Not One but Two Scottish Celebrities Visit Penumbra Milestone!

Scottish actress and comedienne Elaine C Smith officially opened Penumbra Milestone on 23 April.

Milestone is a new unit for people with alcohol related brain damage (ARBD) and is jointly run by Penumbra, NHS Lothian, City of Edinburgh Council. The unit has 10 beds and provides care for those who no longer require hospital treatment but who are not yet ready to go directly home.

Elaine was given a tour of the service and met patients and staff before officially declaring the building open. She said: “It is always quite humbling to come along to a unit like this and see the dedication, hard work and compassion afforded to so many people who are struggling with severe alcohol related problems. All too often as a society we forget the damage and devastation that this disease can cause and struggle to understand it.

“It is a privilege to meet the amazing staff and patients and to officially open this unit which I hope will be a beacon of light across our health and support services and will contribute to all those affected having a greater chance of living a better life”.

Elaine’s visit came just days after a surprise visit from singing sensation Susan Boyle. Grammy nominated Susan took time out of her busy schedule to visit Penumbra Milestone.

During her visit she was given a guided tour by Service Manager Lesley Forbes and spent time listening to a music group made up of residents.

Dr Matthew Hicks, who runs the music group at Milestone, said; “Our music therapy group aims to encourage recovery from ARBD. Performing and listening to music helps residents to improve memory, coordination and motivation.

“When we told residents that Susan Boyle was coming to the therapy group they thought we were joking. When she arrived they were amazed.

“Susan listened to the music and chatted to staff and residents. Towards the end of her visit she sang one of her biggest hits – Wild Horses.

“It was an amazing experience to hear her sing in person… we were mesmerised”

The singer was invited to visit Penumbra Milestone by a former service user.

JustTextGiving
You can now text to donate to Penumbra using JustTextGiving. Simply text PENU22 and the amount you wish to donate (eg PENU22 £10) to 70070.
Kate’s Wellbeing Recovery Story—Nova Short Breaks

Why are short breaks so important to me? It’s simple they keep me out of hospital and that means that they keep me well.

I have been in and out of hospital for most of my life. My mental health has been extremely poor, voices that tormented me and anxiety that crippled me.

In the past I could see myself being admitted into hospital at least 5 times a year, in effect I was staying in hospital over half of the year. Did I look forward to going home, NO!! Even though I have a family at home that are supportive and loving, my fear of becoming unwell again was so great, it robbed me of a life. I was continually fearful of the downward spiral.

Working with the community mental health teams I started to take steps forward and they identified that a short break could be very positive for me. It was nerve racking, I avoid trying new things as it stirs up my anxiety to an extreme. I went to Penumbra’s Cairdeas House 6 years ago. The first break I was nervous—it was all new, but I enjoyed it and when I was leaving at the end of the week, I had my next break to look forward to.

From starting going on a short break on a regular basis, this gave me something to look forward to. Have I had any hospital stays since, none. My life had been a continual revolving door of being admitted and then being discharged and then being admitted again. It was mentally and emotionally exhausting.

However life never runs smoothly and 3 years ago Cairdeas closed. My thing to look forward to had gone away and I panicked. I managed to stay well but I was wobbling badly, my anxiety, stress all on the increase and I saw the hospital admittance looming in front of me and it scared the life out of me.

As I was spiralling down, it came in the form of a flyer and I was so relieved to see that there was a break taking place to a town that I could manage to go to. I can’t go far as my fear and anxiety is too great to be too far from home.

The break was just the tonic, a small group of us in lovely accommodation, home cooked food and an evening meal out to a lovely Italian. Working with staff on my stresses, challenges and anxieties helped me to identify new ways to deal with the source of my anxiety and my stress.

It was good to have a peer approach as well, people who have been through difficult times sharing their learning through mental illness. It makes it feel a bit more possible.

I worked with staff on doing an I.ROC (Individual Recovery Outcomes Counter) and also did My Plan which tailors wellbeing techniques to me. Time wasn’t long enough and soon it was time to go home. Staff reassured me that we would be meeting soon for another break.

A few months later I met with a member of staff to go away on my own and to have one on one time, focusing on my wellbeing to aid my recovery.

We reviewed the paperwork and re-did my I.ROC and as you’ll see there is positive change in a couple of months (see spidergram below).

During this break I even went to new places and I didn’t need to take any medication for my anxiety, this was a rare and wonderful experience.

Short Breaks are essential to me, they keep me out of hospital and in my world that’s highly important. It’s not just my world though it’s my family’s too and if I’m well their life is so much easier.

I’m lucky I have an amazing partner who is my everything. I depend on him for so much. If he leaves the house I feel anxious and I usually go with him. He never complains but I do feel guilty.

Going on the break allows me to let go of the guilt I feel for depending on my loved ones. I know that they get some time out and time to themselves. They also know that when I’m on the breaks it’s a huge part of what keeps me well, so it alleviates their fear and worry about me going back into hospital.

Short Breaks are essential for me. It’s rare that I feel safe or look forward to things but this is something that I get when I go on a break.

I have been awarded SDS (Self Directed Support) and will be using it to plan breaks for the year. This ensures I stay out of hospital and continually take steps forward in my wellbeing and recovery.

Kate’s I.ROC Spidergram

Baseline—5th Feb 2015
Most Recent—16th Apr 2015

Safety & Comfort

Physical Health

Exercise & Activity

Purpose & Direction

Personal Network

Social Network

Valuing Myself

Participation & Control

Self Management

Hope

Life Skills

Mental Health

Most recent

Baseline

FUNDRAISING

Forth Rail Bridge Abseil

The next Forth Rail Bridge abseil takes place on Sunday 18th October.

If you are interested in taking part then please contact Sheena on 0131 475 2549 or email fundraising@penumbra.org.uk.