

Case study

# The Torbay Newsletter Group

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The initial suggestion for a newsletter came from a member of the Co-creating Health team at a reunion, with a view to producing something that could help keep people interested and motivated in self-management. The Co-creating health team did not feel that they had the capacity to take it on, so they asked if any people coming to the reunions were interested to take responsibility for it.

At the first meeting, the group was facilitated by a member of staff but after that it was self-managed, and a core group of four people have formed The Newsletter Group. Since then they have met regularly and produced quarterly Self Management Programme newsletters.

Group members said they wanted to get involved to maintain the impetus of the course, to keep contact with and support others, and to use it as a vehicle to share information about new service developments or research in the treatment of depression:

‘The minute [T] mentioned it my mind was whizzing with ideas. I couldn’t sleep. I felt motivated to do something.’

The group request articles from patients and staff and produce many features themselves. The group has full editorial control and the final version is ‘signed off’ and distributed by the Co-creating Health team. Some features are included that are designed to attract readers and encourage them to keep the newsletter for future reference (for example, word searches and recipes), as it carries the dates of future meetings. This was felt to be very important as many patients do not keep diaries. The newsletter is currently only distributed at reunions in hard copy, but the group wanted to find ways that it could be distributed more widely in different formats, and to staff as well as patients. They also wanted to evaluate the newsletter, to explore the responses of patients and see how the newsletter could be improved.

The group meet informally in a person’s house and they valued this in establishing the tone of the meeting and enabling social contact and peer support. As well as it serving to inform others, some of the group members stressed how much they got out of producing the newsletter:

‘I wanted something further. I think it’s good for us. It was lovely to get involved. It’s definitely done me good.’

One member of the group said she had used her role in this group on her CV and felt it might well have had an impact in her gaining employment.