



The Apollo (Sutton)
Foundation

Hello! To kick things off, please could you tell us a little about your organisation?



Chapter

Certainly! Chapter provides support to people with severe and enduring mental illness in Cheshire West and Chester. Our tailored programme of one-to-ones, group activities, training and voluntary work placements help our service users grow in confidence, improve their mental health, make new friends, and feel hope for the future.



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When you say “severe and enduring”, what does that mean?



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It's an NHS-based term which refers to any diagnosis with very life-limiting symptoms and which lasts a long time, if not a person's whole life. Diagnoses include bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, personality disorder, psychosis, eating disorder and self-harm. To explain the effects of such an illness, here's Lucy!



Hi, I'm Lucy and I have bipolar disorder. My thoughts race, I have trouble sleeping and I sometimes behave erratically, including making bad financial decisions and spending myself into debt, which causes anxiety. My medication helps a bit, but it also makes me forgetful and jittery, which can make me worried about going out in public. I was very low when I got involved with Chapter.



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Thanks Lucy. Joining Chapter has really worked for Lucy. She's grown in confidence to the point where she is not only able to leave her house every day... She is now delivering some arts and crafts classes herself!



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I see... How many people like Lucy are there?



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Estimates vary, but something like 1 in 100 have a severe mental illness. That would mean that in Cheshire West and Chester – where we work – there are more than 2,000 working age people with such a diagnosis. We know there's a real need for our work because for the first time in our 25 year history, we have a waiting list.



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Thanks. Can you tell us about your group activities?



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We run 5-6 different activities every week which offer our service users the opportunity to meet new people, learn new skills and get out into the community. Activities include countryside walks, board games, cooking, photography and many more. In 2019, we have held 116 sessions, engaging 64 different people. Your £500 grant will go towards materials and room hire for these activities.

For more about how our activities help, here's Joe.



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Why have you chosen to ask us in particular?



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Severe mental illness can rob people of basic, normative aspects of life that most of us take for granted, such as employment and independence from family. Our support empowers service users with the confidence and basic skills to live their best lives, which is perfectly in tune with the Apollo (Sutton) Foundation's stated aim.



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Thank you for your time. Just one more question – isn't this conversational format just a gimmick to make you stand out?



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Of course we hope it makes us stand out, but talking is very important to Chapter! One-to-one communication is the backbone of our support, so we thought there was no better way to showcase our work than by having a chat. Thanks very much for listening to us!