

# SUNN

## Service User / Carer Network Newsletter

### Welcome to this issue

Welcome to this autumn issue of the Service User & Carer Network newsletter. We hope you find it interesting!



*A carer and social work lecturer deciding whether to accept the prospective social work student they have just interviewed*

This newsletter aims to provide a snapshot of some of the different ways service users and carers have been involved in the social work programme in 2009 / 2010.

## An introduction to service user and carer involvement

You may know that service users and carers, with personal experience of and knowledge about social services, are involved in the following aspects of the social work programme at London Metropolitan University:

- Interviewing prospective social work students
- Teaching social work students on qualifying BSc and MSc courses, and social work practitioners on post-qualifying courses
- Assessing social work students



*A long-time member of the Service User and Carer Network at London Met discusses a candidate with a social work lecturer*

## Interviewing prospective social work students

Last winter we organised two preparation / training sessions for service users and carers interested in becoming interviewers for the social work programme. The training included examining the criteria we were looking for when interviewing prospective social work students, and role-playing a variety of interviews. Several social work lecturers attended the training, and took part in the interview role-plays,

and several current students agreed to role-play prospective students. A video was made to be used for future interview training for lecturers and service users and carers. Service users and carers who had been involved in interviewing at London Met before also attended the training to share their experiences. They included members of '4Sight', a project committed to enriching the lives of African and Caribbean men who have experienced mental health issues.

The service users and carers who attended the training included individual service users and carers who had been involved in teaching social work students at London Met in the past, members of 'Uniting Carers' from 'Dementia UK', and a member of an organisation called 'Positively Women' (a charity which offers a range of peer support, advice, information and advocacy services for HIV positive women).

Following the training sessions, service users and carers took part in interview panels on six interview days between January and June 2010. After each interview session, all interviewers came together to take part in a de-briefing session to discuss any issues which had come up.



*De-briefing session after a half-day of interviews*

In June 2010 we had a meeting to evaluate the interviewing process. Service users and carers gave very thoughtful reflections on how it had gone this year and made detailed suggestions for the future.



*End-of-year meeting to evaluate the interviewing process*

### **Teaching and assessing social work students**

During 2009-2010, service users and carers were involved in teaching social work students and social work practitioners on a range of modules, including the following:

- \* Social Work through the Life Course
- \* Critical Aspects of Human Growth & Development
- \* Foundation for Social Work Practice
- \* Safeguarding Children
- \* Planning Care
- \* Adult Care Planning
- \* Effective Communication in Social Work
- \* Partnership Working & Management
- \* Critical Perspectives on Diversity
- \* Personalisation and Self-Directed Support
- \* Critical Aspects of Working with Adults
- \* Protecting Children

Students gave us very helpful written feedback on service user and carer involvement in their modules. A brief selection of their comments is included in the following pages.

## Workshop delivered by 4Sight

'4Sight' is a project committed to enriching the lives of African and Caribbean men who have experienced mental health issues. Project members came to speak to students on the 'Social Work through the Life Course' and 'Critical Aspects of Human Growth & Development' modules. Their input on the importance of empathy was commented on by a number of students:

"Making us aware of the lack of support and understanding."

"Their thoughts were insightful and very important to hear in terms of my future practice. Also enjoyable."

"Gave me insight into new ways of thinking about how I could challenge existing practice. To always ensure I ask the service user what they would like to gain, treating them as the individual in control."

"Understanding barriers to empathy within social work."



*Workshop delivered by '4Sight' on empathy within practice*

## Hearing Voices Network speaker

A speaker from the Hearing Voices Network contributed to the 'Effective Communication in Social Work' module. Student comments included;

"Had the opportunity to get first hand experience of her circumstances."

"Speaking from experience counts for so much."

"The inclusion of a service user was crucial."

"Service user put what we had learnt into perspective."

"Really enjoyed session from talking voices."

"HVN service user was an eye opener in new ways of offering help to people who hear voices."

## 'An honest and frank account'

Lin Berwick came to speak to students on the 'Social Work through the Life Course' and 'Critical Aspects of Human Growth & Development' modules. The content and impact of her presentation are illustrated by the student feedback;

"Lin's talk and lecture film, enabled me to have a greater understanding of disabled peoples everyday struggle."

"Her views on how to address & challenge social injustices created by society and institutions."

"Service user gave honest, humane account of needs and services which will impact positively on my practice in the future."

"The reality of how difficult life can be for service users and the daily issues they have to deal with."

"An honest and frank account. This helped me to understand the problems faced by disabled people and to see all service users as individuals."

## Positively Women

Positively Women is a charity which offers a range of peer support, advice, information and advocacy services for HIV positive women.

"HIV session was inspirational and changed some of my pre-conceptions. It's a service user group that I've never considered working with / for and now I'm interested in learning more to support service users."

## 'Uniting Carers' from 'Dementia UK'

Two speakers, from 'Uniting Carers' from 'Dementia UK' spoke to social work practitioners on the 'Critical Aspects of Working with Adults' module. Practitioners' comments included:

"Relevant to the session. Extremely informative, honest / open and really gave me a strong sense of some of the feelings / things going on for them as carers. Just to stress again how much this brought home their experiences and the isolation, loss and lack of support they experienced."

"Sharing personal experiences. Sharing the impact of their caring role. Sharing their pains and its effects on family relationships."

"Information about the impact of caring on carers."

"Listening to their real life stories / experiences was extremely helpful."



*Members of 'Uniting Carers' from 'Dementia UK' evaluate the process of interviewing prospective social work students*

## Safeguarding Children

Student comments on service user and carer involvement in this module included;

"Their involvement really gave me the opportunity to understand a child's experience of abuse, exploitation and neglect."

"I think it is very useful and important to understand it from the service user's point of view in order to be more effective in practice."

## Challenging ideas and views

The following student comments, from two different modules, illustrate the potential of service user and carer involvement to 'challenge ideas and views'.

"They were very useful and challenged our ideas and views."

"Learning to take a service user's perspective. The Tuesday lecture / seminar series has been great for putting us in touch with the challenges different groups face. It is helping me to develop a more 'empathetic' outlook on life and helped me understand more about my own values and biases."



*Members of the Service User & Carer Network discuss the process for interviewing prospective social work students*

## For further information ....

For further information about service user and carer involvement in the social work programme at London Met, please contact Nora Duckett:

### **Nora Duckett**

Senior Lecturer in Social Work

Phone: 020 7133 5189

Email: [n.duckett@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:n.duckett@londonmet.ac.uk)

### **Photographs**

*The photograph on page 5 was kindly provided by 4Sight. The photographs on pages 4, 7 & 8 were taken by Steve Blunt, and those on pages 1, 2 & 3 by Karen Robinson.*