'm on the caring circus with the services who care. Watch me soft shoe shuffle on this Diazepam dazzle dance daze, where all the world's a forget-me fog, and me whole life's just a phase. Just call me the Prozac princess while I rattle round and round, on your magical medical mystery tour, I'm on the miracle cure, they found. Or they tell me I feel much better. Dothiepin's the dope. Written sunshine smarty, the quack, quack, quack's new hope. But you can't bomb me into oblivion, you won't bear these brain cells dry 'cos this zombie's into rebellion, this baby's gonna fly. So I flushed the fino's down the toilet, gave the Diazepam to the dog, buried the barbiturates in the garden, I'm gonna get meself a job. I think I'll be a chemist.