

Assertive outreach pilot a success with clients

Users of an assertive outreach service say that it has improved their quality of life with its innovative and creative approach to meeting their needs says a new report published by the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health.

The report 'Active Outreach: An independent user evaluation of a model of assertive outreach practice' is based on interviews with service users, carers and staff at the Active Outreach Team at Julian Housing in



Norwich. Assertive Outreach is now a major component of mental health service delivery in the UK. The Government's NHS

Plan requires 220 assertive outreach teams to be in place by 2003.

The overwhelming majority of service users interviewed in the study felt that their quality of life had improved

in some way since having regular contact with the Active Outreach team. These improvements included greater stability in their living situation, increased confidence and social interaction,

access to benefits, and support with daily activities such as shopping.

'I trust them to point out things which might be going wrong, advise me about anything, they make my life more relaxed and much easier, I do totally trust them'

comments one service user in the report. Another adds 'Julian Housing really works for people'.

The Active Outreach Team was established

in 1995 to support people in sustaining their own tenancies through flexible and appropriately intensive levels of support. It currently works with 53 service users who demonstrate a high level of vulnerability and isolation, and have managed chaotically in

'Julian Housing really works for people'

the community. The team focuses on engaging individuals and working with them to find practical solutions that will mitigate their social exclusion. Its creative approach to building a relationship with individuals includes giving Italian lessons and forming a rock band. Practical interventions range from improving their home environment to advocacy for meeting their needs within statutory agencies.

Anne McCrudden, manager of the team said today: 'This positive evaluation is a testimony to the "can do" attitude of the team. This is skilled work, requiring patience, respect, humour, understanding, and a belief that "anything is possible". The reward is in seeing people engage with life, and believe in themselves again'.

Julian Housing Support honours Janet

On the 21st December 2001 Julian Housing Support held an event to rename their offices in Oak Street 'Janet Rowe House' in honour of Janet who sadly died aged 54 the previous year. Julian Housing Support was founded 12 years ago and is a Norfolk wide charity supporting more than 800 people with mental health problems every year. It began as a small working party made up of health, social work and housing professionals. Their aim was to make available housing choices and opportunities for independence for the many people in Norfolk whose lives had been affected by mental illness. Janet Rowe was a part of that initial working party and over the

next ten years she played a major role as Social Services Liaison Officer to the Charity's Board of Management. She also provided support and guidance to the management team. Tom Wilson, General Manager of Julian Housing said: "Janet was brilliant, intelligent, and never the negative bureaucrat. Social services often receives a bad press but the good things get little attention. Janet really cared, she always had

time to listen, especially to service users. She supported me, and many of my colleagues in all sorts of ways. We valued her incisive intellect, her wit, and her humour."



Managing Inclusion Series

Please note that the dates for the next events have changed due to circumstances beyond our control. They are now: *Reaching In and Reaching Out 1 March 2002 and Supporting People – Now & Tomorrow is 4 April 2002. If you would like a copy of the notes from the first event in the series Housing Drug Users please email vhg@norwich@lineone.net for a copy.*

Valuing People

Rob Grieg, Learning Disability Director of Implementation, said this week that *Implementation of this strategy requires a change in organisational cultures. Look out for VHG's Spring events: Ready, Willing & Able? and Managing Empowerment - Changing Organisational Culture. For a copy of the DoH's Valuing People Strategy go to www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm50/5086/5086.htm*

Louise Casey under Fire

Louise Casey of the RSU faces increasing criticism over the figures in the *Coming In From the Cold* Progress report. Raising the Roof questioned the validity of this report in September and this was followed by an increasingly strong wave of critical reporting in the housing and social care press. The Simon Community is to issue a formal complaint to the Housing Minister Lord Falconer and request a meeting to discuss the figures reported by the RSU.

YMCA links with CIH for accredited training

The YMCA is to work with the CIH to develop a training programme for staff which will lead to the CIH National Certificate (Supported Housing Pathway) and the CIH Foundation Certificate in Housing. This programme is intended to underpin the quality standard it plans to introduce this year.

St. Martin's Housing Trust

St. Martin's have moved. The head office address is now: 35 Bishopgate, Norwich, NR1 4AA. Please note that their telephone number is the same 01603 667706.

VHG Relaunch 2002 - a positive change...

VHG's Relaunch events in November 2001 marked the official refocus of our organisation as an umbrella organisation that concentrates on meeting the needs of our members throughout East Anglia. The positive changes that VHG have made in the last six months were pulled together for this event.

There was the opportunity to view and be guided around our website www.vhg-east.org and to share ideas for the development and extension of member services. Member displays gave the staff team and other members an insight into the varied and innovative work of projects around the region.

Bob Michel of the Urban Renewal Unit of the DTLR attended the Suffolk Relaunch event and responded to questions from VHG's members around



the organisation of the DTLR and their focus for the delivery of the Urban and Rural White Paper. He was impressed by the enthusiasm and commitment of VHG's members in meeting the needs of the socially excluded in East Anglia.

The future for VHG and our members includes the

Managing Inclusion series which is being delivered over the coming six months and involves experts from both within and outside the region. Increased opportunities to network and to increase your voice at a regional and a national level.

John Hales of St. Martin's Housing Trust said: 'VHG has become a far more professional looking organisation with a real focus on its members. The changes over the past year have enabled VHG to take the opportunity to open up its core base and become a truly regional member organisation.'

The Relaunch events were an opportunity for members to discuss informally some of the ideas they had for VHG to develop over the coming year. We have had numerous requests to restart the Resettlement network with



Opposite page: A guest at the relaunch logs on to the VHG website. Above: A group of members discuss the relaunch with Emma Daniel Members services Co-ordinator. Right: members at the relaunch meeting study one of the display boards.

integrated and specialist training and articles. Another idea, which was raised, was the idea of having a joint AGM event in the form of a one day conference where organisations can break out to have their AGMs in separate meeting rooms. It was felt that this might particularly benefit our smaller members. Many attendees also discussed ways in which key members of their teams would be prepared to share skills and knowledge with other member organisations. Emma Daniel, Member Services Co-ordinator, is



already following up on these suggestions amongst others. Look out in our mailings for news on developments.

Social exclusion - tackling an age old problem

Social exclusion is but one symptom of an unhealthy society. The expression may be new, but the concept spans generations. Those familiar with Bible stories will know that people afflicted with leprosy were not allowed to mingle, let alone enter into public life – and the term "leper" still has unpleasant connotations to this day.

Cindy and I have served as Salvation Army Officers since 1970. Our regular ministry has included some of the largest council estates in Europe and, for a period of two years only, we lived on the kind of estate where residents were treated as substandard citizens.

In 1997 I attended a global conference in South Africa, along with 5,000 other delegates from 134 countries. We broke into 12 smaller groups, each tackling a specialist theme. One might think that the allocation would be around 450 to each group, but my chosen group was less

than half that number. Few chose to wear the badge that declared in bold letters the delegate's name followed by the words "Poor and Needy".

I don't pretend that the Church has got it right, but I do believe that its founder provided the finest role model ever known when it comes to changing attitudes.

Not only did Jesus touch the leper, He also connected with the social outcasts of His day – a practice that led to His ultimate rejection and execution.

I don't believe that faith-based organisations have the monopoly when it comes to reaching out to vulnerable and the disadvantaged people within. My friends include people who make no profession of faith, but still manifest a love for humanity that shines like a beacon.

That acknowledged, most of my heroes who work with the socially excluded are motivated by the giving and receiving of a love of a different kind – a love that has

eternal qualities. Hannah, who works with prostitutes in Indonesia, tries to look at each new contact with the eyes of Christ. When Mother Teresa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the vice-chairman of the Nobel Committee said, "If there is something that our divided world, without peace, needs, then it is people who in the name of Christ will cross boundaries to lessen their neighbour's need, regardless of standing or reputation." To his words Mother Teresa added, "every work of love brings a person face to face with God"

If my opening statement is true, that Social exclusion is but one symptom of an unhealthy society, we have a duty to tackle the symptoms using all the resources at our disposal, and faith-based organisations will know that some of those resources are out of this World!

■ Major Barry Willson, The Salvation Army, 34 St. Giles Street, NORWICH, NR2 1LL.

Comment

The New Year can be an ideal time to reflect back over the previous year and to look forward to the future.

VHG has come a long way over the past year culminating in the relaunch in November. It was great to have the support of the members at not only the relaunch events but also as VHG moved forward. Over the last year VHG spent time listening to and collecting the ideas of the members so that VHG could be truly a members' organisation...this is a process that is still continuing.

VHG continues to provide member services such as mailing and training (including the new Managing Inclusion series), represents members interests at a local, regional and national level with Statutory agencies and acts as a facilitator for such initiatives as Furniture Recycling and the Mental Health Directory. We also work hard to build relationships with business and media contacts and facilitate relationships between them and our membership.

What are VHG's New Year resolutions? To keep listening to our members and developing our services and members network. Do let us know of where you see VHG going forward, what issues you want us to be involved in and research - this is your organisation. We do continue to visit members, but you do not have to wait for a visit to talk to us! Do feel free to contact our office. Sometimes it is good to look back longer than a year to see how much we have progressed. For many people, over the years there has been an increase in paperwork and administration, but let us be encouraged by Bob Russell's comment (see 'Day in the life of.'): 'The homeless sector has come a long way in such a short space of time...and if by slaving over a hot spreadsheet we can secure better funding and keep up an improved service, then perhaps it makes all our jobs worthwhile'.

One person can make a difference. VHG was privileged to be able to attend the event at Julian Housing to rename their offices in Oak Street in honour of Janet Rowe. Whatever our position and role we can all make a difference to those vulnerable people who are often excluded from our society.

Finally do look at our website. This site is being continually improved and includes further information. At present it includes the winner and runner up entries in VHG's 'Stop the Press' competition. I was very impressed in the standard of the entries produced by these young people. This competition gave an opportunity for young people to begin to understand some of the aspects of homelessness. Too many people in our society remain ignorant about the issues involved in homelessness and 'pass on the other side'. I believe that an important aspect of our role is one of increasing the awareness and involvement of our communities in those excluded from society. I was speaking to a project where there are tensions with the people in the neighbouring properties, it may be that an increase in concern and understanding by these neighbours may ease some of these tensions – tensions that many of our members face. Our members' concerns need to be the responsibility and on the agenda of not only the local Councils and Central Government but of the wider society.

Joan Kinnings-Smith - VHG

Training Dates

BASIC DRUGS AWARENESS

Simon Floyd

06-02-02 Norwich

BASIC FOOD HYGIENE

Melanie Hines

07-02-02 Norwich

PSYCHOLOGICAL WAYS OF WORKING WITH

PSYCHOSIS

Jane Wallace

08-02-02 Norwich

SOCIAL FUND OVERVIEW WORKSHOP

Independent Review Service

19-02-02 Norwich

ASSERTIVENESS

AND CONFIDENCE BUILDING

Diane Woodhouse

22-02-02 Norwich

CHARITIES AND THE CHARITY

COMMISSION INTRODUCTION

TO FINANCIAL RISK

AND INTERNAL CONTROL

Mrs J Kinnings-Smith

25-02-02 Norwich

FINANCE FOR NON-FINANCIAL

MANAGERS

Mrs J Kinnings-Smith

27-02-02 Essex

STRESS IN THE WORK PLACE

Susan Banham

28-02-02 Norwich

PSYCHOLOGICAL WAYS OF WORKING WITH

PSYCHOSIS

Jane Wallace

01-03-02 Suffolk/Norwich

INTRODUCTION TO MANAGEMENT

Steve Morphey

March Date TBC Norwich

FINANCE FOR NON-FINANCIAL

MANAGERS

Mrs J Kinnings-Smith

06-03-02 Norwich

STRESS IN THE WORK PLACE

Susan Banham

08-03-02 Suffolk

SOCIAL FUND OVERVIEW WORKSHOP

Independent Review Service

12-03-02 Suffolk

MANAGING AGGRESSION

AND VIOLENCE

Bob Banham

13-03-02 Norwich

EFFECTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT

Diane Woodhouse

20-03-02 Norwich

ADVANCED DRUG AWARENESS

Simon Floyd

21-03-02 Norwich

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION REGARDING OUR TRAINING PLEASE PHONE KERRY ON 01603 617299. DUE TO DEMAND WE ARE CONTINUALLY RUNNING COURSES IN BASIC HEALTH AND SAFETY, BASIC FIRST AID AND THE TWO DAY MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING COURSE. TO REGISTER YOUR INTEREST PLEASE PHONE ON THE ABOVE NUMBER.

STOP THE PRESS! COMPETITION

As part of VHG's Relaunch we ran a competition for schools with the EDP. The competition entries were all of a high standard but the winners were particularly impressive in meeting the brief which was to write a persuasive piece on an aspect of homelessness. They spent an editorial day with the EDP and Raising the Roof on the 21st January. The overall winner was Nazmul Khan (aged 16) and the runner up was Eleanor Matthews (aged 14) both of Attleborough High School. Their English teacher, Mrs McConnell said: It's been a great opportunity for the children to get behind the scenes of an editorial team. *Emma Daniel - VHG*



A day in the life of...

St John's Housing Trust provides accommodation for over 60 single homeless people across four projects in Lowestoft, from their youngest resident a four month old baby in their mother and baby unit to their oldest resident, a 71 year old female staying at the Fyffe Centre. Bob Russell has worked for the Trust since October 1996 and has been their Senior Project Worker since April 1997.

I was working in my office the other day, trying to come to terms with the complexities of the new Transitional Housing Benefit, when I heard raised voices in the dining room. Both Project Workers being busy, I went into the dining room to see what the fuss was about. Someone was complaining about the coffee, two residents were debating which video to watch. This, combined with the general hullabaloo surrounding the pool table had given the impression that wholesale warfare had broken out. I spent a few minutes discussing the merits of a slightly more expensive coffee, arbitrated in the argument over the video and congratulated a resident who had been offered council

accommodation before making my way upstairs to the archive store to retrieve some previous years' invoices with which to compare current expenditure.

It was while looking through the filing cabinets that I came across an article written in 1976 by George Jeffrey, Warden of the Lowestoft Night Shelter and some black and white photographs of residents and the interior of the original Shelter.

In those days, people were only allowed

to sleep overnight in the Shelter and had to spend the whole day wandering around town. The general gist of George's article was how he had put on his oldest clothes and taken his then Social Security allowance of £1-65 and endeavoured, like his residents, to fill in the bleak hours until the night shelter reopened at eight o'clock that evening. After hours spent wandering round town, his money long gone and the wintry wind biting through his thin clothing, George was forced to return home 2 hours before the allotted time. More than anything, the monotony of having nothing to do with his time had completely disheartened him.

The photographs were also a revelation, showing mattresses on the floor, old and tatty bedding, broken furniture, bare floorboards and a broken window in the background.

I could not help but compare both George's article and the old photographs with what I had just experienced. The

Bob Russell

St. John's Housing Trust

homeless sector has come a long way in a short space of time. The quality of life for St John's residents today is much better than that experienced by residents in 1976 and if, by slaving over a hot spreadsheet we can secure better funding, and keep up an improved service, then perhaps it makes all our jobs worthwhile.

Bob Russell