



Autumn/Winter Newsletter (Nov/Dec 2008)

Clear Thoughts is the name for Mental Health in Learning Disability Knowledge Centre. The website can be found at www.clearthoughts.info

The project aims to provide people with a learning disability, their families and frontline staff with information about being mentally well, keeping positive mental health and mental ill health in learning disability.

The project is being undertaken by ARC, the Association for Real Change (www.arcuk.org.uk), with funding from the Dept of Health.

The project has done lots of work since the last newsletter in July this year. You can read the older newsletters on the Clear Thoughts website.

One of the major jobs has been to decide on the style of images to be used on the website and which aspects of mental health needed an image. Both the style of the image and the areas covered are the result of questionnaires circulated to as many people as possible. **Many thanks to all those who replied to the questionnaires, your feedback has been very useful.** The feedback from the questionnaires was overwhelmingly that the Change Picturebank style of image was the preferred style for the project. Areas that people thought needed images where also shared.

As a result of the initial questionnaire the project now has 22 specially commissioned images. These images now also have a 'wordbank' with them. The 'wordbank' was the result of a further questionnaire that shared these images and asked people, especially people with a learning disability what these images meant to them. The images on the website are the result of these questionnaires.

The feedback has also suggested that two other images are required, these are for Anxiety and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). These are currently in development and will be added to the website when ready.

The website now also has eight 'checklists' covering a number of areas regarding mental health. These include Keeping Mentally Well, Signs and Symptoms of Mental Ill Health and (Other) Issues to Consider. These aim to be simple to understand and follow and when accessed electronically have links to other useful sources of advice and support.

Over 500 people are visiting the website each month and spending an average of over 6 minutes looking at the website. Hopefully this means people are still finding the website helpful. The images and checklists will help people move around the website and get the information they want from it.

The project does not have the financial resources to develop printed materials. Although we know not everyone can get on a computer. Therefore as well as putting this information on the website it is also now available in a CD format for organisations to develop their own materials. This CD with the images and the checklists will be given free to all the Learning Disability Partnership Boards. Everyone else can purchase the CD for £15.00 the cost is to cover development plus postage and packing.

This CD resource will be launched at a workshop session held at Learning Disability Today in London on the 27th November. The PowerPoint presentation given on the day can be accessed from the Clear Thoughts website.

Some organisations have also asked about Mental Health Awareness training for their front line staff. The Clear Thoughts project is developing a one-day course in this area and it will be available in the New Year. For more details and costs regarding this training contact clearthoughts@arcuk.org.uk

There are 6 months of funding left for the project. ARC will try and keep the project going as long as possible but if you have any ideas for sources of funding please let us know.

The website also has audio (was well as the words it can talk to you) To allow the website to talk you need to download 'Browsealoud' software. This is easy to do and its free. Lots of other websites use Browsealoud and you will be able to listen to them as well. www.browsealoud.com

The final resource from another ARC, Dept of Health funded project, the Candle project can still be downloaded from the Clear Thoughts website.

Candle stands for CAMHS and New Directions in Learning Disability and Ethnicity and as is a resource for those who work directly with young people and their families regarding Learning Disability, Mental Health and Ethnicity.

The resource gives information, direction and resources to staff about the key issues that face children and young people who have a learning disability, mental health issues and are from a minority community.

The project clarifies the role of those working directly with the young person and offers practical advice on how to undertake this role.

The resource includes handouts, case studies and exercises all of which are free to photocopy and use. The resource is available as a hard copy for £25.00 a CD for £5.00. These costs include postage and packing.

The Candle Resource can also be downloaded for free from the Clear Thoughts website. (Be aware if you have a colour printer that it will use lots of ink! You might want to print in black and white)

BUY ONE GET ONE FREE DEAL

Buy the Clear Thoughts CD for £15.00 and get the Candle resource on CD FREE – all you need to do is say you'd like the Candle resource when you order the Clear Thoughts CD.

We have also designed some new postcard sized flyers for the Clear Thoughts project with information about the images, training and the CD. If you would like to have some of these for appointments, meetings, to include in mailings, conference packs or to give to individuals, families or staff then please get in touch.

If you are an organisation that would like a link from this website then again get in touch, this is also the case if you would like to put a link to the Clear Thoughts site on your website.

If you have any questions, suggestions or comments about Clear Thoughts or you would like to order the Candle and/or Clear Thoughts resources please contact the project on cleartoughts@arcuk.org.uk

