



*Lifecraft*

The Lifecraft Plan  
April 2008 - March 2011



# The Lifecraft Plan: April 2008 – March 2011

## At a glance...

What follows is a detailed plan setting out what Lifecraft hopes to achieve as an organisation over the next three years – here is a summary:

### Aims and Objectives

Lifecraft was set up to encourage self help for mental health and we have a lot to be proud of with our wide range of services. However, we have also experienced difficulties; particularly a shortage of resources (money and people) and this has meant that opportunities for member involvement and development have not been developed to their full potential. We want to go back to our first principles and work hard to strengthen self help and user involvement in every aspect of our services.

### Service plans

We plan to do this by:

1. **Counselling** – Increase spaces available to 36 and trial chargeable counselling service with target of covering at least 30% direct costs
2. **Arts Programme** – Develop through more enterprise, work out in the community, links to other organisations and online activity
3. **Training, volunteering and employment** – Facilitate better opportunities for members to be directly involved in the delivery of Lifecraft services and offer (to those who want) opportunities to develop skills and knowledge which can be used in other settings
4. **Social Club** – Re-establish by strengthening permitted earnings programme for members so that it is a user led service and one that is always welcoming and inclusive
5. **Other groups** – Introduce unique activities that close gaps in services elsewhere and continue to provide a range of opportunities for member leadership
6. **Lifeline** – Secure long term sustainable funding through contracts covering full costs
7. **Information** – Build links to other information providers and support member involvement in delivery
8. **Campaigning and SCUF-** Identify new ways of working and partnership opportunities to maximise the potential for service user involvement
9. **Joint working and outreach-** Greater work with other community organisations to understand potential needs and develop appropriate responses which Lifecraft could effectively develop towards the goal of self help for mental health

## **Capacity to deliver plans**

Lifecraft is unique in terms of the people who offer support to its development, either as volunteers, members or staff. Our plan will focus on ensuring that everyone has access to the training and support they need, particularly the volunteers who are fundamental to the delivery and development of our services. Lifecraft will consistently pursue the highest standards in service provision and policy development which will include work towards appropriate quality standards.

## **Funding and sustainability**

The great difficulty for Lifecraft in recent years has been putting together funding from a very wide range of sources, including a large number of small one off grants and donations. In developing future projects the emphasis will be on sustainability through greater voluntary support, longer and larger projects, particularly work for which contracts can be negotiated over a term. We have already implemented a full cost recovery approach to planning our projects and have developed a reserves policy which will in the longer term offer some protection against cut backs.

We hope you will enjoy reading this plan and if you have any ideas or thoughts that you would like to contribute please contact us:

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# Lifecraft Plan 2008-11

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## 1. Introduction

This plan sets out what Lifecraft hopes to achieve in the next three years. It is based on Lifecraft's best understanding of what is needed to fulfil the overall aims of our organisation - ***to encourage and support self help for mental health.***

The ideas contained in this plan include feedback from a wide range of sources:

- Current members through monthly meetings, consultations and evaluation results
- Staff and volunteers through supervision and planning sessions
- Informal feedback from other organisations working in mental health
- External consultants, Charity Fundraising who undertook a detailed piece of research on behalf of Lifecraft in June 2007

This is not a final plan. We want as many people as possible who are interested in the work of Lifecraft – members, other mental health service users, funders and other organisations who work in mental health to have a chance to tell us what they think.

The plan is available via our website ([www.lifecraft.org.uk](http://www.lifecraft.org.uk)) and at the Bath House and we will be happy to send out full copies to anyone who is interested.

## 2. Background

Lifecraft is a registered charity no. 1048144. It was founded in 1993 by a small group of mental health service users who identified gaps in community care, particularly access to information and support (especially out of hours). It has grown substantially over the last 15 years and today's services include:

- ⇒ Six weekly groups, including lots of Arts based activities
- ⇒ Access to free long term counselling for members
- ⇒ A telephone crisis helpline open 365 days from 7pm-11pm, open to anyone
- ⇒ Opportunities for user involvement in campaigning and the development of services
- ⇒ Training, volunteering and employment opportunities for members
- ⇒ A social club for members to meet for mutual support, including weekly meal
- ⇒ Free internet access
- ⇒ Quarterly newsletter and website
- ⇒ Mental health handbook of services in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire

Lifecraft is a user led organisation and is governed by a board of nine trustees of whom seven are Lifecraft members. It is unique in that membership is based on self referral. Open monthly member meetings are held to exchange views and ideas and provide input to the development of Lifecraft services.

There are over 200 active members registered, of whom about 50% are using our day services at any time.

Lifecraft is funded through a wide range of grants, statutory funds, donations and fundraising activity. In the year ended 31/3/07 it had an income of £284,994. For more information about Lifecraft and to view copies of our annual report and newsletters please go to our website [www.lifecraft.org.uk](http://www.lifecraft.org.uk)

### **3. Setting the scene**

Looking ahead for three years is very challenging as so much is uncertain:

- Delivery of mental health services locally is undergoing a service transformation alongside the plans for the new Foundation Trust.
- The introduction of individual budgets will mean far reaching changes. Although the full implications are unclear at this stage we know that we cannot expect to negotiate large contracts with Social Services and instead will need to “sell” our services more directly to in the community
- The population of Cambridge and South Cambs continues to grow rapidly with the growth in housing and an increasing number of newer communities
- New opportunities for user led partnership work across not just mental health but pan-disability are emerging
- Getting funding is increasingly competitive and difficult. Although there may well be more opportunities to tender for contracts with public bodies Lifecraft will need to assess these opportunities carefully against its overall aims and objectives
- The lease on our premises at the Bath House is due for renewal in 2009 and we have no indication at this stage of the likely level of rental increase

We will continue to review and update our plan as our understanding of these changes develops.

## 4. Objectives

Lifecraft recognises that with so much change happening the future is uncertain and that in three years Lifecraft may look very different from what it is today. Throughout this change Lifecraft will work towards these two overriding objectives:

⇒ **To encourage self help through services which are unique, individual and safe**

- Identifying new ways of working which build on our ethos of self help
- Facilitating members greater involvement in the delivery of Lifecraft services through training, volunteering, employment and enterprise opportunities
- Keeping a strong framework of policies and procedures which safeguard the well being of members, staff, volunteers
- Building our financial reserves so that services are not so vulnerable to cut backs

⇒ **To help build a stronger and more representative voice on issues affecting mental health and wellbeing**

- Encouraging greater participation by existing members in decision making at Lifecraft and developing our trustee induction and training
- Reaching out to people and communities who are not accessing our services to understand better their needs and expectations of Lifecraft
- Work with statutory services to extend and strengthen user involvement
- Exploring joint working opportunities with other organisations who share our aims

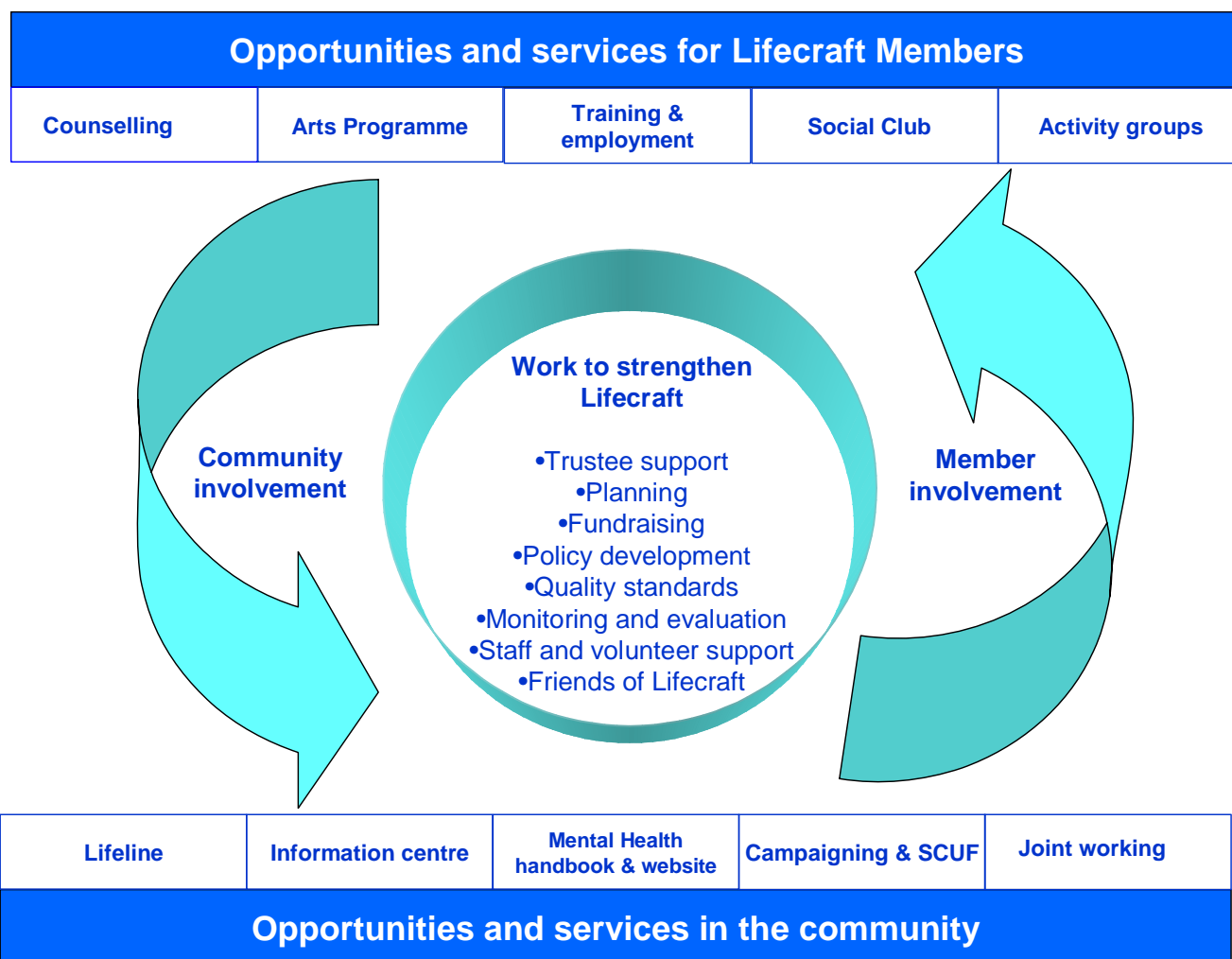
Having these objectives helps us agree our priorities, especially when we face tough decisions regarding funding services.

## 5. Service plans

Lifecraft services fall into three areas:

- **Services for members** (counselling, social club, activity groups, training and employment opportunities, arts projects)
- **Services for members and the wider community** (Lifeline, information centre, mental health handbook and website, campaigning, support to South Cambridgeshire Users Forum- SCUF, joint projects with other related organisations)
- **Internal services** – for the safe running of Lifecraft (support to members, trustees, staff and volunteers, planning, fundraising – including Friends of Lifecraft, quality standards, monitoring and evaluation).

These are set out in the following diagram:



Looking at each of these services in turn:

## 5.1 Counselling

### Current provision

The counselling service has been running for over 10 years and is managed by one part time (2 days a week) coordinator and a team of 10 volunteer counsellors. The counsellors are from diverse theoretical backgrounds, including arts based therapy and life-coaching. All have regular supervision and practice in accordance with the BACP ethical framework for good practice in counselling and psychotherapy and follow detailed guidelines developed by Lifecraft.

Each volunteer offers three hours a week during Lifecraft's opening hours (12-7pm, Monday – Friday). All Lifecraft members can access the counselling service subject to a

counselling assessment. Currently 26 members receive a free counselling session of up to one hour each week

The service is unique from two aspects:

- Counselling is not time limited (i.e. the counselling is not for a fixed term but continues until both parties mutually agree that it is appropriate to finish)
- People who are not normally considered eligible for counselling through statutory services can benefit from the service.

Take up of services is currently good with 68% of appointments offered taken up.

### **Planned provision**

There is some capacity to expand the existing weekday service with up to 33 potential slots per week. There is also demand to reopen the Saturday drop in service.

The offer of free counselling to members who are not interested in engaging in our other services or supporting the user led ethos of Lifecraft will be reviewed. Our expectation is that all members attend at least two members meetings each year and for those who do not wish to do this we will review the feasibility of introducing a nominal fee for their counselling.

### **Funding**

This service is currently funded by Cambridgeshire PCT through the service level agreement we have with Cambridgeshire County Council which is renewable annually through to 2010. This funding will cover the weekly counselling but the Saturday drop in can only be reopened if sufficient funds are raised to start up the wider weekend service.

Further funding opportunities will be explored through:

- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Primary Care Trusts in support of national expansion of access to counselling services
- Developing a chargeable counselling service in providing supervision to other counsellors. Our proposals indicate that revenue could be generated by chargeable counselling at a rate of £500 per month from March 2009 onwards. By 2011 this could be covering 30% of the costs of running the counselling service.

## **Meeting Lifecraft objectives**

Evaluating the impact of counselling is difficult. The service supports people living in the community, enabling them to manage their day to day lives and is as much about maintaining the status quo as about growth and change. Success means fewer hospital admissions for clients; clients being less reliant on statutory services. It is difficult to measure this; you can see when demand increases, less likely to notice when it falls.

## **5.2 Arts programme**

### **Current provision**

This includes regular weekly groups in art, music, singing and creative writing. Previous projects have also included drama. These groups are popular with members and have resulted in publications and exhibitions – most recently an anthology of poetry by Lifecraft members (“the Craft of Life”) and a CD (Lifesongs) of music performed by the Lifecraft singers and the weekly music group.

### **Planned provision**

We plan that the existing groups will continue but the arts programme will be developed by giving much greater opportunities for members of Lifecraft to produce, exhibit and sell their own work. This will include a focus on the merits of the work that is produced and the individual as an artist rather than their mental health. The work will include:

- Longer weekend sessions with greater focus on the artistic process and the application of skills and concentration over longer periods
- Publishing books, music, prints and other printed merchandise including a web gallery and art information blog (a new website is already in production for this)
- Promoting and selling these through a new online shop as well as regular exhibitions, poetry and music evenings, a travelling “Lifecraft stall” in community venues and direct approaches to businesses
- Increased member involvement in the planning and promotion of the projects
- Collaborative work by members to include agreeing pricing structures, resolving copyright issues, commission rates and contracts

## **Funding**

The existing arts programme is already funded through Lankelly Chase, Talking in Tune and Cambridge City Council and has previously received funding through the Swan Mountain Trust and Awards for All.

It is intended that the expansion will ultimately be self funded through revenue generated and/or opportunities to “sell” spaces on this programme as part of the move towards individual budgets (2010 onwards). However this is at least 3-5 years away and the budgets assume an additional investment in the arts enterprise activities of up to £40,000 over the next three years and we are identifying funding sources to support this.

## **Meeting Lifecraft objectives**

The arts programme already fosters a self help approach and the expansion into social enterprise will further encourage:

- More professional working practices
- More group/ collaborative work
- Project planning and business development skills

This project should also substantially widen Lifecraft participation in the community and links to other organisations.

## **5.3 Training, Volunteering and Employment**

### **Current provision**

As a user led organisation Lifecraft has always sought to promote opportunities for members to be involved in shaping and running its services. Lifecraft currently has 18 staff of which 14 are also members of Lifecraft. There are a further 44 volunteers involved (as trustees, Lifeline volunteers, counsellors, support to groups, events and fundraising). Of these volunteers over a third are members and/or mental health service users.

The volunteer involvement programmes for counselling and Lifeline are already well designed and offer great opportunities for individuals to develop their knowledge and skills and no significant changes are planned for these in the next three years, although we do hope to work towards Investing in Volunteers accreditation over the next three years.

The trustee involvement programme has recently been improved to include a new induction programme and will continue to be gradually strengthened.

However, with funding difficulties in recent years, insufficient resources have been put into the support, training and development opportunities available to employees on permitted earnings contracts and members wishing to volunteer in the running of the day services, and it is in this area that Lifecraft plans to improve in the next three years.

### **Planned provision**

There are currently 10 members employed by Lifecraft on permitted earnings contracts to support the running of the social club, reception and kitchen. Employing adults who may be considered as vulnerable, to support other adults with mental health needs, has presented a number of challenges – particularly in terms of meeting the expectations of Social Services for implementing robust Protection of Vulnerable Adult (POVA) policies. Lifecraft also wants to look more carefully at how these employment opportunities can offer real progression to individuals in terms of employment outside Lifecraft, including mapping skills required to National Occupational Standards in Health and Social Care.

Members are also interested in more volunteering opportunities to support day services, particularly in the reception and kitchen areas.

Lifecraft plans to:

- ⇒ Introduce a core skills training programme to be delivered in short sessions including teamwork, interpersonal skills, confidentiality, health and safety, emergency first aid). This would provide a foundation for taking on permitted earnings contracts or volunteering with us. To complement this we hope to raise the funds to also offer more specific courses including food hygiene, managing challenging behaviour, listening skills, etc. each relevant to the area of work / volunteering in which members are interested
- ⇒ Ensure that permitted earnings contract roles have realistic and evaluated job descriptions, that rates of pay are commensurate with the work expected
- ⇒ Develop more supported volunteer opportunities in the front office and kitchen area supported by relevant training.

- ⇒ Identify other areas of training relevant to all members particularly around personal safety and assertiveness, either delivered at Lifecraft or through links to other groups in the community
- ⇒ Make available more information on other organisations offering training /placement / work opportunities. We are already members of WAVET
- ⇒ Document and share the information on the challenges involved in delivering services (as an employee or volunteer) in an environment where you are also a recipient of services.

More recently Lifecraft has established an IT suite offering free internet access and is trialling IT training for members through Cambridge Online.

### **Funding**

Lifecraft already has a service level agreement with Cambridgeshire County Council which covers some of this work. To extend the training as described above new applications will be made to the New Ways of Working fund and Cambridge City Council (Economic Policy).

This investment in training and support is estimated at up to £20,000 for the next year. If successful a volunteering support project will be researched with a view to securing funding by March 2009. The purpose of this will be to enhance opportunities to volunteer within Lifecraft and to support each individual progress and encourage links to opportunities outside Lifecraft.

### **Meeting Lifecraft Objectives**

This work upholds the Lifecraft self help ethos and is fundamental to the organisation and is seen as a high priority. The aim is for day services to be as self directed as possible and greater member involvement in delivery will ensure this.

## **5.4 Social Club**

### **Current provision**

The social club is intended to offer an open forum where members can meet and offer mutual support. Until February 2007 it was open every day, but due to funding difficulties it was cut back to Monday – Friday 4pm-7pm and opening on all Bank holidays from 12 –

7pm. It is intended to fit the gaps left by other services in terms of both hours available and in offering a more unstructured environment.

Although regular users value highly the companionship and support it offers outside the hours of other services, attendance has fallen in recent years – regular users are now less than 20% of the active members at any time – approx 15 people. This has been exacerbated recently by staff shortages which have meant irregular opening hours and uncertainty. We need to offer services which are secure and reliable and therefore are aiming to increase the resources available to the club by enhancing the keyholder training and support so that it can be run effectively by member employees.

### **Planned provision**

A detailed consultation took place on the future of the Social Club in December – January 2007 and this highlighted:

- People not using the club felt it was at times an unsafe environment and that it was too easily dominated by a small number of people.
- A preference for at least one day of weekend opening (even if this meant losing up to two weekday sessions)
- More activities and more communal meals
- More training for staff and members on handling challenging behaviour
- More support from staff, including keyholders on permitted earnings contracts
- More promotion to increase numbers – target for 30 regular attendees by March 09

These targets are incorporated into the 2008 plans. This includes the employment of new weekend workers who will also be able to support the reopening of drop in weekend counselling and a second kitchen coordinator (member employee) to help with the planning and preparation of communal meals.

### **Funding**

The social club is primarily funded through the Social Services contract. The aim is to re-establish the social club as a service delivered by members by the end of March 2009 (see above under training and employment initiatives). If this is achieved it should become a more viable long term service. Opportunities to raise funding for additional activities will be sought as raising funds purely for the social club remains difficult.

## **Meeting Lifecraft objectives**

The social club fills a gap in services by opening into the early evening and on bank holidays. It has the potential to offer greater opportunities for member involvement but it has to tackle the issues regarding personal safety as a priority.

## **5.5 Other activity groups**

### **Current provision**

In addition to the various arts based groups, Lifecraft has a Men's and Women's group offering a range of activities / taster sessions as well as outings. In the past Lifecraft has also run a football team.

### **Planned provision**

The Women's group has a strong track record and has worked collaboratively with other organisations and is unique at Lifecraft in offering an environment where vulnerable women can seek mutual support through other women. It is planned to build on these strengths.

The Men's group has experienced difficulty more recently, particularly without a member leader. It is also open to women and has lost some sense of purpose with low attendance, although the regular art and philosophy sessions are popular. Further member consultation is due in the near future and consideration will be given to using some of the time available within this time towards the development of the arts enterprises and/or developing new projects, e.g. allotment project or sports activities

If there is a continuing demand for groups and activities this will need specific fundraising, particularly when the option to renew the current contract with Social Services expires in 2010. The aim is for all member led groups to be as self sufficient as possible

### **Funding**

These groups are largely funded through the Social Services contract. With the anticipated change in funding as individual budgets come into place (see section 3 above) Lifecraft will need to raise more grant / trust funding for these groups and / or ensure that the activities on offer will potentially appeal to individuals managing their own budgets.

In developing these groups Lifecraft will work hard to make sure it does not duplicate services that are available elsewhere, e.g. at Cam-MIND or the Resource Centre.

### **Meeting Lifecraft objectives**

The aim is to continue to develop those groups and activities which are unique and based on strong member leadership and involvement.

## **5.6 Lifeline**

### **Current provision**

Lifeline was established nine years ago and was funded through the Lottery for the first six years. It provides a mental health telephone helpline throughout Cambridgeshire 365 days from 7pm-11pm. It provides support to people in crisis as well as more general information on mental health services.

Lifeline has achieved quality accreditation through the national Mental Health Helplines Partnership (mhhp). 20 volunteers work in pairs offering two shifts per month. It is planned to increase the number of volunteers up to the maximum of 27 by March 2009. Volunteers are backed up by trained supervisors who also take the line when there are no volunteers available. Volunteers complete over 20 hours of training before starting on the line and are supported with regular training and group supervision.

### **Planned provision**

Lifeline is recognised as a key component within the framework of mental health services and details of the service are to be included within the new CPA folders. For the next 18 months Lifeline aims to maintain the current service delivery with two lines available on 5 evenings and one line on the remaining two evenings. Call volumes are expected to increase at a rate of 5% per annum rising to 3800 calls by March 2011.

Further promotional work is currently being undertaken with funding targeted at the Peterborough and East Cambridgeshire areas. There is reasonable diversity in terms of the usage of the line across age, gender and ethnicity. Further work is planned in outreach to community groups to identify service enhancements for mid-2009 onwards.

The new mental health handbook for Cambridge City and South Cambs is urgently needed and continuing support to the Cambridgeshire wide handbook on line will continue to ensure that information given to callers is relevant and accurate.

### **Funding**

Lifeline is a unique service and it was always planned that it would eventually be delivered on a contract basis. This is currently being negotiated with Cambridgeshire County Council, the Mental Health Trust and Primary Care Trusts with a view to securing a service level agreement from 2009 onwards. Long term sustainable funding is an absolute priority for this service.

### **Meeting Lifecraft objectives**

The service is unique, individual and safe. It provides a vital back up to mental health service users and the personal testimonies of callers to the line emphasise its crucial importance in times of distress.

## **5.7 Information Services – Information Centre / Handbook & Website**

### **Current Provision**

Providing more information on mental health services was one of the reasons that Lifecraft was founded and it remains one of the organisation's main charitable objects.

As well as providing information through the Lifeline service (described above), Lifecraft enables access to information through:

- The Information Office at the Bath House (drop in open 1- 4pm Monday – Friday)
- The Mental Health Handbook for Cambridge City and South Cambs (currently being updated – new publication due April 2008)
- Contributing to the new Cambridgeshire wide online mental health handbook
- Lifecraft website including many links to other organisations
- Frontline News – Lifecraft's quarterly newsletter distributed free to all members and a wide range of community contacts
- IT suite where Lifecraft members can undertake their own research

Lifecraft provides a signposting service only and the information requests are wide ranging covering housing, benefits, debt and employment as well as mental health issues.

### **Planned provision**

With the growth in online information the need for a dedicated information resource needs careful review. In 2008 Lifecraft will:

- Map other sources / providers of information in our area and identify the gaps relevant to Lifecraft,
- Establish more opportunities to volunteer by members within the service
- Establish stronger links with other information providers and set up more information sharing sessions for members
- Test the demand for an advocacy drop in (a trial with CIAS and is due to start shortly)
- Improve the storage and display of information

Frontline News and the website will continue as both are popular and well used services.

### **Funding**

The information services are funded through a range of sources including statutory, one off grants and donations. With the research planned we will have a better understanding of the need for a face to face service and the resource needs of members wishing to volunteer within the service by March 2009. We will identify future sources of funding based on this.

### **Meeting Lifecraft objectives**

Access to information is vital for a user led service and this will remain a key part of our service but may be delivered in different ways in the future, including greater user involvement.

## **5.8 Campaigning & SCUF (South Cambridgeshire Users Forum)**

### **Current Provision**

Lifecraft has had great support from Comic Relief who has funded the post of Campaigns Office for over 4 years. This role includes:

- Opportunities for member involvement in awareness raising events and campaigns designed to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness

- Facilitating SCUF as the voice of service users in the area and encouraging member representation in development of statutory services
- Building links with other organisations and maximising opportunities to work together on relevant projects, e.g. the Big 1 in 4 Bus Project for World Mental Health Day and the 209 radio project
- Encouraging member involvement through training and one to one support
- Keeping up to date with what is happening in mental health locally and ensuring information is properly distributed

### **Planned provision**

The wide ranging nature of this role is very challenging and we want to set more specific targets for the future so that everyone is realistic about what can be achieved. This will include:

- Focusing time on projects which are unique and user led, e.g. the Radio 209 project
- Continuing to network and develop joint working opportunities with other organisations to maximise the impact of campaign and awareness raising work
- Reducing the role of the Campaigns Officer in fundraising events
- Support to development of SCUF to increase numbers attending. Possibly making meetings more issue focused and developing an online forum
- More training opportunities to build the capacity of SCUF members to undertake more development work rather than relying on paid staff – links to Experts by Experience programme
- Introducing Campaigns as a regular slot in Lifecraft activities where anyone can drop by and support research and campaign development
- Identifying representatives for the key stakeholder / consultation groups, rather than reliance being placed on this job holder to cover them.
- Develop understanding of how the planned Foundation Trust will involve users

### **Funding**

Subject to good progress this post is funded by Comic Relief through to March 2010. The focus of the next two years will therefore be on developing the skills of individual service users to take this work forward rather than relying in the long term on a paid post.

Additional sponsorship, grant funding, donations will continue to be sought to cover events / projects.

## **Meeting Lifecraft objectives**

This work is a priority and fully supports the overriding objective of developing a stronger and more representative voice.

## **5.9 Joint Working / Outreach**

### **Current provision**

Most collaborative / joint work that currently happens in Lifecraft is facilitated through the Campaigns role described above. It is included as a separate section because Lifecraft sees good opportunities for far more work undertaken on a joint basis with other organisations in the future.

There are two aspects to outreach:

- To support members who are unable to access day services at the Bath House
- To work with and understand the needs of people and communities who have not previously accessed any of our day services.

In terms of the first Lifecraft has always encouraged member to member support and can offer limited support with travel expenses for members for example to visit each other in hospital. Proposals have been developed previously to look at expanding the outreach that Lifecraft can offer to members and these will be reviewed considering carefully the numbers who could be supported and the potential sustainability of the work.

In terms of the second – that is reaching out to people and communities that have not previously accessed our services - this is key to Lifecraft's longer term development. As part of its work on equality Lifecraft wants to ensure that it is reaching out to as many people and organisations as it realistically can. Diversity across all services is fair but there is evidence of communities that are underrepresented and work has already begun on making contacts with community groups to find out more about what is needed.

We currently monitor our services by age, ethnicity and gender for our membership. Collecting information on use of our services in the community (e.g. Lifeline) can be difficult as we balance our need for information with great sensitivity towards the people using our services who may be experiencing significant distress.

## **Planned provision**

The plans for 2008 onwards include:

- Research and support for relevant national / regional initiatives which present joint working opportunities that would benefit Lifecraft, e.g. work on user led disability coalition
- Building stronger relationships with other organisations working in mental health and looking at opportunities for working together for the benefit of members
- Defining the potential scope and objectives of a new outreach project to encourage participation in Lifecraft services by current and potential members

Based on this work the need for more targeted outreach projects and /or partnership work will be identified and built into the plans and funding targets

## **Funding**

Funding for 2008 will come from unrestricted grants with a target of having a plan to develop this work by the end of the year. A full outreach and development programme is currently built into the budgets for 2010 onwards.

## **Meeting Lifecraft objectives**

This work supports fairer representation and enables access and helps Lifecraft be as effective as it can be with the resources available.

## **5.10 Summary of services**

Lifecraft is already running a wide range of services. Our focus is on:

- ⇒ Expansion of enterprise in the Arts programme
- ⇒ Building a greater variety of activities into social club time
- ⇒ Through the training and support for volunteering increase member involvement and leadership in the delivery of services
- ⇒ Stronger links with external organisations and networks
- ⇒ Greater emphasis on outreach and working outside Bath House

## **6. Lifecraft's Capacity**

This section is about Lifecraft's resources – people, premises, equipment and finances to deliver the services described above. It also covers the standards that Lifecraft wants to work to.

### **6.1 Members**

Lifecraft is a user led organisation – the number and level of participation by members therefore governs the capability of the organisation as a whole. In the early days there was a strong voluntary ethos but this has changed considerably over the years and although there are still a large number of people wanting to join Lifecraft (over 80 new applications each year), people's readiness to participate in decision making at Lifecraft varies.

Lifecraft is based on self referral and this presents increasing challenges, particularly with the number of people seeking support through Lifecraft who have experienced significant issues with alcohol or illegal drug misuse. Lifecraft is currently reviewing the assessment for services criteria to ensure that we only accept as members people whose primary issue is with their mental health. We also need to consider new member's willingness to participate in the social and communal aspects of our day services and encouraging greater participation in decision making.

Our plan includes increased resources into supporting and encouraging members, particularly new members through induction events and buddying. More support will be put into the monthly Members meetings both to encourage people to come along and to provide the training, e.g. in chairing and taking minutes so that there is a clear structure for discussion and decision making

Stronger links between the Members meetings and the trustees will also be re-established so that it is clearer where members do have an influence and how decisions are made.

### **6.2 Trustees**

Lifecraft is fortunate to have a number of dedicated members who have become trustees. The trustee board has good level of user representation with 7 out of 9 members being current Lifecraft members. The constitution currently requires trustees to stand down each year which can lead to instability and a resolution to amend this will be developed this year.

A new trustee induction programme was introduced in 2007 and a skills audit of the current board is being completed. By the end of 2008 a full trustee handbook will be developed and other training needs identified.

There is currently no position for a Vice-Chair or Secretary and the need for both these roles needs to be reconsidered, particularly to help with succession planning where Lifecraft is currently very dependent on the outstanding work of the current Chair who also leads on fundraising.

Further links to trustees within other organisations would be helpful.

Concern regarding the personal liability of trustees has been stated as a possible barrier to involvement and the advantages / disadvantages of Lifecraft becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) will be assessed once this form becomes available – due summer 2008.

### **6.3 Staff**

Lifecraft currently employs 18 people, ten of whom are on permitted earnings contracts and one person on a fixed term contract. 13 of these staff are current mental health service users.

There is a low turnover of staff and this has great advantages for Lifecraft with staff knowledge and experience. However sickness rates are relatively high and proper account needs to be taken of this when budgeting for relief cover in future projects.

As part of a recent review the training and development needs of all staff have been considered and this has led to the recommendations regarding the development of the permitted earnings scheme (see section 5.3 above).

There is the capability to deliver more training in house as the current team has a great deal of experience to share both in the field of mental health and in general management. Regular team training sessions will continue to facilitate this.

Local training through Cambridge CVS, the Volunteer Centre and the Social Enterprise People is taken up where relevant. Future budgets will ensure that the costs of any other external training courses are included.

#### **6.4 Volunteers**

Opportunities for volunteer involvement and development have been described in section 5.3 above. Lifecraft will continue to maximise opportunities for members to be involved and supported as volunteers in the running of Lifecraft. We will research the feasibility of working towards the Investing in Volunteers standard commencing 2009.

In support of these aims Lifecraft will be developing proposals for a Volunteering development project which will bring together these strands and develop robust approaches to securing and sustaining the involvement of a range of volunteers from diverse backgrounds including our own membership.

#### **6.5 Premises**

Lifecraft currently sublets from the Bath House Association five offices and kitchen and hires out the main hall for 7 hours each day. It is a good central location within a diverse and vibrant community. However there are regular issues regarding safety as the Mill Road has the highest level for recorded violent incidents in Cambridge and street drinkers regularly congregate close to the building.

Close work with the community police and the installation of external CCTV is helping.

The lease is due for renewal in 2009 and early work is required to find out what rent increases may be expected. Although some would consider the appearance of the building to be in need of overhaul it is considered comfortable by members and the layout suits our services. The trustees do not currently plan to seek out alternative premises and are not seeking to take on the management of the property as there is not the current capacity to do this.

## **6.6 Equipment**

The final stage of updating the computer network is due to be completed by March 2008. Further work is needed to develop the IT suite and make the quiet room a more comfortable room. More flexible tables and chairs would be helpful in the main hall.

## **6.7 Finances and reserves**

The funding requirements related to individual services have been described in section 5 and are summarised in the attached budgets in section 7.

After facing a severe financial crisis at the start of 2007 when Lifecraft was facing closure, a great deal of work has been included to introduce stability and to put all services onto a full costs recovery basis. This is now complete and the budgets for 2008 and beyond are prepared on this basis.

We still have further internal work to complete to bring our internal bookkeeping systems in line with the new full costs recovery approach and this will be completed during 2008.

Lifecraft continues to rely heavily on the role of the Chair as the main fundraiser and this will be addressed as part of our future funding strategy with a greater emphasis on securing longer and more sustainable funding agreements.

Lifecraft currently has no reserves and aims for the current year to have a small surplus. The overall target is to have a minimum of three months running costs in reserves – a total of £75,000. We estimate that this will take 10 years to achieve and the target is to allocate a proportion of the funds that are generated through our community fundraising into reserves, with an annual target of £6,500 minimum.

Knowing that services are safe is very important to members and where changes have to be made they need to be given time to be implemented to minimise the impact on the health and well being of members. To achieve this reserves are vitally important and it has been argued that in the longer term Lifecraft should be looking to build a reserve fund of 40% turnover.

In October 2007 the Friends of Lifecraft group was launched to encourage wider community support for our work. Friends pay an annual subscription fee of £12 and are invited to at least two events each year. Additional donations from Friends have already been very encouraging and this work will be taken forward under the guidance of one of our trustees. We hope to have at least 30 people becoming Friends of Lifecraft each year and an agreement is being developed as to how much can be allocated to reserves from Friends' contributions.

## **6.8 Quality**

The use of PQASSO has been re-established and we will have completed level 1 by March 2008 with level 2/3 already in a number of areas. Level 2 is expected to be complete across all areas by 2009 and level 3 by 2011.

We plan to work towards the Investing in Volunteers standard from 2009 onwards.

We will continue to maintain our quality standard in respect of Lifeline.

In respect of our legal and financial requirements we keep all required records and are fortunate to have a very experienced Finance and Office manager.

Lifecraft consistently reviews its policies and procedures and tries to keep these up to date. A number of new policies have been introduced over the past six months and it is planned that policies will be fully compliant with Social Services expectations by the end of June 2008. A process of action planning in support of all these policies is gradually being introduced and the trustees are regularly reviewing progress. The trustees will review the need for separate policies and procedures sub group to maintain momentum on these important issues.

## **6.9 Monitoring and Evaluation**

Although we have many personal testimonies to the difference that Lifecraft has made to individual lives, we find it difficult to quantify the difference our work makes. Improving the ways that we can monitor and evaluate our different services is a theme that runs across all of our plans for the next three years.

Our approach will include:

- Working together (with members and key funders) to agree the aims for our monitoring and evaluation work, the principles that we will work to and how information will be shared
- Finding out more systematically from new members what they expect from Lifecraft when they join us
- Considering how feedback can be gained in ways that are not intrusive and do not undermine trust in Lifecraft
- Finding new and interesting ways of gathering ideas and not relying only on paper based techniques
- Understanding how feedback can be collated without losing the unique individual perspective
- Always seeking a broad range of feedback and considering carefully which parts of our membership are not represented
- Identifying the barriers that people may reasonably face in participating in monitoring and evaluation and how these can be overcome
- Training and links to other organisations to gather examples of good practice and see how far they could work at Lifecraft

This work will link closely with all of our work on participation and equality to ensure that we deepen our understanding of the impact that Lifecraft can have on individual lives. A member group will be set up to lead on this and report their recommendations to the trustee board during 2008.

## **6.10 Risk Management**

The trustees introduced a new process for reviewing organisational risks in September 2007. This follows Charity Commission guidelines and will continue.

In terms of delivering day to day activities, risk is regularly reviewed and Lifecraft members, volunteers and staff have worked together to develop guidelines which help us understand the situations that may occur and ensure that we have the knowledge and skills to deal with them effectively. We do not try to eliminate risk but to understand and respond to it effectively.

## **7. Budgets**

From 2010 onwards Lifecraft has no confirmed sources of income. Lifecraft has a number of three year projects which will expire by then (Comic Relief, Lankelly and Sobell). In addition our option to extend our current Social Services agreement expires by March 2010 and the impact of individual budgets is as yet unknown.

Forecasting future income sources is therefore difficult and the budgets in Appendix 1 have made assumptions about the likely level of funding rather than potential funders. This appendix includes:

- Minimum budget 2008/9 (this works from known income sources only at the time of completing this plan)
- Planned budget 2008/9
- Summary budget 2009/10
- Summary budget 2010/11

(A copy of Appendix 1 can be requested from Lifecraft)

The Chair of Lifecraft who leads on all fundraising activities (as the Coordinator is currently part time) puts in regular well researched bids and we remain optimistic that the targets for 2008/9 are achievable..

## **8. Funding Strategy and Sustainability**

Lifecraft manages income from a wide range of sources:

- ⇒ Grants from Charitable trusts and foundations (one off and term grants)
- ⇒ Donations from individuals and businesses
- ⇒ Subscriptions through Friends of Lifecraft
- ⇒ Earned income through service level agreements (and potentially through sales and fees in the future)

This is increasingly hard to manage with not only the need to constantly develop and write new bids but also the monitoring and evaluation responsibilities relating to grants and contracts.

Lifecraft targets to keep its core costs (management and governance and overheads) to less than 20% of total costs in order that we can provide the best value for money. In order

to achieve this we cannot afford to allocate more time to funding and monitoring and therefore larger and longer funding arrangements are the target.

Our fundraising strategy for the next three years is therefore to:

- a) Secure contracts to deliver services wherever possible (e.g. Lifeline and counselling)
- b) To maximise in kind support for delivery of services through volunteer support and time given
- c) To maximise opportunities for earned income through enterprise
- d) To consistently implement full cost recovery in all new project bids
- e) To encourage regular giving through Friends of Lifecraft
- f) To develop larger and fewer projects and manage costs tightly
- g) To continue to build relationships with donors and trusts who have supported our work in the past

Security of services is very important to our members (see above under reserves) and in making funding applications Lifecraft will need to stress the importance of building a reserve fund to protect against fluctuations in income.

## **9. Conclusions**

The coming three years may well be the biggest challenge for Lifecraft yet as so much is uncertain. Lifecraft firmly believes that if it can keep strong the principle of self help and encourage activity and involvement across the membership then whatever the difficulties faced, we will be able to work together to learn and grow from the challenges we face.

## **Appendix 1: Lifecraft Budget proposals 2008-2011**

***(These are available as a separate document as they contain sensitive information)***