



# Family Support for Schizophrenia

Family Support for Schizophrenia, founded in 1981 as Cape Support for Mental Health, is a support group for the families and carers of people living with schizophrenia

Our goals are

- To give support to the families and carers of people living with schizophrenia
- To enlighten and educate families and the public about schizophrenia and mental illness
- To raise awareness aimed at fostering community support and involvement
- To reduce the stigma associated with schizophrenia and mental illness
- To advocate for the rights of persons with mental illness

Extracts from FSS newsletters June & July 2022

## Community Mental Health & Psychiatry Foundation: Supportive services and care for people with long term mental illness

Anél Pienaar, Director: Social Work

Extract from June newsletter: **Introducing Anél Pienaar**

Our June speaker will be Anel Pienaar, Director: Social Work at the Bellville-based Community Mental Health & Psychiatry Foundation (CMHP), who will be telling us about the services and care CMHP offers to people with long-term mental illness.

Concerned at the lack of safe, decent, quality, permanent and affordable housing options for people with long-term psychiatric disability in South Africa, CMHP's mission is to develop and administer appropriate 24-hour comprehensive care to help fill the need. To this end, CMHP manages a range of housing facilities for more than 300 individuals with a psychiatric diagnosis in the greater Cape Town and Boland area. CMHP mainly uses a Psychiatric Rehabilitation (PSR) approach, aligned with four areas of the client's life - their living, learning, working, and socialising environments. In addition to its housing facilities, CMHP runs a community mental health clinic in the grounds of Stikland Hospital, and a community mental health academy which offers a two-year training course for caregivers.

Anel has been working with CMHP for many years, and we are sure her talk will be of interest to families wanting to find out about possible options for their loved ones.

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**Family Support for Schizophrenia**

NPO 040-491 | 083 713 8653 | [mail@capesupport.org.za](mailto:mail@capesupport.org.za) | [www.capesupport.org.za](http://www.capesupport.org.za)

**Management Committee**

*Chairperson* Maureen Robinson | *Treasurer* Mark van Wyk | *Secretary* Sue Custers  
*Members* Marijke Littlefield, Lydia Franciscus, Wayne Schonegevel, Leigh Haselau

Although loadshedding foiled the plans of quite a few would-be attendees, 35 of us were fortunate enough to join Zoom for the comprehensive and richly-illustrated talk on CMHP's facilities and services given by Anél Pienaar of Community Mental Health and Psychiatry Foundation.

Anél explained that CMHP was founded by Pastor Roy Harris and his wife Matilda twenty years ago as a community organisation in the northern suburbs. It took on the challenge of providing accommodation at scale for psychiatric patients from 1996, when government psychiatric hospitals such as Lentegeur, Stikland, Valkenberg and Alexandra had to discharge large numbers of patients, and the Department of Health gave CMHP the use of some of its old buildings. CMHP still works closely with the Department and Stikland Hospital, and is partially funded by the Department.

### *CMHP's housing facilities*

Today CMHP runs seven different housing facilities providing accommodation for 300 mental health care users; operates a Community Mental Health Academy, training 45 psychiatric caregivers per year; and has its own clinic in the grounds of Stikland Hospital. Property management is taken care of by the Kingdom Ministries Trust.

CMHP accommodates psychiatric patients from all age groups, and all levels of functioning. More than 80% of the residents are people with schizophrenia. Many are from poor social circumstances, and may come from night shelters or off the streets. Some are patients who need to be discharged from psychiatric hospitals to release places to allow new acute cases to be admitted. Some homes have high-functioning residents who do not need a lot of assisted care, and are able to hold down jobs.

So as not to "block the system", CMHP prefers people to stay in the community with their families for as long as possible, and at least until they are 30 years old.

### *Success story*



Anél told us how proud they are of their success rate - they have been able to break the "revolving door" cycle, and have a maximum of 1 or 2 admissions to hospital per year. Anél shared the secret of their success: "A bit of structure, a bit of routine, a neutral environment, and not too much intervention from the family". Other factors include the close monitoring and care offered by CMHP's professional and general staff, scrupulous attention to administering the residents' prescribed medication, and the availability of the academy's students to help residents with activities and personal care.

## *The seven group homes*

These are CMHP's seven group homes, with details of those catered for in each:

- **Hansie Vroom:** Severely disabled children and adults
- **Bowker House:** Old age home for psychiatric patients
- **Huis Sonop:** Residents 40-60 years old
- **El Roi:** Residents with both intellectual & psychiatric disability
- **Kerith Retreat:** Residents 30-50 years old
- **Harris House:** High-functioning men and women
- **De la Haye:** Younger high-functioning men

Anél sent the following answers to two questions we put to her after the meeting:

***How long is the waiting list?*** “Depending on which home is suitable, we will probably be able to help immediately if it is a private bed. If there is an emergency, like the death of the primary caregiver, we will try to give the first available place (will put the person first on the waiting list). Otherwise it can be a long wait, up to a year.”

***How can families support their loved ones?*** “Regarding family support at home, it is very difficult to give advice, because it will differ from person to person and his or her circumstances. We find that the difficulties come in with the emotional connections to families and the fact that patients sometimes do not accept authority at home and manipulate the household. If they are in a group home everybody is treated the same and they thrive in the little bit of structure and routine that all abide by.”

Many thanks to Anél for this introduction to CMHP. As one attendee said, “It is very reassuring to know that there are alternatives out there”. We wish there were many more! We congratulate CMHP on its work - may it go from strength to strength.

For an overview of CMHP, its facilities and work, visit [www.mentalhealth.org.za](http://www.mentalhealth.org.za). Further contact details can be found in the *Useful links* section below.

### ***Useful links - Some accommodation options***

Cape Mental Health (CMH) - <https://capementalhealth.co.za/>, 021 447 9040, [info@cmh.org.za](mailto:info@cmh.org.za)  
- Fountain House - <https://capementalhealth.co.za/what-we-do/#>, 021 447 7409  
- Kimber House - <https://capementalhealth.co.za/what-we-do/#>, 021 447 9040

Comcare Trust - <https://www.comcare.co.za/>, 021 448 0760 (mornings)  
- The Welcome Club - <https://www.comcare.co.za/community.html>

Community Mental Health & Psychiatry Foundation (CMHP) - <http://mentalhealth.org.za>,  
- General enquiries - Anél Pienaar, [anel@mentalhealth.org.za](mailto:anel@mentalhealth.org.za), 021 981 9850, 082 878 4626  
- Mental Health Academy, Volunteering - Sanet Louw, [sanet@mentalhealth.org.za](mailto:sanet@mentalhealth.org.za), 021 981 9850

Hope House Trust - [www.hopehoustrust.co.za/](http://www.hopehoustrust.co.za/), 082 920 2195



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