

# napac Newsletter

The National Association for People Abused in Childhood

## Spring 2003

The National Association for People Abused in Child-

Registered charity N° 1069802

### LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Friends

I feel privileged to announce to you all that the long awaited freephone telephone line for adult survivors of abuse has recently opened. We have called it the NAPAC infoline. Since its opening on 18 Nov 2002 we have received over 2000 calls to the lines - surely a good indication of the need for the service!

Please inform as many people as you can that there is now a national freephone line to support adults who are still struggling with the effects of childhood abuse. Although it is an information line, our qualified advisors are trained to discuss relevant issues with callers and suggest ways forward.

NAPAC is in partnership with DABS (Directory and Book Services) and all callers to the NAPAC Infoline are offered resource packs covering issues connected with abuse and recovery from it. NAPAC's aims and objectives are to support adults through their recovery and since some people don't even realise that recovery is possible we are asking callers to phone us back for more support in the future if they need it.

It is only a beginning but already Peter and the Trustees are busy networking and liaising with government departments to try and persuade them to fund the distribution of leaflets and resource packs to all who need them and to offer more funding to ensure the permanency of the line. We need millions of these leaflets to be distributed to doctors' surgeries, Primary Care Trusts, libraries, C.A.B, Housing departments, Social Services and so on. If you need any yourself please contact Leslie Proctor of BSS link services at:

[NapacLeaflets@bss.org](mailto:NapacLeaflets@bss.org)

There is still a great deal of work to be done in raising awareness and convincing those in the medical and mental health professions that recovery from childhood abuse is possible. It is also clear that there needs to be a change in attitude from these professions towards those who disclose such experiences, if we are to ensure that they are given every possible support in becoming empowered to make their own choices in their healing process.

Thanks for all your support, we could not have made it to this landmark without you.

*Gill Thomas*

Chair, NAPAC

### NAPAC EMPLOYEES

Myself and Gill spent three days in Manchester in October helping recruit NAPAC's first six InfoLine employees. Each and every candidate they saw was excellent and it was a pity we couldn't hire everyone who had applied (in good time!). However the six successful candidates have our full confidence and support and will be great ambassadors for NAPAC. They also have a huge wealth of experience supporting survivors of abuse and we are very fortunate to have them on board. Welcome all!

*Peter Saunders*

## NAPAC LAUNCH - A FANTASTIC DAY!

A packed Committee Room at the House of Commons on 19 November heralded the dawn of a new era! Well maybe that's a bit of an exaggeration but the launch of our national information line was a resounding success and we couldn't have packed in more people if we had tried. As expected Deidre Sanders chaired the meeting with her usual style and presence. She introduced our guests including Jacqui Smith MP the Minister of State at the Department of Health, Hilton Dawson MP (who kindly arranged the venue), Ray Wyre, Chris Cloke from the NSPCC and Peter Calderbank from BSS. All spoke with great enthusiasm and support for what has been achieved and it was left to Gill (Chair of Trustees) and Peter Saunders (Founder) to really bring the message home that NAPAC is here to stay and by hook or by crook we will find the additional funds needed to sustain the info line well into the 21st Century.



Peter Saunders was interviewed by Granada TV before the launch and by BBC News 24 afterwards where he was asked to comment on the Governments' latest proposals to deal with child abusers and rapists. As we go to press Peters' interview was still on the BBC Website if anyone wants to tune in. During the next four days he did a further four BBC local radio interviews and the launch was featured in The Big Issue and Third Sector Magazine. More press coverage is expected to follow as the media learn that in the first two weeks of operation the info line received more than one thousand five hundred calls!! Watch this space.

## NAPAC UPDATE

This year has seen unprecedented media space given to NAPAC. Deidre Sanders has twice placed our details in The Sun and Zelda West-Meads mentioned NAPAC in her column in the Mail on Sunday. This resulted in our heaviest post-bag to date. Things have quietened down lately but Peter had a piece in Community Care Magazine in late August published; and The Times printed his letter in their 'Debate' column (Business Section) on 14th October. Back in June, he also became embroiled in a heated debate with The Catholic Herald and some of their correspondents, over the existence of satanic and ritual abuse. They had printed an article saying it was fantasy and all part of a 'protestant evangelical plot'!! The letter Peter had sent to them was then forwarded by one of their reporters directly to the British False Memory Society – absolutely true – he then marched in to the Herald's Editors office and asked for the right to respond. To his credit, the Editor printed Peters' letter the following week!

## FAME AT LAST!

NAPAC was mentioned in the Summer edition of the newsletter of the AAFAA (Action Against False Allegations of Abuse). Apparently someone had heard Peter's challenge to Dr Bill (False Memory) Thompson on Radio 5 Live! and didn't like it. When we are attacked by the false memory – "most of us make it up or imagine it" – brigade we must be doing something right. How many children's lives are put at risk by this disturbing group of people? No one doubts that there is the odd false, malicious allegation but their approach is that most children lie or fantasise and that the few thousand abusers who are caught and convicted are mostly innocent. Everybody knows that very few child abusers are ever caught, fewer still are charged and convicted and as Ray Wyre recently said, we still have a system that believes it's right that "a hundred guilty people walk free rather than risk jailing one innocent". Some might argue that's okay – but not when it comes to child abusers – our greatest destroyers of families and lives.

## HELP FOR DISSERTATION

I am looking for survivors of childhood sexual abuse to assist me in a study for my final dissertation on the effects of childhood sexual abuse in adulthood. Please contact me by e mail [J\\_rawstron@yahoo.com](mailto:J_rawstron@yahoo.com) or call 07734 864 490 for further information.

## FUND-RAISING

Even given the grant from Government it's true to say that we have never been more stretched financially. The cost of the Info Line in year one is in excess of £110,000. The Government have only given us £50,000 so we still have a lot of money to find. So those of you who raised money in the past – please keep it up – and those who haven't, please think of what you can do. Every little really does help!

## TIME FOR A CHANGE

It's 2002. Can you comfortably talk now as an adult about your abuse anywhere except in a therapy setting? In our society, the can of worms marked 'abused in childhood' is opened, only to be sealed back with a soldering iron in no time. When it is addressed, society slaps itself on the back heartily for having been brave enough to bring it up at all.

We are all vulnerable creatures. Abuse does leave its mark. Bullying in the playground, the classroom or at work, harassment, sexual harassment, verbal abuse, even violent physical assault - they all happen. Society is proud that we get knocked down, we get up again and we get on with life. Rape victims and perhaps one 'confessor', if they had one, lived right through life in silence. Their truth was buried with them. Go to a rape crisis centre now and you will find the counsellors are trained to encourage some male and all female victims to talk about their ordeal to as many people as possible following their attack. This is now regarded as fundamental in the healing process.

Paedophilia and child abuse, however, remain a very dark force in our consciousness. As a society we all live unknowingly amongst the abusers and the abused. When we are forced to watch as yet more of the abused step forward, the accepted response is horror that this parallel universe really does exist. Months or weeks later when yet more of them hit the spotlight, society is horrified all over again. Those who did suffer are encouraged to pretend that they did not. Unknowingly perhaps, their continuous performance silently comforts those who would live less happily with the reality.

Say, 'I was abused as a child' in a private chat, and your face becomes very grey indeed. Your listener sinks down thanklessly into a deep lonely dark well. Society has always borne a heavy burden of shame for failing to protect innocent children and continues to do so. The realisation that abuse really did go on, often repeatedly, in secret, and was tolerated by everyone known to the abused and the abuser's has a paralysing effect. The listener is powerless, brushing off your words with a change of subject, an excuse for an exit, perhaps an unspoken reason not to see you again. Horror and shock when reminded of the parallel universe of abuse is real, is becoming a bit of a worn out old tune, if not a somewhat naive one. Society should be mature enough to listen, without sealing the sufferers away in a therapy closet, talking about professional boundaries and taking a fee just for paying attention. People who don't have enough honest strength to listen to the abused and the truth of what happened to them are wanting. Perhaps it is they who need help.

Isn't it time for you to speak up about why your mother, brother, father or certain people really did disappear from your life, without feeling ashamed or to blame? Isn't it time for you to get back your self respect by being able to tell someone who could become a real friend, instead of an acquaintance, all about why you can't stand showing your childhood photos, why you really didn't complete your education, or why you don't trust the Church or other institutions? Time doesn't alter memories of abuse or make them better, or heal them. No, time only teaches us to deal with our pain better. Healing means becoming generous of heart and letting in the new. Healing to that extent can take time, but it does not erase the truth of our life's experience, and the consequences of those experiences, because that is, unavoidably, a part of who we are.

It's time for everyone to look out for the abused and listen to them with their hearts, and with their minds, their sense of justice and perhaps above all their integrity and respect. The abused have tried their best to heal. Now it's society's turn to get going. Now it's your turn, if not to listen, to speak up, say your truth and be heard.

*Morven Fyfe*

Morven Fyfe is a teacher, writer and campaigner. She would be interested in hearing from you. If you would like to give your feedback to this article, or share any more of your views or experiences, please write to her, care of the Editor. She will do her best to reply to your letters.

### **Would you like to contribute to a book?**

The writer of 'Time for a Change' is writing a book. The book not only provides guidelines to help survivors take that big step and start to tell their story. For the book to be strong, authentic and up to date she would like to hear from you. Everything that is communicated prior to publication will be done in complete confidentiality and any contribution from you will only be published with your permission.

Contact [morven\\_fyfe@hotmail.com](mailto:morven_fyfe@hotmail.com)

## BOOK REVIEW

***Stress and Depression in Children and Teenagers*, by Vicky Maud .Sheldon Press, £6.99**

Despite everything we know today about mental health, depression in children and teenagers is still an under-recognised, and misunderstood, problem. As Vicky Maud puts it, in her compassionate and practical guide, *Stress and Depression in Children and Teenagers*, "There are many misconceptions about children and depression, with one being 'What have they got to be depressed about?'"

As a mother of four children, as well as an experienced agony aunt and long-term advisor for Depression Alliance, Vicky Maud has a wealth of experience to draw on. Much of the time, her book gives insights into a range of everyday issues, such as schoolwork and friendships; however, she stresses the importance of listening to your child, and attending to small worries, to keep the lines of communication open. For the most serious problems, such as bullying, drug and alcohol abuse, and sexual abuse, she offers facts and practical advice. Each topic is illustrated with real-life examples taken from her own experience and that of the people who have contacted her. She takes care not to blame anyone for problems, and reassures readers that everyone finds parenthood difficult sometimes; the only times when she feels "sad" is when parents do not even try to ease their children's distress.

This book will provide a valuable quick reference guide for parents, as well as a basis for family discussions. It is also clearly written, friendly, and accessible, which makes it helpful for older children to read as well. The charity YoungMinds states that "Childhood, from infancy to adolescence, is the time when mental health is developed"; Vicky Maud's book is a welcome contribution to addressing a vital issue.

*Katie John*

## IN MEMORY OF SHIRLEY EDWARDS

Shirley, a friend to all who met her— sadly passed away peacefully on the 8th of September, aged 61. Shirley started helping people who were abused in the early 80's. Like a Mother to all who came to her meetings at the Open Door Project in Feltham, she always smiled and made us feel safe. She would always be there for all, giving her phone number out as a helpline; which she would answer 24 hours a day.



Every year, Shirley would organise a march in London to create awareness of the problem of child abuse. Her presence comforted the many who knew and loved her. Always dressed colourfully, she was a warm person, full of fight.

She will be very sadly missed by us all.

*Vincent*

## THANKS TO PRESTIGE PRINTING

NAPAC would like to thank Prestige Print and Design of Stockport for so kindly assisting us with the printing of this Newsletter.

Email [prestige@d.aol.com](mailto:prestige@d.aol.com)

0161 476 6886

## NAPAC PEN

This is our new NAPAC pen, with the Info Line number on it. If you would like one, please send a cheque or postal order for £1.00 payable to NAPAC at the address given below left.



## CONTACT DETAILS

Any feedback and articles will be gratefully received.  
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## DISCLAIMER

The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of NAPAC or its committee. Any correspondence is treated with strict confidentiality, but if we are given information which is considered to disclose current incidences of abuse, we will inform the appropriate authorities.

The NAPAC name must not be used without our prior specific consent.

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