

# Mental health campaigner travels UK



**A FORMER social worker has strapped on his walking boots for an epic coastal hike around the UK to transform attitudes to mental health.**

Chris McCullough Young – who has struggled with mental health problems since he was 12 years old – set off from his Dumbiedykes home in 2011, relying only on the hospitality of strangers to help him on his journey.

His early struggles inspired him to become a social worker, first at the Western General Hospital, and later in Falkirk.

But in 2008 he found himself becoming distant from people and he had to give up work as there were times he didn't know who he was.

Doctors diagnosed him with borderline personality disorder (BPD), and Chris said he was astonished by how people's behaviour towards him changed with this news.

The 50-year-old said: "My manager told me I was too nice to have BPD. It's like saying, 'You're too nice to have a broken leg'."

After hearing on the radio that 90 per cent of people would not knowingly invite someone with a mental health problem into their home, Chris decided to set out on a walk to change their minds.

He said: "You get this incredible kindness as you go around. People offered me a place to stay without even knowing my name.

"On day one, as I got over the Forth Road Bridge, a woman saw me in my kilt carrying a big rucksack and trailer and she said, 'What on earth are you doing?'. I told her what I was doing and she gave me £10 for dinner."

Kind strangers across Scotland have let Chris camp in their garden, watched the World Cup with him, cooked him dinner and even run him a bath when they heard his story.

He said: "The worst I get is people saying, 'You don't look like one' when speaking about mental health.

"I don't think most people knowingly go out to make life difficult for those with mental health problems.

"From my experience it won't take much of a shove for people to realise that other people are fabulous."

Chris has made it as far as the town of Porthmadog, Wales, but his struggle with BPD means that he has to take frequent breaks on the journey.

Although he hopes to continue for another two years, Chris will return to Edinburgh next month to lead hundreds of professionals, carers and those with mental health conditions as they walk a mile in each other's shoes down the Royal Mile.

Judith Robertson, programme director at charity See Me, which is helping to organise the event, said: "Tackling the stigma towards mental health is vitally important and Chris's incredible action has done so much to change the attitudes of those he has met.

"This was an amazing feat and one that has inspired us, and has inspired hundreds to join us on September 3 [2015]."

The Walk a Mile event will begin at 6pm at Johnstone Terrace. To register, visit [www.letswalkamile.org](http://www.letswalkamile.org).

<http://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/health/mental-health-campaigner-travels-uk-1-3861498#comments-area>  
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