

# **Mental health context of Change Minds**

Change Minds conference on  
archives & Mental Health

15<sup>th</sup> March 2018

# History of Mental Health Care

- Dedicated hospitals for people with mental health problems and other conditions in England go back at least as far as the Middle Ages (The Bethlem Hospital was founded in 1247)
- Generally most people with mental illness received no organised systematic care until the 19th century
- The 'theory' of mental health problems focussed on religious, moral weaknesses, passed on through generations.

# History of Mental Health Care

- Early asylum treatments were primitive, usually involving sedative drugs like laudanum, which were administered orally, and baths in various forms as a method of calming agitated patients
- The asylums provided long term residential care for a wide mixture of people with severe mental health problems, dementias such as those resulting from tertiary syphilis, learning disabilities, epilepsy and “moral defectiveness” (e.g. having an illegitimate child).
- At its height – in the mid-1950s - asylums in England accommodated 150,000 people (0.4% of the total population).

# Reflections on the Archive Session

- educational and fascinating experience for me
- the reverberation between past and present.
- exploration, mastery of a subject and group support.
- Humour
- Political and personal
- The meaning of experiences

# Power and Psychiatry

- Power of decision makers
  - The power of a diagnosis
  - The power of deciding needs
- Funding
- Treatments
- Accommodation
- Notions of Recovery

# What this meant for me for the future

- Dealing with vested interests
  - How do we turn focus away from managing ‘the system’ and more towards the service user and carer?
- Bringing the ‘Outside’ in
  - How do we share, invite in or overlap with the community – not just carers but schools and colleges, business, leisure, media?
- Outcomes
  - How do we measure mental health improvement in a meaningful and direct way that allows us all to learn?