



Challenging ideas in mental health

Roundhay Wing - service users' reactions

Steve

I really enjoyed it, you know, I enjoyed the humour and I enjoyed how they brought the seriousness out in the humour, you know, I really enjoyed it, yeah, brilliant.

Woman

I think just the same as Steve. It was a really good video; a sense of humour and the way they were quite creative. The guy who was doing that alternative Eminem was really good the way he did that, but it does only cover a very small perspective of what it's like within a ward environment. There are a lot of other issues as well that it hasn't really touched on, but it was good.

Man

It was quite accurate in a lot of ways. It made a lot of points obviously comically and ironically. The only thing it doesn't really make clear is how much brutalisation and terror there is in a place like that.

Woman

I like the bit about the valley of the eternal day centre and that and I thought was dead accurate and it's so easy to fall into that trap where you've had a bit of a breakdown, you've been in hospital, so you start doing a day centre thing because you realise you need something, you need some sort of support. The only place really where you're going to get that is at a day centre so you kind of like go along to the day centre and you meet everybody else who's been in the same predicament as you and it's so easy to get dragged down by that and it's hard to find a way out from that and you can find yourself at a loss as to which direction to move into, where to go, where to break away from it, where do you sort of like say, "Well, that was a part of my life, it's over now and I've got to go forwards". I like that part. You know, I thought it was quite accurate.

Woman

What I really identified with from the film was that the sense of arriving, being admitted to hospital and getting the feeling you're never going to get out again and in my experience it was actually fuelled by other patients as well saying to me, "Oh, yes, they told me, I was in for three weeks but I've been here two years", and the horror stories of other patients telling you and just the sense of, yeah, how are you going to escape? I really identified with that and I think that's not helped in cases where the physical surroundings are foreboding and daunting like in that video and in the case of our local hospital.

Woman

They were saying about at what point you're allowed to sort of like leave when you're considered okay. They made some sort of like, little talking sort of like saying 'Oh, I just want to get out of here' but somebody else just wanted to stay and I think that's dead right. It can be like that you know for a lot of people, it can be a complete struggle just to get some help, just to get admitted, because sometimes that is what's wanted, that's what's needed in some circumstances.

Man

You get admitted to hospital and you're in for six weeks and you think you're okay then they let you go home, they say, "You're okay, you're all right", then you're back in a couple of days later and they don't get the balance right sometimes, you get a bit confused sometimes.

Woman

I know it's strange because it seems to be sort of like a six week period, doesn't it? Where when you're first admitted it's like, "Right, you're not very well, you're staying in here", and at that stage most people, when you are quite ill, all you're wanting to do is to just get out of there, "I'm okay", because you're maybe not aware yourself that really you do need some help but because you're that kind of, like, out of it, then all you want to do is just leave and just go and they're not letting you and then eventually when you sort of, like, come to your senses and you realise you've been all over the place and you've been a bit out of it, you think "Oh god, I've got to go back to that life now" and "I've got to go back to that horrible flat. I've got to go back and pick the pieces up" and that's when you start thinking, "Right, they're going to be chucking me out soon, they're going to be chucking me out. What help am I going to get?" and everything...

Man

You feel isolated and that's frightening. I used to feel like that before I had my friends and a girlfriend and things.

Woman

Because everything's done for you in hospital, isn't it, all the washing's done and your bed turned, everything.

Man

There are just loads of people around you all the time to talk to then when you're back in the community.

Woman

Then when you go home, you're isolated, on your own and that's hard, that's the hardest thing, isn't it?

Woman

In my case I felt like I really, really needed to be in hospital. I was desperate to be out of my home circumstances and the pressure that that was adding to my problems, but then, when I'd been in there a few days, because of the environment and the sort of oppressive and basically just feeling so scared and watching other patients being treated disrespectfully, I was so afraid of being sucked into that that I actually discharged myself when I was nowhere near ready to be back out in the community and I did that with the support of my carer, and I felt like I was just desperate to make a run for it before they slapped a section on me (apparently I wasn't section able) and the feeling of relief when I got out into the car park and I was like driving away fast, fast, fast it was like it will stick with me.

Woman

I remember when I first was admitted and they put me on an anti-psychotic, I didn't know what an anti-psychotic was, so I was dead against them and for the first week of being there, or the first few days, I was insisting I didn't want any medication. Then the next thing, they came down the corridor with an anti-psychotic and something else and I got that thing where your jaw kind of like moves and shakes and - was it dysplasia or something like that it's called, and I remember saying to them "Oh, why is my jaw doing this?" and they just completely ignored me, and then it was only afterwards and I mentioned it to one of the other nurses and they gave me like a side effect tablet, but I didn't know what was happening to me.

Woman

Because I thought that video came on very anti-medication and I'm very against, like, having too much medication but I do think its useful in certain circumstances, not to put people off from using medication per se, I think it's important.

Lesley

I feel that my medication has helped me tremendously and psychotherapy as well, of course.

Man

I found the same as you, Lesley. I found that out that medication, you know, that medication does help me and regular, I take it every 12 hours and I'm all right, I feel a lot better for it and sometimes you do need your medication. Some people can do without and some people can't. It depends on the individual.

Man

...you get to choose what you take and what you don't, it shouldn't be imposed on you, "You must take this, you must take that", you should have the choice of what medication you choose to take and what you don't.

Man

One tablet I was on, I think it was Allaperidan I think it was, and it made me, I couldn't go out in the sun, and I couldn't walk out in the sun, just two minutes in the sun. They didn't tell me anything about that and my skin went all dry and I was stiff and I couldn't walk for months and I kept sleeping all the time. They didn't tell me anything about that, they just gave it to me, you know, until I saw my doctor and just changed my tablets. I had to stand up for myself. You have to do that, don't you?

Woman

The other thing they tend to do as well, for a quiet night on the ward, like, they kind of picked on it a little bit in the video there, didn't they? About "Don't turn the light on or else they'll come and sedate us all", and when I was there it was a case of, "If you don't take this sleeping tablet..." and it's just to keep the ward quiet. I'd been in there a few weeks and I got to the stage I didn't need a sleeping tablet to sleep on a night but they really, really liked you to take one.

Woman

Luckily I wasn't on the anti-psychotic tablets more than two or three years [INDISTINCT] ...type of discanezea I think that was what you were talking about, but the anti-depressants, well, I'm on them for life, (laugh) and that contrasted with the psychiatrist that I was with who said, "I'd like you to go on to lithium but I want you to think about it for a month first and find out about it first and then come back" and that was just a very different way of being treated.

Woman

I thought it was interesting when they said about the Gestapo in the office, just the whole thing about them well, for a start, them being in the office. I just couldn't believe it, I'm, like, "Just where are all these nurses that are meant to be nursing people?" Except for the odd patrol when they're checking that everybody's there, they just seemed to be in the office with the holiday brochures! I know that's probably really unfair but that was the impression and they just seemed to sort of come out every now and then to check on people and dole out the medication and I couldn't see what nursing activity was going on.

Man

There's good and bad in everywhere you go and I found out when I was last ill there were good nurses, they just never have time to talk to you because they were too busy looking round, checking everybody all over the place. But the nurses haven't got time to talk to you, because they haven't got time, because they're always in the office, but as you say, you know, doing paperwork they just haven't got time. I mean I had a named nurse and she was okay because she came to see me and I was asking for help because I needed it, but some people who sit there, are quiet, they don't...they get a bit frightened, they don't know what's going on and they daren't ask, they just sit there worrying about things. You need to talk about it to each other.

Woman

People are going to have good and bad experiences and I'm sure, you know, you can't tar everybody with the same brush but it's a scandal that that's, like, allowed to go on at all really.

Woman

Yes, I think you're right there. I think that's true.

Woman

Most people really don't know what it's like being in there and that it can be absolutely horrifying.

Woman

I thought what was interesting is that that unit is actually being closed, did it say, and I think that's the thing to hold on to that there's hope for positive change and that's certainly reflected in what's going on in our local services. People are starting to address the issues such as physical environment and user empowerment by the fact that those people were making the video.