

S.I.S

SELF INJURY SUPPORT
IN NORTH CUMBRIA

Registered Charity No: 1106750

SIS News

Welcome to SIS News

Welcome to SIS News, an issue which is full of pictures! In this issue we share with you the sad story of Dave Tuck who ended his life in February 2009. **Dave's parents Maria and Phil have very kindly shared this (pages 4-7) with SIS in the hope that by raising awareness about the help available to those who self-harm that a similar tragedy might be prevented. In memory and celebration of Dave's life, and to raise funds for SIS, a sponsored walk is taking place in May (see details below).**

Following positive feedback from the previous newsletter, we again have a focus on creative expression from people who self-harm, including artwork and poetry from SIS service-users.

It's been a busy few months, and you might have seen or heard about SIS in the local news. I hope you enjoy reading about what we've been up to!

Mary Hillery (Chair)

Sponsored Walk, in memory of Dave

Maria, Phil and Ollie are joining with other friends and family of Dave Tuck

for a sponsored walk from Askham near Penrith to Arthur's Pike, in memory and celebration of his life.



The walk will take place on Sunday 2nd May from 11am. Sponsorship is being taken to raise funds for SIS.

Any donation would be very much appreciated. You can donate by visiting www.everyclick.com/tucka When you make a donation, don't forget to check the Gift Aid box if you are a UK taxpayer as then SIS can claim an extra 28p per £1 donation. We have already had some fantastic donations, and our hope is to reach our target of £5000!

With thanks to our funders.

 Lloyds TSB | Foundation for England and Wales

Issue 7

April-June 2010

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LOTTERY FUNDED

Self-Injury Awareness Day 2010!

On 1st March it was Self-Injury Awareness Day (or SIAD). Although we raise awareness about self-harm all through the year, 1st March is a focal point for awareness raising. This year we were lucky to get three whole pages in the News and Star on the day itself, and were particularly pleased that Hannah Gollings (whose story we shared in Newsletter 5) volunteered to share her personal story with the press, so a huge thank you to Hannah! The news coverage was excellent publicity for SIS and the work which we do. Hits on the website and enquiries about training increased dramatically on the day as a result!



Ruth Lax with Hannah Gollings



SIS Volunteer, Hannah Gollings

SIS held an open day, and were pleased to make contacts with various people from local organisations over tea/coffee and nibbles. The News and Star came to take pictures (see below left), and CFM interviewed Steve about the day.



Mary Hillery, Ruth Lax & Helen Watson



(Above) Hannah with the display board and nibbles!

(Below) Mary with one of our visitors



Notice Board



Self-Harm in the News

On 12th March self-harm was in the news, following results from a survey being published with findings that the number of young people admitted to hospital after cutting themselves deliberately had risen by more than 50% in five years. There were 2,727 admissions in the UK for self-harm with a sharp object among under-25s in 2008/09, compared with 1,758 in 2004/05. In addition to this there was discussion about how some **websites can 'glamorise' the issue of self-harm**, and how graphic images and videos (for instance on YouTube) can encourage young people to self-harm. At SIS we see self-harm as a symptom of underlying emotional distress (rather than something people will do just because they have seen other people doing it), however we also recognise that such videos can be distressing and potentially damaging for already vulnerable people.

Steve was interviewed for BBC Radio Cumbria (with a focus on increased figures from A&E departments within the county), and a clip from SIS service user Louise was also played.

There was a lot of press coverage about these findings, and more can be found here:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/hi/health/newsid_8563000/8563670.stm



SAFA

SIS covers areas in Cumbria beginning with CA postcodes. For those in areas with postcodes beginning LA, SAFA (Self-harm Awareness for the Furness Area) is an organisation which is very similar to SIS.- to find out more about SAFA, visit



www.safa-selfharm.com

Any suggestions for future issues of SIS News would be much appreciated. Please get in touch if you would like to write an article, or if there is anything relevant which you would like to see included. We appreciate all feedback! Please also forward this newsletter to anyone who you think might find it useful, and suggest that they sign up to our mailing list!



SIS are very pleased to announce that we have received funding from the Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales for 2010! We are very grateful for their support!



Lloyds TSB | Foundation for England and Wales



Dave's Story

How difficult this is to put into words, your son's life.

David was born on the 5th of May 1983. He weighed in at a whopping 11lb 2oz. He was born with the umbilical cord wrapped around his throat. He had been stuck for a while as his shoulders were bigger than his head. In fact they said it was like giving birth to a 3 month old baby. He spent the first two days of his life in an incubator; his face black and swollen from lack of oxygen. Dave recovered well and continued to thrive.



He was very quick to walk, talk, and know his numbers. He had a dry sense of humour from an early age. His nature was loving. His gentleness and kindness couldn't help but melt the hardest of hearts. He was the eldest of three boys. David grew up in the heart of rural Cumbria where he attended the local village school. David was very happy at school. Unfortunately this time finished all too soon. He went on to Secondary school when he was eleven. There had been twenty nine pupils at his primary school when he left. The Secondary school had twelve hundred.

Dave was there for the next five years. He was not afraid to be different in his nature. He enjoyed his own company just as much as being with friends. He would try everything that was on offer at the school in way of lunchtime clubs. We watched our son deteriorate from this lovely child to a very troubled and sometimes angry young man. He withdrew into himself and his music. It was not always like that. He was still loving and caring. He would sit on the Aga and chat with me while I cooked tea. When in year 9 we discovered by accident that David had been bullied since year 7 by five lads, who admitted to "making his life a misery". I contacted the School and tried to get the problem sorted. All concerned were brought in and dealt with in front of us all. Unfortunately the problem became worse for him.

He told me this when he was eighteen. The bullying continued until he left but he kept it hidden from us all. In fact that was the problem with the situation. He would withdraw into himself and not talk about his problems. Even earlier in his life I could see him when in large family groups he would tend to withdraw into the background whilst his brothers were there up front. I always felt with Dave I had to pull him forward so he was with them.

At fourteen years old David started to cut himself using a scalpel blade. The more he hurt in his head the deeper he would cut. Always in private and never shown it was never an attention seek! The piercings started around this time and with everything Dave did it was taken to extreme. I think at his peak he had twenty six in his face and other parts of his body. We were against a fourteen year old having piercings, but with Dave there was no negotiation. We tried.

As I write this I can see the spiral of self destruction started subtly and gathered impetus. I think it was around this time that the most awful rages started. They were very destructive and violent, infrequent to start with, but they got worse as he got older. This went way beyond average teenage behaviour. They would erupt suddenly with little warning and it was a very frightening time for the whole family. They would finish as quickly as they had started. It was as if a lid had been slammed shut on a

box. You were left reeling from its effects, but the eerie calm that followed made you doubt it could have happened in the first place.

It was not always so tense, but I think what happened at school rubbed off at home and the sad thing is, we were oblivious to it all, because Dave chose not to tell us for fear we would make it worse. By the time he was fifteen Dave decided he was not going to try and pass his exams (personally I felt it was a fear of failure so he empowered himself by taking this decision). No amount of bribery of any kind to cajole him worked. Dave had decided he was going to be a Body piercer when he left school and, bless him, he was for nine months. Ironically he had a terrible needle phobia, he refused to have an operation because of the use of needles, however he pierced absolutely everything. He was unique. You have to remember this was at the early stages of our journey and so we were naive as to what was to come. Up until this point Dave had been a grade A student and no problem to anyone. At this stage the anger was quite rare. We saw what was happening as a problem that we could sort.

I remember the Head of year 11 called to inform us that the Headmaster would like to see us as a matter of urgency. This meeting was the turning point. Dave had written an autobiographical piece for his English coursework. It had been written while his dad and I were abroad on business. In fact just before we went away Dave was convinced he was playing hockey for the school team as he religiously turned up for practise. **Dave wasn't picked yet again. He and a friend stole a bottle of gin and proceeded to get alcohol poisoning on the streets of the town. He spent the night in hospital. I wouldn't have gone abroad, but another friend's mother said it would be alright and he could stay with them. She was a Teacher at the school.**

Soon after our return we went to see the head about Dave's English coursework. It had ended with the words "And so to the future. What is the future? Death is the future. I look forward to the future". Remember, at this stage, there had been not one concern slip from any of his teachers and no phone calls about his behaviour. The writing was very dark and pessimistic about his life. The Head finished **the meeting with the words; "If we didn't get David professional help he could see him hanging from a tree".** In the months to come, the school was so worried he would do something terrible to himself or others, and they did not want the responsibility so they put him on early study leave isolating him even more. The Head saw **"A Waco situation" potentially (his words).**

He saw a psychologist over the next two years, but refused to talk and made little eye contact with him at all. **It was a very frustrating time but I don't think they liked one another. David had no confidence or feeling of**

self worth. It was around this time when I knew Dave was stressed and cutting himself. I was at my wits end because I couldn't stop it or help him. I rang the Samaritans and talked to a nice bloke called Ron. He didn't know what to say, but listened as I unburdened my worries onto this stranger. I was looking at self harm websites trying understand why this was happening, but everything was geared to girls; there was little or no information about boys who cut. Dave never once tried to meet us halfway with anything. There was more reasoning with his brother at five than there was with Dave at fifteen. When sixteen arrived his rages were out of control and so was the cutting. It was a very difficult time for us all not just Dave. The slightest thing would set him off. Again it was not all the time. He was stressed a lot. Dave loved his music and he loved to share it with me. It was his way of letting me know how he

was in his head. Dave would create tapes of his music and give them to me to listen so I could gauge his mood by the music.



Writing this makes it sound like we had no communication with one another, but we did. He would talk of the pain in his head, unfortunately he just could not articulate why. He would constantly ask my opinion on different songs (trust me these were not your average pop songs). Most I liked anyway. He even asked if I would talk to the mother of a friend of his who was having difficulty with her daughters self harming as he **felt I understood. I think it was because he taught me to accept things and not to judge what you don't understand and just be there.** We shared a lot together, good and bad.

His descent continued. It was so very sad the day I had to throw my son out of the house. He went berserk truly not just at me but also when his Dad tried to say that Dave could stay if he would just abide, for want of a better word, by the house rules. He left, but returned five minutes later in such a rage he was actually foaming at the mouth, such **violence, the police were called and Dave was taken to stay at a friend's house.** His brothers, who were twelve and six, were clinging to each other totally traumatised and I knew I had to stop this. It could not continue for their sanity. So it was me who told Dave he could not live **here any more. We had to find another way. Such pain. Dave went to stay at my sister Margi's for three months in Nottingham.** I suppose it was a cooling off period. At first he would not speak to us. So I kept in contact with him via text messages and through Margi. He slowly came round. He returned to Cumbria and **lived at my parent's house close by. I would visit most days. David's appearance was challenging to say the least and such hardness and anger in his face.**



The next four years was spent either in dead-end jobs or deep depression. This is when we first encountered the suicidal thoughts. He would become very withdrawn not wanting to see his great friends and he would talk of the darkness and despair and ugliness going on in his head. The music ever present to help verbalise his thoughts. Self-harm in the form of cutting, and burning himself with cigarettes, continued during these periods. His arms were so bad that he was cutting into scar tissue. On many occasions anti depressants were prescribed. He did try them to help him sleep, as his sleep pattern was terrible. Counselling was recommended. He was taking drugs at this time too; Cannabis, speed and ecstasy.

At seventeen he moved into his first flat. A girl moved in at the same time. Now started the desperate phone calls in the night and the rushes to Hospitals or Police station. The police would not keep him in a cell because they could see he was vulnerable. At times he found life hard dealing with being in a relationship. He would get so stressed with life and the continuing pain and darkness followed him. He was seeing a Psychiatrist as the suicidal thoughts continued, but stronger, and now with more detail. He knew when he was eighteen that he had a strong urge to hang himself. These thoughts were not new. What was new was that he could not worry about hurting those he was leaving behind. I know this because as I was with him at the Doctors when he said it. There was to be several half hearted attempts at suicide and a spell in a mental health unit after a serious attempt when he was nineteen. Nothing seemed to change the spiral of self destruction. Later I was to discover that the Psychiatrist had diagnosed Dave with a probable borderline personality disorder. Unfortunately I found this out, and what it meant, only after he had died. The Psychiatrist wanted Dave to go to a residential therapeutic community at Crewe, but he refused.

However, shortly after this time, something in him changed for the good. In October 2005 when Dave was twenty two he went to Finchale College in Durham to learn the trade of joinery. He was determined to break the cycle of dead end jobs. When you have zero confidence everything feels like a mountain, but he did it. We were so very proud of him. Slowly, after years of torment and pain, our lovely son started to emerge again.

The change in him was so wonderful - and he was so proud of his achievements - as he should be. He did it! Dave loved to show us round the college and introduce us to his new friends.

We would take him over to Durham college after supper on a Sunday evening. I remember his Dad and I looking at Dave and realising that we could see for the first time in years our lovely lad was walking tall with confidence, all be it fragile. It choked us both with pride he had truly turned his life around. He knew it too. The weed was the only thing he was using now which was a relief. He also took up and excelled at Tai Kwon Do, and loved it so much he helped instruct it. He gained his Black belt in the sport last year. He also taught himself the guitar of which he would practise religiously. He was very good at it. He would show us new pieces he was learning and wanted us to share in it. God it felt so good to see the anger and rage go out of his face. His gentleness returned.

After ten months Dave graduated from the College with his first certificates in Joinery. He once told me that he felt that the bullies nearly destroyed him but he had won through. When he left college he got a placement at a joinery firm locally where he continued to work in paid employment in the years after his **placement was completed. However, Dave's fragility was seen at the time when his placement was ending and** he transferred to paid employment with the firm. A misunderstanding over his starting rate of pay knocked his confidence massively and, because he did not have the confidence to discuss his disappointment with his employer, triggered a suicide attempt. We liaised with his employer on his behalf and, sorry for their mistake, they showed themselves to be understanding and sympathetic. In the years since then it has been very clear that they came to value Dave and the work that he did for them.

He took pride in this work and appeared to grow in strength and confidence, to the point when he could take on the responsibility of being Head Machinist.

He gave up the weed at the end of 2008.



His last bad episode involved turbulent distress in his personal relationship. This triggered an episode of serious self harm. We were called to A & E by his neighbour where we found him with at least a hundred cuts to his body. That was about two and half years ago. He had not cut prior to that for about two years. In saying that there, had been a definite shift in the way Dave felt in stressful situations. Self harm did not help now. David felt strongly about ending his life.

For the last two years Dave seemed to have left his Demons well and truly behind him. He had turned his whole life around and my heart would ache with pride when I looked at him and how much he had achieved in his life.

Unfortunately he found the turbulence in his personal relationships too hard sometimes.

You know some people are just too gentle for this harsh world. It doesn't mean they are weak. They are just different.

Dave hung himself on the 23rd of February 2009.

Maria Tuck

Support Group - Artwork

Over this double-spread we share with you some artwork from one of our support groups!



Fear is a feeling
it Wont Hold
Me Back



PAMPERING RELAX
PLAN CONFIDENCE



LOVE
More
Love
In
Our
Household
Brighter
AND
Colorful
Life



Relax Treat
Create Share



Assertive & Confident
in situations

Relax

Chillout

Be content
Within myself



Feedback from SIS Service User!

I thought that self injury was an attention seeking behaviour and to behave in such a way showed lack of self control. Having come to understand more about self harm, I have come to realise that this was an immature view, as the issue is far more complex. Through acknowledging that I do self harm and that it is not for attention and it is mostly acted upon when I feel that I am in control, I started to question what was I doing? After seeking advice from Samaritans and a contact number for SIS, I made contact with a charity that can only be described as a hidden gem in the city of Carlisle. Its office is neatly tucked inside a busy bustling city centre. Within which a real sense of calm and respect is evident. The support on offer from staff at the centre is something that I have found to be extremely valuable and precious.

"I am beginning to understand that my life is valuable and I am precious too."

Through being given time to unravel the turmoil that is going on inside me, I am finding out who the real me is. The environment that is created during time spent talking to members of staff has allowed me to be real, open and feel secure in beginning to release things deep inside of me that I can't understand. Rather than the release being destructive in self harm, I am learning to find alternative ways of dealing with my emotions (the hurts, fears and sadness) so that a positive and constructive thought or action can be the result.

Why?

*I self harm because the pain inside wont leave,
It's my way to emotionally grieve
It's an outward sign of the hurt that lies deep,
an expression of tears I long to weep.
Yet with no tears its hard to find,
a way to show my emotional state of mind.
Self harm you think should bring tears,
yet for me it numbs my hurt and fears.
It's something that I have to work through no magic wand will make do.
Complex issues in life can't be ignored,
but how they are dealt with can be explored.
So for now, while I work things through
Self Harm for me; it's what I do..
Don't judge me or worry too much
Listen, be there, keep in touch.
Help me work out how to be me
Let me live, and learn guilt free.*

I am so pleased that I was given the information about SIS and that you have been able to offer me support. Thank you to you all :)

Sarah J

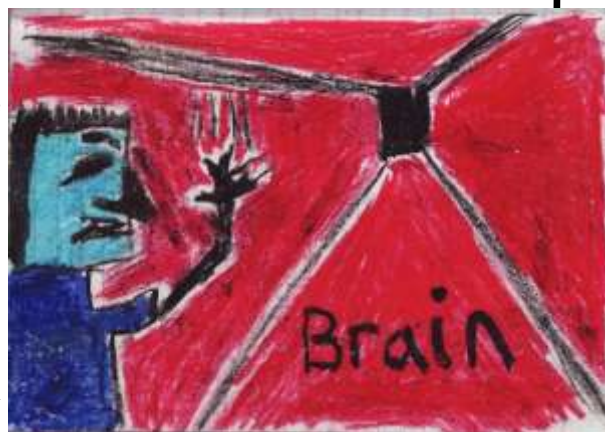
With much thanks to Sarah for her positive feedback about our services - ed

Artwork and Poetry

On this page we share with you some artwork from Jemma Brown whose artwork is driven by her mental health issues. Jemma is visually impaired so a lot of her artwork is about colour and shape. **I'm sure you'll agree that her work is thought-provoking**, and that she is extremely talented being able to express herself in this way. Jemma describes her artwork in the following words:



Breaking down the wall one brick at a time (top left) is about my own struggle to talk about my self harming behaviour, it's a very tough wall to break down and it took a lot of counselling to get me there. In counselling we used the wall metaphorically to take out a brick to talk about it until I found it too difficult and we put the brick back in. Totally bonkers but it worked!



Trapped (right) is about the feelings of being stuck with your faults and not being able to get out.



1in4 (left) is a picture of 21 people all different apart from 4 of them are shaded in black - to represent that 4 of them have mental health issues.

The following poem which is about my own emotional struggles is dedicated to my friends...

There once was a girl
And she was so scared.
She knew people loved her,
She knew that they cared.
But stuck in her head with impending madness,
Irrational thoughts, overwhelming sadness,
She sat and laughed,
And cried till distraught.
She envisaged the blood,
And of death she thought.
Those prettyful blades, so silver and shiny,
The capacity to kill in something so tiny.

If you've not been there
It's hard to explain
The sadness, the madness,
The intolerable pain.
But tolerate she would unless she could no longer,
She hoped she would grow into someone stronger.
She wanted to be rid of
The guilt and the sorrow,
The past and the present,
And to live for tomorrow.
She hoped she would get there with help from her friends
And that this would be the beginning, and not the end.

Mary

Training Dates

Due to the continued success of the SIS training workshops, we have further dates arranged for 2010. Training days have already been held in Workington in February and Carlisle in March.

Training days cost just £80 (including 0% rate VAT) and include comprehensive training materials, refreshments and lunch. Courses run from 10am-4pm (refreshments from 9:45am). Discounts are available for individuals (not from organisations), and also for group bookings.

Tuesday 25th May - Whitehaven
Wednesday 23rd June - Penrith
Thursday 15th July - Workington
Tuesday 28th September - Carlisle

We are also available to deliver in-house training sessions to groups both large and small, for days and **shorter sessions**. Please contact Steve or Ruth on 01228 515500 if you're interested in arranging training, or if you wish to book a place on one of the dates above.

We also regularly attend events with a display stand (see pictures), so get in touch if you'd like us to come along to your event!



New Counsellors

We are very pleased to welcome two new counsellors to SIS who join the other seven. Helene Wickins is based in the Carlisle area and Kathryne Francis in West Cumbria. All of our counsellors are fully qualified, BACP registered, and are paid by SIS for seeing clients.

Recruiting trustees is an ongoing challenge for most charities, so please do get in touch if you are interested in joining us. We currently meet once every other month on a weekday afternoon at our office in Carlisle. If you would like to know more then get in touch with Ruth, and perhaps come along to our next board meeting!