

Stephen's Story

I have just finished with Penumbra and on good terms too. Over a four year period I have met many fine Penumbra people be it staff or (hate to use the term) clients – to me they are all people and I don't want it to be any different. What follows is an account of my journey to recovery via Penumbra. I hope this is not only of interest to the reader but may be useful/beneficial to his/her own journey.

It all started in the summer of 2003 when I became homeless. I lived in a tent, a car or homeless accommodation. This was seen as being too much for me by some people around me, so that in November I was admitted to hospital to a long term stay ward. In mid April 2004 I was passed fit for discharge from hospital care. I agreed to accept a care plan – part of which meant that I was to use a service called Penumbra. This was the first time that I had heard of this organisation which was known locally as the Borders Supported Living Service. So I was passed on to Penumbra bosses and staff. I did not know what all of this meant but the first gent I met used the phrase: "Road to Recovery". I found this phrase like a breath of fresh air and I think it was Alex, an office jockey/boss at Penumbra, who came to see me for my first home visit who used it.

Alex gave me a simple outline of what Penumbra support would be and we discussed which support worker would be best suited to me. The name that came up was a Mr. Steve Smith, a retired teacher/head teacher of local schools.

I soon found out meeting Steve that he had as many interests as myself when we had time away from home maintenance and other boring BSLS stuff(!). Part of the

Penumbra possibility was that they would encourage me to build on skills and interests that I possessed and take these as far as I wanted to go with them. And we did.

Steve began with home maintenance and helping me to manage my personal finances. He also helped me with shopping which was followed by coffee as an occasional treat! The carrot was that I would be given support in pursuing my interests in chess and entering poetry competitions. Steve provided me with a lot of information about writing and poetry (he is an experienced writer and I am a wannabe!) and an interested ear when I discussed my ambitions for organising chess and other events. Steve worked with a student on placement with Penumbra called Karen and she enabled me to organise myself to do Open University courses starting hopefully with courses in poetry and family history.

In the last year I have organised, with the help of my lass, Susan Featherstone, the Scottish Borders Chess Congress in Hawick Town Hall, in July last year and in April in this. There is also one to take place in 2010. I am helped by this by being online and this will be a great help in organising events in the future. In October we shall have a blog/website up and running. Susan is another ex service-user who has gone on to do voluntary work and following interests in walking, travel and cooking. I thank my new friend: "E.E" who is another ex service-user who has also helped with the chess and has also shown me that there is life after Penumbra.

Stephen, Hawick