



Scottish Hearing Voices Network

9th July 2008

For immediate Release:

Press Release:

Support group launches project to find ways to improve support for people who hear voices in Scotland

This week the Scottish Hearing Voices Network (SHVN) is launching a consultation to find out what kinds of support people who hear voices would like to see provided in Scotland.

The Scottish Hearing Voices Network is planning to set up a national office to support the development of Hearing Voices Groups throughout Scotland. They have written a proposal and would like to hear what voice hearers from Scotland think about the kinds of support they would like to have. They would also be happy to hear from other people concerned with hearing voices too, such as family members and mental health workers. The consultation period will last for three months and has been funded by [Awards For All](#).

Angie, who hears voices herself and is chair of SHVN said:

"A little known fact is that research shows the majority of people who hear voices never come into contact with psychiatric services. However, some people who hear voices are overwhelmed by the negative and dis-empowering aspects of the experience and are diagnosed as having a serious mental health problem such as schizophrenia. We wanted to find more positive ways of helping people to learn to cope with their voices. We support self help groups meeting around Scotland and encourage people to talk about their experiences and because it works very well we want to spread the work to other parts of Scotland."

SHVN has put its proposal for a National Office and Support Service on the internet [here](#) and people are welcome to read it and give their opinions about the plans. SHVN have also put together a [questionnaire](#) for people who hear voices to find out more about what support they have now and what kinds of support they would like to have in the future.

Angie wants as many people who hear voices to complete the questionnaire and to read and comment on the Networks plans, she said:

"We want to hear from people who hear voices from all parts of Scotland. We know many voice hearers feel isolated and unsupported. I would therefore encourage voice hearers to complete the questionnaire, read our proposals and become members of our network. No one needs to feel alone in their experience of voice hearing. It's good to talk!"

The SHVN welcomes new members and anyone who wants to join can contact them at their office or fill in the application form below.

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Information for Editors

For more information on this press release contact: Paul Baker, INTERVOICE Coordinator telephone 020 7617 7378 email: admin@intervoiceonline.org

For more information The Scottish Hearing Voices Network contact SHVN, 216 - 220 Hilltown, Dundee, DD3 7UA, email: patwebster@btconnect.com

For more information about our approach to hearing voices visit the INTERVOICE site at www.intervoiceonline.org

Read more about the Hearing Voices Movement at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hearing_Voices_Movement

The Scottish Hearing Voices Network

The Scottish Hearing Voices Network was established in April 2001, by members of Hearing Voices groups throughout Scotland.

The Network aims to:

- Relieve the suffering and distress of people who are voice hearers, vision seers and/or have related extraordinary experiences.
- Promoting the development of hearing voices support groups in Scotland.
- To provide mutual support
- The advancement of education through training and research

SHVN welcomes new members, anyone interested in joining can download the application form [here](#) and return it to SHVN, 216 - 220 Hilltown, Dundee, DD3 7AU

INTERVOICE

The Scottish Network is a member of [INTERVOICE](#), the International Network for training, education and research into Hearing Voices. SHVN hosted the 2006 INTERVOICE seminar in Dundee.

INTERVOICE is an international support group for hearing voices initiatives. There are currently 19 active national organisations in membership. INTERVOICE aims to:

- show that hearing voices is a normal though unusual variation in human behaviour
 - show that the problem is not hearing voices but the inability to cope with the experience
 - educate society about the meaning of voices so as to reduce ignorance & anxiety and to ensure this innovatory approach on voice hearing is better known by voice hearers, families, professionals and the general public
 - demonstrate the wide variety of voice hearing experiences and their origins, and peoples' approaches to coping
 - increase the quality and quantity of mutual support available to all people and organisations involved in hearing voices work across the world
 - make our work more effective and develop more non-medical ways of helping voice hearers cope with their experience
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Some facts about hearing voices:

- * Studies have found that between four and 10 per cent of people across the world hear voices.
- * Between 70 and 90 cent of people who hear voices do so following traumatic events.
- * Voices can be male, female, without gender, child, adult, human or non-human.
- * People may hear one voice or many. Some people report hearing hundreds, although in almost all reported cases, one dominates above the others.
- * Voices can be experienced in the head, in the ears, outside the head, in some other part of the body, or in the environment.
- * Voices often reflect important aspects of the hearer's emotional state - emotions that are often unexpressed by the hearer.

Hearing voices in itself is not a symptom of an illness, but is apparent in 4 % of the population (some research gives higher estimates) and even more (about 8%) have peculiar personal convictions, that we call delusions, and do so without being ill. Whilst one in three becomes a psychiatric patient - two in three can cope well and are in no need of psychiatric care and no diagnosis can be given because 2/3 are quite healthy and well functioning. It is very significant that there are in our society more people hearing voices who never became psychiatric patients than there are people who hear voices and become psychiatric patients.

In our research concerning people who hear voices we found that in 77% of the people diagnosed with schizophrenia the hearing of voices was related to traumatic experiences. These traumatic experiences varied from being sexually abused, physically abused, being extremely belittled over long periods from young age, being neglected during long periods as a youngster, being very aggressively treated in marriage, not being able to accept ones sexual identity, etc.

Hearing voices in itself is not related to the illness of schizophrenia. In population research only 16% of the whole group of voice hearers can be diagnosed with schizophrenia.

The prognosis of hearing voices is more positive than generally is perceived. In Sandra Escher's research with children hearing voices, she followed 82 children over a period of four years. In that period 64% of the children's voices disappeared congruently with learning to cope with emotions and becoming less stressed. In children with whom the voices were psychiatrised and made a part of an illness and not given proper attention, voices did not vanish, but became worse, the development of those children was delayed.
