

Visit to Maytree , a sanctuary for the suicidal in London 10th October 2007

By Penny Vandeleur (Secretary for CAPS Inc)

"I don't really want to die but I don't know how to live" is commonly experienced by many people in a suicidal crisis.

The stigma of mental illness and the fear of being in a hospital prevent many people from seeking help. Maytree offers a short stay in a safe residential setting where you can talk, reflect and rest - and restore hope. Maytree is a place where you will be heard, respected and accepted, without judgement and in confidence. www.maytree.org.uk

As one of CAPS's major goals is to set up a similar facility, it was with very great pleasure that I had the opportunity to visit the London house while on holidays there.

I was warmly welcomed and spent most of the time chatting with the director Paddy Bazeley. I took a number of photos and here is a selection to tell the story of my visit. There were no guests the day I was there, but they had had a busy week the week before, they have been running for just on 5 years and if you would like to know more about the actual running of Maytree, there is a report available at their website conducted by The Tavistock Foundation which is very positive and recommends that more Maytrees be set up all over the UK.

Maytree is just about to release a draft blueprint for those who wish to do just that, so it will of course be of very great interest to CAPS.

Please enjoy the following photographs of "Maytree".



Maytree is a very ordinary 3 story terrace house in a London suburb, easy to reach by train, entrance is the green door on the left. What happens inside is not so ordinary.



It did need some renovating to make it suitable for taking up to 4 guests at a time, plus a couple of small offices and bedrooms for volunteers.



The bedrooms are cosy and warm with nice outlooks. All 6 bedrooms are fitted with a buzzer so guests can call for a volunteer at any time of the day or night.



The kitchen is large and a lot of talking happens here. It looks out onto a small but gorgeous garden which is also much used.



The guests often help with the maintenance of the courtyard garden. I saw a squirrel running along the top of the fence !



Paddy's office, includes a lot of memorabilia from grateful guests - the painting on the wall of the Maytree tree symbol is one of her favourites.



The Office manager, Rupal, is a delightful, warm person with whom it is easy to feel comfortable.



Another gift from a guest, photos entitled "Parts and a Whole" as a way of saying "thanks" for their assistance in helping her/him to be whole again.

Finally, I can only repeat our chairman Richard Robert's words after he visited Maytree himself earlier this year " If something like Maytree had existed in Australia I believe my daughter would still be alive" After my visit I can certainly echo his words. Maytree is a beautiful haven whilst at the same time being professionally operated. We at CAPS welcome community support to ensure a similar house is established as soon as possible. Records and research prove that London's Maytree has indeed saved many lives.