



December 1<sup>st</sup> 2009

Dear Lovely Star Wards' Members,

Firstly, huge apologies for the loooong gap in e-newsletters. There are lots of reasons for these, mostly dull and internal to Bright but as you'll read further down, we've been working on lots of things that we hope will really enhance your working lives and the benefits of your work with patients.

## Survey

Many many thanks to all of you who made time to respond to The Stupidly Big Star Wards' Survey. The results are fascinating - and heartening! It's been fantastic to learn more about the magnificent work you're doing, how Star Wards is helping and what things we can do more/less/differently to support your work. Rather than doing a quicky tot-up, Alan is meticulously analysing the responses and we're starting to implement your suggestions. We'll be writing up and circulating the findings soon(ish).

## Website

We know that despite the rich contents of the website, the navigation is a little 'quirky' even for an unconventional organisation. So we're creating a whole new, hyper-beautiful and useful website which even I will be able to find my way around. (And for those of you who are wondering if this is all just a ploy to create a new publicity platform for Buddy - YES!! I certainly hope so and am making the most of my new iphone to send Tim the designer lots of irresistible pics of the cute hairy one.)



## Connecting up

Probably the clearest message from the survey is that you'd like to be able to be in easy contact with each other, for all the usual networking things of sharing challenges, triumphs, disappointments, ideas, solutions and for inspiration and encouragement. OK. All those over 18 please take a deep breath full of trust and optimism. (Pause while my 50 year old, ciggy-knackered lungs do the same.) Ready? We're about to do big things with social media. And not just Face Book and Twitter but extraordinary new mechanisms like ning. (Yes, really. ning.)

In the words of the incomparable Corporal Jones: "Don't panic!!" We know that lots of you are no more interested in ning-ing than in skinny-dipping in the Thames in mid-December. The social media stuff will be additional to communication methods more in most of our current comfort zones. The very very clever thing about all the groovy new opportunities, however, is that we can painlessly circulate information, photos, videos, news with a few clicks, swear-words and e-magic.

## TalkWell (and bingo...)

A beautiful, glossy, ideas-packed copy of this conversation training resource should be arriving in your ward in a week or two. Look out for the disco envelope! In the meantime, you can preview and/or download a copy from: <http://tiny.cc/talkwell>

We've had very positive feedback about TalkWell and, as ever, Jo Spencer and team at Highgate Mental Health Centre have wasted not a nano-second before making not just the most of a new resource but immediately adapting it. They're so creative that they've even introduced the best version of Bingo I've come across. Everyone starts off standing up and as a person's number is called, they sit down. The last person standing up wins! Awesome! Radical! The traditional loser is The Winner! There are other ideas for messing with traditional bingo at: <http://www.recreationtherapy.com/tx/txbingo.htm> and from the quintessentially invaluable Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bingo\\_\(U.S.\)#Variations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bingo_(U.S.)#Variations)

Slipping in some Bingo ideas isn't completely gratuitous. One of the most important factors in generating warm conversation on wards is, of course, having something to talk about. I was incredibly lucky to hear a presentation by the remarkable Phil Forder this morning. Phil is Arts Interventions Manager at HMP/YOI Parc in Bridgend South Wales. His work has included the creation of The Art of Living programme, a motivational course for adults that uses art as its medium. Hay-in-the-Parc, A literary festival for prisoners sponsored by the Hay Festival, Parcomix, a printing imprint that

uses comics to disseminate information, and Lounge Learning, a means to educate through the use of film. None of you will need convincing about the power of arts to reach people who are in a spectacular mess. What was so interesting was hearing about the impact on communication, conversation and relationships of Phil's highly imaginative ways of using popular art forms.

Which leads neatly onto....

## **Making the most of TV on wards**

All wards have TVs. Most patients, staff and visitors enjoy watching some programmes on TV, making this an exceptionally egalitarian, accessible and sociable resource. But one whose potential is rarely maximised on wards, for all sorts of reasons ranging from the 'invisibility' of the ubiquitous TV set to the British tradition of watching TV in silence. (Unless you're the Royle Family.) We're adapting a resource I created for people with profound and multiple disabilities - 3DTV, which gives loads of ideas for turning TV into a very stimulating, sociable and enjoyable shared resource. Turning it from a substitute for conversation and a barrier to relationship building to - well, the opposite!

And nipping back to TalkWell, we're also creating a training spin-off using TV programmes as a fun and unthreatening resource. (It's of course in no way just an excuse for me to sit and watch dozens of episodes of *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and *Friends*. That's just a bonus.)

## **Beyond the Full Monty**

I blogged some thoughts about the Full Monty:

<http://starwards.org.uk/?p=427> but for those of you who don't want to hop over to the Star Wards website, it went...

*We've been astonished and thrilled that quite a few wards are tenaciously working towards getting the Full Monty award, for having versions of all the relevant 75 ideas in place. I went on Friday to the staggeringly wonderful Bowman LSU in Bodmin, who are exemplary in so many ways, from having a highly effective social inclusion worker to the quintessentially simple facility of a ward card for the local library along with an ability to take out up to 18 books at once.*

*And then there's Cheshire and Wirral Partnership! They have (slowly building drum roll - if you've got an iphone you've probably got an application for this)... achieved Full Monty status in (minstrels play trumpets...)... in every single one of their 18 wards, which are spread across 4 hospitals in a vast area of this fine land. It's an enormous achievement for a ward to gain this award, and always reflects inspired, therapeutic practices way beyond the 75. But it's a remarkable feat of leadership as*

*well as of frontline excellence for this quality to be so consistent right across inpatient services.*

Before I learnt about CWP's sensational achievement, I had been wondering whether the Full Monty was not such a great idea. Perhaps too elitist, demotivating for the majority of wards (like the one I go on as an inpatient) where it's still a triumph to have introduced 10 of the 75 ideas. But CWP's Absolute Monty status has made me rethink this and we're now looking at pulling together a bunch more (of your!) ideas for wards who have achieved the near impossible and are keen to keep innovating.

There's more but I'll save that for a future newsletter, which will be with you with a shorter gap than the wait for this one!

Love Marion - and Buddy