

## **Helping Older People**

Since 1998 the Project's principal other scheme has been Helping Older People (HOP) which targets the over 55's and is self-funding. This programme was originally set up when it became clear that there were particular problems concerning older people and prescribed psychotropic drugs, especially in withdrawal, consequently we sought additional funding in order to make a greater impact on this problem. The first programme was jointly funded by Lloyds TSB Foundation and Help the Aged. Subsequent programmes (each of 3 years' duration) have been funded by a range of charitable trusts. Each 3 year programme has seen a continuing rise in the numbers of older people who we have been able to help. Since 2006 additional funds have been raised in order to increase the number of hours specifically given to our HOP programme.

## **The Problems with Prescribed Psychotropic Medication**

The minor tranquillisers and sleeping tablets (benzodiazepines) such as diazepam, lorazepam, nitrazepam and temazepam are now recognised as highly addictive and should only be prescribed for a maximum of 2-4 weeks. The HOP Project is often helping those who have been taking them for 20-30 years. Use of these drugs cause depression, confusion, agoraphobia, panic attacks and social isolation which can lead to a loss of independence and premature entry into elderly people's homes. Many clients are also taking antidepressants such as doxepin, dothiepin, amitriptyline (tricyclics) or prozac, seroxat, cipramil, (SSRI's) or venlafaxine which can also cause unpleasant side effects and be difficult to withdraw from. Our HOP programme helps clients to cope with withdrawal and regain good mental health, well being and their independence.

## **The Services we Offer**

We help clients to understand more about the problems caused by psychotropic medication and where appropriate make a safe withdrawal from it. All doctors concerned are informed in writing when a patient wishes to become a client of the Project. Many of our clients are referred by their doctors.

We offer the following services free to our clients:-

- Individual counselling
- Weekly group meeting at the Project, outreach groups in other areas of Bristol
- Drop-ins
- Telephone helpline

## **Helping Older People Targets (October 2011 – October 2014)**

1. To help 20 older people a week and 80 a year through groups, individual counselling and our telephone helpline.
2. To continue to expand our group specifically for older people in Bristol.
3. To undertake a prevention programme of up to 10 visits a year to organisations for those over 60, to give talks/workshops where appropriate.
4. To contact other organisations dealing with older people to send them information about our services and encourage them to put the clients in touch with us where appropriate.

Bristol & District Tranquilliser Project is run by counsellors who have taken antidepressants and withdrawn successfully from them or who have other personal experience of these medications. If you have any problems with these medications for which you would like help or advice, please contact us on our helpline number Tel: 0117 9628874. (Mondays to Thursdays 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.) We also offer group meetings, drop-ins and individual counselling. We are mainly funded by the Bristol Primary Care Trust to provide this service. Our services are free and confidential.