

# The Great Escape Bed Push

Soteria Bradford is holding a sponsored Bedpush from Leeds to Bradford on Saturday 3rd July 2010 to raise funds for a small Soteria (Mental Health Recovery) style house in the Bradford Area, as well as to raise awareness of the work of the Soteria Network and the need for alternative approaches for people experiencing extreme states/psychosis.

The Bedpush will start at 11.00am from outside the Old Workhouse entrance of St. James Hospital in Leeds and will finish at The Playhouse in Bradford where there will be a fundraising cabaret in the evening (more details to follow). We will be pushing a hospital bed through Leeds town centre, Headingley, Kirkstall, Stanningly and Thornbury, before arriving in Bradford (a total distance of around 12 miles).

Though we are serious about opening a Soteria style project, the Bedpush and the event in the evening promise to be a lot of fun, and we hope that you will be able to join us on the day. Even a couple of sponsored miles will make a difference. There will be transport on hand for those who don't want to do the full distance!

We are asking people who would like to join us to register via the website, in order that we can keep abreast of participant numbers. You can do so using the form below. Once you have signed up please click the link at the bottom of the page to download the sponsorship form and info sheet which you can print out to start getting sponsored.

If you have any queries please use the contact form on the Soteria Bradford Page . You can also telephone Theresa Smith on 07776 054620. There will be a cabaret in the evening to which all are welcome.

The Great Escape Bed Push protests have now taken place each summer since 2005. Go here <http://vids.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=vids.individual&VideoID=52152268> for a film of the most recent English escape. Each year we symbolically escape psychiatric institutions, dressed in pyjamas and 'hot tail' it with a psychiatric bed to a place of safety and celebration. We aim to raise awareness about the over-use of forced treatments in mental health services and the need for holistic choice based services. In 2007 we went global, because the mistreatment of psychiatric patients is a global problem. There have now been Bedpushes in England, Canada, America, South Africa and Scotland. If you would like to organise your own bedpush things we have found useful to do are to have:

A series of planning meetings with the people interested in taking part.

A hospital bed with good wheels (we used a porters bed).

pyjamas.

A giant syringe (You can make this, artists can help here)

A good leaflet.

somebody to send press releases to local newspapers radio TV and chase them up.

take a picture of what you might look like for the press release.

Have some people willing to talk to the press about the experience of forced treatment and the alternatives.

To organise accomodation if it is a long journey (camping / friends houses/ cheap accomodation).

A loud horn for blowing everytime you start to push the bed a bit further (good for morale).

A megaphone for telling people what you are doing on the journey. Use humour 'we have escaped the psychiatric hospital!' 'We are mad, but they are madder!'

A map! Use roads where you can, its important to (peacefully) disrupt the traffic... this is an important human rights issue!

A sound system at times can be good formorale ('all you need is love'.. 'Madness' songs etc).

A party at the end of the bedpush; speeches samba band music cake drumming, dancing etc.

We will be happy to put pictures notices, and stories about the bedpush on this bedpush website.

Our most recent bedpush in England involved 'escaping' from St Ann's hospital in Tottenham and pushing the bed to Parliament Hill fields on the 10th of October 2008. Previously we escaped Callington Road Psychiatric hospital in Bristol (BS4 5BZ) at 9.30AM on Friday 13th of July 2007. We went 'on the run' and pushed the bed to Bath arriving Saturday the 14th of July at a Mad Pride Celebration (organised by the Mad Hatters of Bath) at Queen Square. Here there was a carnival atmosphere with music, theatre and dance.

Meanwhile in Toronto Canada at the same time there was a Bed Push starting at the Center for Addiction and Mental Health on Queen Street and ended up at Parkdale Activity and Recreation Center for a celebratory meal and an open stage for entertainment. Also in Northampton, Massachusetts, U.S.A. an Escape from Psychiatry Protest also took place. For more details see: <http://www.freedom-center.org>

The Great Escape Bed Push protests aim to raise awareness about the poor levels of choice of treatments and the widespread use of force used in the psychiatric hospitals. The Great Escape Bed Push Team believe in its current state psychiatric care often makes people's problems worse and that the use of unnecessary force is on the increase. "Forcing patients to take medication against their will is a spirit-breaking practice. It can put someone off mental health services for life, as it breaks down trust between staff and the individual they are supposed to be taking care of" (Dr

Rufus May, Clinical Psychologist and former patient).

Many of the campaigners have been in-patients who have witnessed and experienced the use of forced drug treatment. They were joined by nurses and others concerned by the emphasis on control in psychiatry and the lack of therapeutic activities. The crazy bed pushers will give out wanted posters and dodgy pills (sweets) to members of the public and proclaim 'Psychiatry is off its trolley!'; At various points of the journey the escapees and the public will have to look out for the giant 6 foot syringe squirting water at them. We are protesting about the over use of force in psychiatry (e.g. forced drugging, forced ECT, psychosurgery and brainwashing). In England the government is introducing forced treatment in the community Community Treatment Orders we urge people to resist these plans. We are also campaigning for more meaningful activities in hospitals, access to alternative therapies, more accountability about levels of force used in psychiatry and more alternatives to hospital admission provided (e.g. crisis houses). The rest of the website shows the diaries, pictures and press coverage of the last three English bedpushes in 2005 and 2006.