

Ian McInness Award for Inclusive Volunteering

Lothian Bipolar Self-Help Group

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The volunteers of Lothian Bipolar Self-Help Group demonstrate that living with a long-term health condition is no barrier to volunteering. For the last 12 years they have provided support and advice to people living with Bipolar Depression, their families, and friends.

All the volunteers have Bipolar Depression themselves. They currently support a membership of 400 individuals through newsletters, support groups, topical workshops, resources and social activities like walking trips and cinema outings. They help people access Edinburgh Leisure facilities and during lockdown provided lifeline support online. The volunteers have established a separate support group for younger people and are exploring how to better reach and support people with Bipolar in ethnic minority communities. In addition, they deliver education sessions for clinical professionals and students and support carers.

Through these opportunities they have enabled people with Bipolar to help, educate and support others through their volunteering. As a result, people with Bipolar Depression have a better understanding of their condition and how to manage it, are less dependent on statutory services and a number have been helped to move onto education, volunteering, and paid employment.

