

A Positive Journey



What's on in A Positive Journey?

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- Identifying the disorders. StressCare Foundation
- Plymouth Recovery College
- Enjoying the meeting

Sharing experiences in Plymouth (UK)

After the first meeting in Agrinio (Greece), partners of 'A Positive Journey (APJ)' joined again to share their experiences and updates about APJ project.

The 2nd meeting (the 5-9 of May'14) in Plymouth (UK), within the framework of the European Project GRUNDTVIG 'A Positive Journey', was attended by partners from Greece (Mental Health Center/General Hospital of Agrinio), Lithuania (ZISPb), Volunteer Cornwall (UK), Italy (Cittadinanza Onlus) and Plymouth and District Mind (UK).

The partners gathered to find out more about how Plymouth & District Mind works and its approach to improving the mental health of the local community in Plymouth.

One of the main goals of the project is to show how one person's life experiences can be an inspirational story for others.



All partners update their web pages on APJ's website in their own language.

APJ aims to show how through positive thinking and believing in their own talents and abilities, and seeking out the support of others to achieve their goals, individuals CAN inspire others. It was discussed that even if people have difficult and distressing life experiences, they are still capable of achieving their goals.

APJ's team is working to ensure that mental health problems are not stigmatised and to highlight what can be achieved by trying to live everyday in a positive way.

To find out more about this project, please visit our website:

<http://www.apositivejourney.com/>



Facebook.com/MyPositiveJourney



@Plymouth_APJ

What are the main tasks?

APJ will address the problem of stigma, for those who are socially excluded or at risk of being socially marginalized.

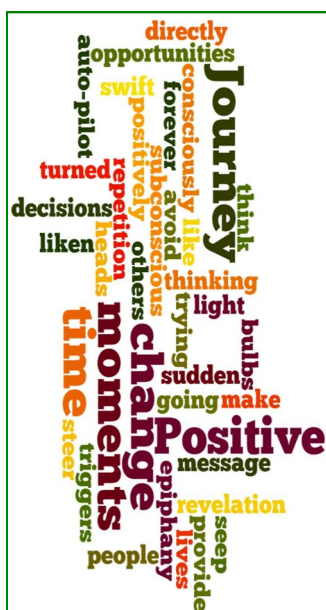
Each partner works with a range of disadvantaged groups, for example: mental health, learning disability or ex-offenders.

APJ give our target groups the opportunity to tell everyone their positive journey in overcoming challenges in life.

Our participants will meet, engage and discuss promotion of their positive journeys, learn and share best practice from other cultures and empower service users to create positive images as a means to combat stigma, and interview a local "disadvantaged" celebrity.



True lives become inspirational stories



“Life is a journey where we have many obstacles to overcome. There is a famous Greek poem called ‘Ithaca’, written by Kavafis which encapsulates the main idea of APJ”. Virginia Antrian (Greek Partner) introduced the video voiced by Sean Connery.

Please follow the below links to find out more about different inspirational stories:

Kyle Coleman:

<http://kylecoleman.co.uk/>

David Hill:

<http://www.damekellyholmestrust.org/athletes/david-hill/>

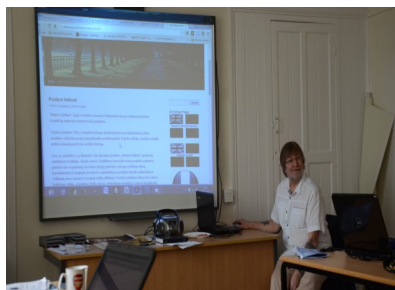
Teresa Overall:

<http://tjoverall73.wordpress.com/>

Psicoradio:

<http://www.psicoradio.it/>

One of the highlights of APJ is the collection of material suitable for putting into a book format and the making of a documentary film about the different people interviewed.



Graham Nicholls highlighted that “APJ, through European cooperation, will address the stigma that disadvantaged groups face in their life journey – it will demonstrate that there is life beyond disadvantage. Partners from the UK, Greece, Lithuania and Italy will exchange best practice and create a media and communication learning toolkit to help tackle stigma.”

David Hill, Paralympian swimmer and motivational speaker, has kindly agreed to be a ‘celebrity’ representative for Plymouth Mind to showcase what APJ is all about.

“Where there is a will, there is way”, asserts David who has proven, and continues to prove that if you set your mind to do something, anything is possible. Sky Sports recruited him to go into schools to promote sport and to “inspire a generation” - a legacy from the Paralympics 2012. He is also a fully qualified carpenter, despite his disability of having a no lower arm.

Plymouth Mind also mentioned **Teresa Overall**. She has suffered from mental health disorders since she was 15 and now she uses that experience to educate people on self-harm through her role as **Associate Trainer at Plymouth Mind where she provides courses on Understanding Self-Harm**.

Teresa recently completed the City and Guilds Award in education and training.

Each partner country had a different story to tell.

From Greece: Panagiotis Kouroumplis, born in 1951 in Matsouki Aetoloakarnanias, married with 2 children, he is a Dr of social sciences, lawyer and he is a Member of the Greek Parliament in the 2nd Athens electoral district and parliamentary spokesman for the party SYRIZA-EKM. In the past he had been elected MP three times in the Aitoloakarnania prefecture with the party PASOK.

In 1961 he lost his sight after a German grenade explosion, a remnant of the Second World War.



He has been honoured many times for his social achievements and aim to build an effective welfare state and a humane society by many Greek and international institutions (Stasinopoulos foundation, Association of Greek Writers, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, European Health Club and others).

In 2012 the Euro-American Women's Council (EAWC) awarded him with the international prestigious ARTEMIS award for his willpower and his persistence to his aims.

Partners from Italy shared their contribution to APJ. They showed a video about a musical band, called **"Sorci Verdi"**: the musicians are suffering from mental health disorders and to be part of this band contributes greatly to the success of their recovery processes. They are followed by the Mental Health Services of the area where they live and by the Cooperative Zerocento from Faenza.

Also mentioned: **"Psicoradio"** a project of people living with mental illness who have created and manage a local radio station in Bologna.

“The radio broadcasts aim to spread correct and relevant information on mental health-related issues and at fighting the stereotypes pervading the public opinion about mental illness and the mentally ill”, said the Italian partner.

“ Where there is a will, there is a way. If you set your mind to do something, anything is possible”

Partners from Lithuania shared their story too. Its title could be “*I am, I want, I can*”. This life story is about an incredible woman who was diagnosed with blood cancer.

“It was hard to accept this in the beginning...”

This lady had to drop her studies, she had no job and social activities.

After a difficult period, she wrote an article in the newspaper about an NGO working with disabled people. She started to go to the meetings and she managed to finish her studies in Environment Engineering. However, she became ill again so she had no choice but to

restart chemotherapy and decided to be operated on at the Vilnius Santariškių hospital. She was able to continue thanks to lecturers, doctors, nurses, and psychologist.

“I had many plans, and the most important thing was I did not have a single doubt that I would not recover”, she said.

Unfortunately, she had to wait a long time for a bone marrow transplant, but she eventually got it: “*I am going to celebrate New Year at home, although it is difficult to sit still, but my heart is full of joy that I am healthy and I am coming back to family that I will be able to continue my studies”,* she exclaimed.

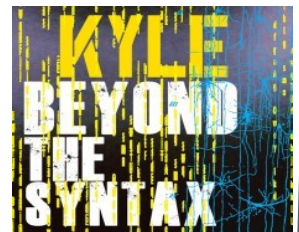
Terry Stanton from Volunteer Cornwall talked about **Kyle Coleman, the Cornwall “celebrity”**. He was diagnosed with autism aged three. “*He is non-verbal but he sings with perfect pitch and he has launched his new song Standing on Solid Ground”,* said Terry Stanton.

“As time went on Kyle retreated from the world leaving him unable to communicate and relate to anyone, enclosing him in a pervasive fortress of autism. While growing up, Kyle still remained unreachable at times, however he never lost his fascination and love of music. With the sensitivity of music therapy, a doorway opened permitting him safe passage, enabling him to find his own musical expression”.



Kyle Coleman

We all have a talent. APJ will help people to express it.



Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Association: StressCare

Royston Hackney, Coordinator of StressCare, was one of the guests at this meeting. He was previously introduced by Graham Nicholls who talked about how he meet him and Caroline Keane’s story.

“The Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Association known as StressCare was launched in 1994 to educate the public and provide access to the application of therapeutic treatment for the mental and physical illness known as ‘Post Traumatic Stress Disorder’ to include counseling and support”, Royston said.

The Co-founder, Caroline Keane, decided to launch it after suffering a Post Traumatic Stress Disorder when she left Zimbabwe in 1987 following experiences in its civil war, when she was taken captive.

As Royston explained, *“The organisation carried out research on the effects on rural families traumatised by Foot and Mouth in West Devon. Caroline has also set up an empowerment programme based on colour and art therapy for the relief of trauma within the family - these two pilot projects took place in Scotland and Denmark”.*

What are the Stone Carriers?

The African tradition of Stone Carrying originated in Great Zimbabwe. It consists of a group or community gathering in ceremony at the time of the full moon four times a year. The group identify concerns within their community around a stone placed in the centre of a fire. Whilst the stone is in the fire the community around the fire hold “council” each participating in the discussion of the best ways forward and options open to the community. The stone is then removed from the fire and each person holds the stone in an act of generating their energy and vision consciously to imbue the stone, thereby ‘feeding the stone’ with energy. The stone is then passed to the stone carrier who literally takes the stone on a journey asking the stone to direct his/her footsteps and in believing thought and intention that the stone is taking the tribe forward and leading the way, by introducing the energy components needed for forward movement of the tribe.





Plymouth & District Mind Association hosts for the 2nd APJ meeting

Plymouth & District Mind Association

We are a mental health charity, formed in 1984, and continue to go from strength to strength, evolving and re-structuring as the need arises, reflecting both the needs of mental health service users and the community we serve. Our projects are delivered by dedicated, professional staff and we also acknowledge the tireless support of our volunteers and students on placement who work alongside us.

Our Oasis Day Centre is run by our service user peer mentor support team who provide a safe, welcoming environment for those with mental health problems, as well as organised social events and activities. It is now based in our Parkside building.

We operate from two buildings adjoined by a garden. Our main building (8 Woodside) is an impressive grade 2 listed Georgian building. The Mind Parkside building (6 Woodside Lane) is to the rear of the property and can be accessed via our main building and through the garden. Mind Parkside is also accessible via the service road which runs next to the boundary wall of Freedom Fields Park.

If you have the time, why not visit Freedom Fields Park? Not only does it have impressive views of the surrounding area but it is full of history. It has been landscaped and refurbished through the Heritage Fund. It is also the location of The Cafe In The Park - our community cafe which is run completely by volunteers. This is open most weekends throughout the year and also on a daily basis during the summer.

Plymouth Recovery College

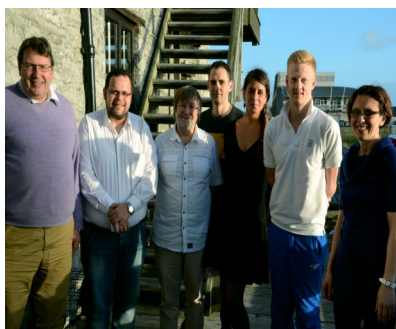
Three tutors (Annette, Paula & Dave) from Plymouth Mind explained the courses that they run. "All the courses provided in the Recovery College are designed to contribute towards Wellbeing and Recovery. People who share experiences of mental health challenges are involved in the delivery of the courses – to inspire HOPE and embody recovery". Courses are designed to help users develop their skills, understanding and control of their challenges.

Plymouth Recovery College aims to:

1. Provide a base for recovery resources.
2. Promote an educational and coaching model in supporting people to become experts in the self care of their recovery .
3. To break down barriers between 'us' and 'them' by offering training sessions.



A Positive Journey Project Team meeting in the Training Room of Plymouth Mind on 5-9 of May 2014



Team APJ with Dave Hill (second on the right)

Enjoying the meeting

On the first evening, the partners dined at the China House restaurant in Plymouth with David Hill, the Paralympian swimmer. We know he has a full agenda but he took time out to meet for few hours and to have dinner with us. We were delighted to be able to share our ideas with David. We thank him for his support and his mention on Facebook: "Really good meal at @TheChinaHouse tonight in Plymouth with #APositiveJourney. Lovely to catch up & share good practice #APJ".

During the 2nd day evening, all partners enjoyed visiting a traditional and cultural coastal village called Looe. The twin towns of East and West Looe face each other across a river and are joined by a bridge with 7 arches dating from the early 19th century. With narrow streets and a medieval guildhall now a delightful museum, and the second largest fishing fleet in Cornwall.

It's going to be a busy year with APJ, but at the end, we will be able to present different stories, a positive movie about unknown people with inspirational stories from partner countries.

Throughout the year, we will keep you updated on the progress of our project on our website www.apositivejourney.com and on Facebook and Twitter.

We want to hear your story! If you would like to share your story with APJ, please contact us:

mystory@apositivejourney.com or

thepositivejourneyking@apositivejourney.com



Team APJ at Looe (UK)

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