

Cheryl Prax's experiences of the Mental Health System and the wider
community
By Cheryl Prax

I was completely ignorant of what happened in the Mental Health System until I was unceremoniously dragged into it by the police in August 2009, who took me illegally from my home and into a mental health hospital.

When I was discharged, I went back to work and immediately started to find out more about the mental health system. I began to campaign against ECT (Electroconvulsive Therapy) on my own with posters on my bicycle. From here, I was approached by a man who told me there was a first protest by SOAP (Speak Out Against Psychiatry) outside the Royal College of Psychiatrists in July 2011. I went along and read out [my story](#) at the protest. I then went to regular fortnightly meetings and protests.

I found a group called Kensington & Chelsea Mental Health Carers who held monthly meetings on various subjects. The first meeting I went to was on Restraint which was important to me as my arm had been broken in the hospital!

I also went to meetings of my Mental Health Trust - CNWL as a member of the public and asked questions about ECT at the end. I was constantly fobbed off. I ran for election and eventually, I became Governor for Westminster Public in 2013 and was re-elected twice, completing eight years of service. It was like banging my head on a brick wall, though eventually 2twomore like-minded people joined me as Governors too!

I went on a Police committee for Mental Health.

I took a year's course on Open Dialogue which I paid for myself.

I have campaigned on social media and met many people interested in changing the Mental Health System. I have been to many conferences and debates. I have joined Liberation.

People should have choices and the choices should be humanitarian and not medical.