

SUNNN

Service User/Carer Network Newsletter

Welcome to this issue

The Service User and Carer Network at London Met has gone from strength to strength since the last Newsletter in 2006. There have been a number of new and exciting events and developments. The first one was the success of the 'Promoting Users and Carers in Social Work Education' Conference that took place in January of 2007. This conference, organised and hosted by members of the Network was, initially intended to include users, carers and interested others from London based universities. However, it was attended by over 70 delegates from around the country. Peter Beresford from Brunel University and Shaping our Lives and Gina Tyler from Lincoln University presented their experience of and vision for service user involvement in social work training and practice. Conference delegates also had an opportunity to discuss how they are currently involved and share ideas of how they could be involved in the future. A delegate's account of the event has been included below. Another exciting development is the announcement that funding for a new post of part-time Co-ordinator has been agreed. The aim is for this post to begin in January 2008. Other developments have been in relation to staff. A new staff member, Evelyn



Peter Beresford speaking at the conference. Photo by Steve Blunt

Kerrigan Lebloch, was successful in securing a permanent position and alongside these new beginnings we have seen a few endings. Verrol Liverpool retired from the department in July this year after 15 years teaching. Verrol's leaving RAP is on page 4.

Sharing Experiences

A conference convened on 10th January 2007, in Tower Building, which is one of London Metropolitan University's campuses, opposite Holloway Road tube and close to Arsenal's Emirates football stadium. About 80 delegates were gathered to promote the 'London wide' Participation of Service Users and Carers in Social Work Education, organised by London

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Sharing Experiences

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Metropolitan's staff namely Stephen, Nora, John, Sinclair, Liz, Evelyn and Donna, in tandem with service users and carers namely Anne, John, Pearl, Tom F, Debi, Gaynor and Bob .

On the day, carer, Debi and service user, Bob opened the venture exactly on time and invited delegates to sit at a number of tables to relate their experiences of involvement in the social work degree course.

Next were two guest speakers; Peter Beresford from Brunel University and Shaping Our Lives, and Gina Tyler from Lincoln University. In his address Peter mentioned that at present the UK Government had been lobbied regarding payments for service users and carers without such payments adversely affecting benefits like Income Support. Peter's words were well received.

Around the table, where I was sitting, were a mixture of service users, carers and professionals. One person had travelled from Lincoln, two had experienced mental health problems, one man in his late fifties had a significant hearing loss.

I thought the professional ability of Nora and the expertise of both Bob and Debi were exemplary. They set a high tone for the future. It was interesting to note that while the conference was aimed at London based universities, delegates came from all over the country, highlighting national commitment. On reflection it would have been useful for delegates to hear from a Government minister responsible for social care as well as to hear from social work students on the value of involving service users. It was disappointing not to have delegates from more London based universities. Tom Smith



Bob Walsh chairing the conference
Photo by Steve Blunt

Debi: And the Sunshine

Interview by Tom Smith

I had arranged to meet Debi, one member of London Metropolitan University's Service User and Carer Network, at eleven o'clock at the entrance of Canary Wharf tube station. Not having been there before I was impressed by the architectural splendour around the square. The towering glass-walled structures soared so high I was surprised not to see snow at their tops. At ground level there were multiple unique restaurants, emporiums, expanses of water, and pleasant parks and public spaces.

The Canary Wharf regeneration scheme had certainly cost its developers untold millions of pounds, turning a once run down area of the East End, into a city within the City, a place Londoners are no doubt immensely proud of.

Debi arrived, eager to show me more

The towering glass-walled structures soared so high I was surprised not to see snow at their tops.

of the remarkable site, she took me to explore a high-class shopping precinct on the ground floor of one skyscraper building. Over a curved bridge we walked to an area where warehouses that once contained exotic goods from all over the world, perhaps from the Canary Islands, had been turned into expensive penthouse flats, up market bistros and in one case, interestingly, a 'Museum in Docklands'.

I conducted the interview in an open space in front of a Wetherspoons pub. Debi, an East Londoner, a cockney, in her forties, is an attractive, auburn haired, confident and intelligent lady who lives on the Isle of Dogs near to her parents and sisters. She has a brother who lives in Spain on the Costa-Del-Sol.

In her early twenties Debi met, fell in love and eventually married Harry who was a ship repairing welder; after some time their marriage broke down.

Some years later she met Tony and became his partner. They lived on the fifth floor of a tower block with their two dogs, a German shepherd and a Staffordshire bull terrier. Debi mentioned the lift, which she used to transport herself and the dogs to the street for exercise, was constantly breaking down. There was one incident when she was stuck in the lift with the



dogs for over an hour. The dogs became very fretful and began to fight and Debi was bitten. After this Tony got a job as a caretaker which came with a ground floor flat. The dogs were much happier and so was Debi.

This relationship broke down eventually, Tony moved out and resigned from his caretaker's job and Debi who had been left in the property on her own, was given notice to quit. She appealed but lost on the grounds that she had illegally obtained a council property (through no fault of her own). She had tried to pay the rent but for legal reasons the council refused to accept. After four years of fighting her corner, she was eventually forced to leave her home.

The council refused to offer her alternative accommodation and she was forced into homelessness. After many years of hostels and temporary accommodation she was eventually offered a place, (only because she had been burgled and her new computer was stolen, which she had to continue to pay for on hire purchase), in a grim and gloomy block of flats. The tenants in the new accommodation seemed unpleasant, anti-social layabouts, and gangs used to hang around the pathways. Debi turned the offer down and was homeless once again. The Homeless Persons Unit refused to help because Debi had turned down the one offer permitted for medical reasons (which they ignored). She returned to live with her parents taking with her two budgies, one of which she'd caught in the park. (She no longer had the dogs). Her parents were unhappy about her budgies, because they were very messy. Being a strong and independent woman she found rented accommodation.

Committed to raising cash for the charity 'Help a London Child' she did a sponsored trek through the Namibian Desert. Later she would duplicate that effort by doing a sponsored trek through the green mountains, farmlands and rocky spaces of New Zealand.

Debi's on-going adventures involve volunteering with a UK/USA exchange

programme, which involves working in New York, Manhattan, organised by the Winant Clayton Volunteer Association. For over fifty years the organisation has run a cross-cultural voluntary exchange programme between the two countries. Each year they send a group of UK volunteers to the East Coast of the USA, to do volunteer work in local grass roots communities. Volunteers travel to the UK to undertake similar work. Debi remains involved with the programme and is now the Chair of the Management Committee.

It is a unique experience of living and working in another culture that can be challenging, rewarding and fun. Being part of a small group offers mutual support and is a good opportunity to make friends.

Later on she met her ex-husband Harry again. Once a fit and active man a skilled welder and glass fitter by trade, he had developed breathing problems, in fact he was suffering from emphysema a disease of the lungs.

Now living in a privately rented flat, the caring Debi offered to help, dealing with his day-to-day problems. Organising a home-help service, sometimes cooking him a meal and tidying his place. Ex-husband Harry is a heavy smoker, strong drinker and can be stubborn.

As the interview ended, Debi told me that tomorrow she would be driving to the airport to welcome the American Volunteers, who were arriving as part of the WCVA venture.

I enjoyed the day in the bright sunshine as well as seeing the wonders of the Canary Wharf complex. But our day wasn't over yet, Debi suggested that she show me where she, her sisters, her parents and (ex) Harry had lived; as well as showing me the gloomy block of flats the council had offered some years

before.

We descended to the bowels of the earth to an underground car park where we climbed into her car, a Rover. I said to Debi as we drove along, why don't you advertise yourself to do guided tours around the Isle of Dogs. She smiled pointing out the scenes of the Area she was so fond of.

During the tour I began to understand it was not just the Canary Wharf site that had benefited from regeneration, the process was more widespread than that. On nearly every street there were brand new buildings, shops, expensive hotels and thriving businesses.

Before the tour ended, as we were approaching a roundabout, I was astonished to see a unique set of traffic lights standing at its centre. Debi told me the locals call this the 'Traffic Light Tree'. This 'tree' contained multiple sets of traffic light assemblies, all showing in sequence, red, amber and green, all positioned and mounted branch-like, around the trunk like a support column!

We stopped at the DLR Island Garden Train Station. I thanked Debi for an interesting day, a day when hopefully we got to know each other a bit better. I shook her hand and wished her well as she drove away.

Was I now putting my life in my hands intending to board a driverless train, which would take me to the Northern line, to be transported home? In came the train, I boarded, only to discover that like the ordinary train, the DLR also has problems, the train would not travel all the way to its declared destination; there were signal problems. The joys of travelling by London Transport! I urge every reader to visit the Canary Wharf complex; I guarantee they too will be overwhelmed by the splendour



Debi Grainger presenting the social work conference in 2007. Photo by Steve Blunt

of what they see.

In conclusion, during the interview Debi seemed relaxed and at ease as she told me about some of the good and sad events in her life. She was optimistic and extremely positive in her outlook, and exceedingly proud of her East End Isle of Dogs.

Though I sometimes felt swamped by the amount of details she told me, I have done my best to transcribe it correctly. One thing I failed to mention is that Debi has thoughts of becoming an actual Social Worker, but is hesitant to commit herself to the long-term educational process.

My thanks and respect to Debi.

Tom Smith

So you think you know about advocacy ? Social workers often have to advocate for service users. Here's one model of understanding advocacy.



(Taken from *Power Tools* (1998) by Alan Leader and Kate Crosby, published by Pavilion Publishing.)

Verrol's leaving RAP

Verrol Liverpool left London Met after more than 15 years of teaching on the social work course. He recited this RAP during his leaving dinner.

Chorus

A time to born (barn)
A time to mourn (marn)
A time to move on (aan)

Goodbye Malcolm Payne
You are such a pain
Move over Coulshed and Orme (Arm)
Wake up Neil Thompson, to the new dawn (darn)

Chorus

Want to tell you a little story
'Bout a publisher called Jessica Kingsley
Insist on writing to me as Dr Liverpool
Never had a PHD, but that's cool

Chorus

Seen a lot of stuff come and leave
Thought the next person would be Steve
Can understand how Richard feel
Got to tell him about an ex-staff I met
Who told me there is life after London Met

Chorus

Let me list the things I will miss
Such as 'simulacrum' explained by Demetris
Anthony's lectures on 'themes and issues'
I cannot resist
What about John Barraclough going on about anti-oppressive practice
And Stephen Fox with his SWOT analysis
Those names I have left out I do not mean to dismiss

Chorus

Had some good times at London Met
Seen some students I'll never forget
Like the grateful Abiola from Lagos Nigeria
Whose words I'll always remember
'You are my father, you are not my tutor'
Or that other student I'll call Joy
Who instead of 'Carl' in Carl Rogers, wrote 'Roy'

Chorus

Wish DASS and all my colleagues the best
Will be thinking of you and all the rest
Always remember number 7 when posting a letter
And don't forget to let your students know they matter

Chorus

Verrol Liverpool July 2007

An introduction to Jamaican patois

Jamaican is an English-African Creole language. The Jamaican language developed in the 17th century, when slaves from West and Central Africa were exposed to, learned and nativized forms of English. London has a significant Jamaican speaking community and of the 34,000 students currently enrolled at LMU, 4,000 are international students from approximately 150 countries including from Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, St Lucia, Guyana and St Vincent, along with small numbers of students from other Caribbean islands.

(For some readers it might help with the pronunciation of Verrol's poem).

Aan - on	irie - nice, right, cool
Bandooloo - dishonest or dishonesty	Jamdung - Jamaica
Blouse an skirt - an exclamation similar to "Wow"	kiss mi neckback - a term used in disbelief. Similar to "I can't believe it".
Breddah - brother	Labrish - idle chat
Buss - burst, break broke	Lyad - a liar
Bwoy - boy	Marnin - morning
chi-chi man - a gay man	Mauger - thin
chupid - Stupid	Nuff - plenty
Craven - craving, greedy, avaricious	nyam - eat greedily
Dawta - daughter, used by many men to refer to women	obeah - a brand of witchcraft practiced in Jamaica
Deh deh - is there	oomahn - woman
Dem - them	pickney - child
Diss - disrespect	rathid - a term used in surprise, similar to Ooh Noo
duppy - ghost	screw - a frown of displeasure, a scowl
dutty - dirty	spwoil - spoil
ebery - every	smody - somebody
easy nuh -chill out	tan so - be that way
faas - meddlesome, interfering	vex - upset, angry
fayvah - resemble	whappen - what's happening, what's up, a greeting
fe yuh - for you	wha ah gwan – what's going on
furdah - further	yahso - right here
Gal - girl	yute - youth
gi-im - given him	
gravelicious - being greedy	
gwan - go on	

Adapted from the Jamaican online dictionary <http://www.jamaicans.com/dictionary/M>

Poetry corner

Beautiful love

Blue eye ebony looks reveal loves identity stance
 In ivory towers emerald golden glance
 Kings and queens dance
 In tune
 Sing princes and princesses in sunshine and rain
 Clustered grapes bosom bless
 Beautiful love
 Enlightened species laughter isn't late?
 Antique smiles hello diamond
 Unlearned your hate
 Children's talent way beyond
 Of whom finery coloured art
 Unique love melts hearts
 Sail calm romance
 Stars and planets the rainbow clue
 Time is life's lover
 Beautiful Love
Joshua Hyszachar

Freedom to speak

The power, the sound, the word
 Individual rights to self determination must be heard
 The word can not burden you, the liberty of others
 The truth may be an offence to sisters and brothers
 But it is not against the law of life confession
 Yet your talent is not without my permission
 Word is wind blow is unkind strategy
 Compliment and complain opposite force of the same energy
 What does not cost life, does not deserve death
 The law of life must be respected with faith
 Ignorance of the law of life forgives no one!
Joshua Hyszachar

What are We?

What do you see when you see me?
 Do you see incapacity —
 The twitches and twisted hips
 And the spit hanging from my lips?
 What do you see when you see me?
 Do you see possibility?
 Something of yourself—or something else?
 Tell me what you see.
 What do you feel when you face me?
 Pity?
 Are you frightened or disgusted?
 Embarrassed? Amazed?
 Would you swap place with me?
 What's 'real'?—what's 'empathy'?
 Tell me—what you feel
 When we're face-to-face.
 Will you accept me, as I am —
 As I accept myself?
 Do you accept all that you are?
 Can you find the bit of you in me
 And the bit of me in you?
 What's my worth—my standing
 My contribution? Am I anything to you,
 Or are we both nothing,
 You and I?

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Only joking.....only joking.....



Clare in the Community , by: Harry Venning. Reproduced with kind permission

The last word...

■ Over the spring and summer 2007 a number of new members joined the Network. Rosie, Joanne, Colm and Noel. There are also a number of other people interested in joining.

■ Members of the User and Carer Network and teaching staff met together in September 2007 to participate in training with Barnardo's Youth Participation Project. One aim of this event was to think about how more young people can be involved in teaching on the social work degree. Initial feedback from the event has been very positive.

■ In August Network members met with Pam Hutton, a service user who is also the Co-ordinator of the service user and carer involvement initiative at Havering College. Pam talked about her work and also outlined some of the complications of the benefits system and how benefits payments can be affected by additional earnings.

■ Members were also involved in a process looking at what is taught on the social work course at London Met and where and how service users and carers can become more involved in teaching and learning. A lot of really helpful suggestions and ideas were discussed.

■ Service User and Carer Participation in Social Work is a book published by Learning Matters in 2007. Available at : www.learningmatters.co.uk/title.asp?myBid=420

■ Donna Dustin, Liz Davies and Nora Duckett have had books published in 2007 and in 2008. Donna's book *The McDonaldization of Social Work* is published by Ashgate.

Liz and Nora's book *Proactive Child Protection and Social Work* is published by Learning Matters

■ Service users have been designing a Service User and Carer Post Qualifying Module. Sinclair Coward has been leading on this and more information about the module's at <https://intranet.londonmet.ac.uk/prog-plan/module-catalogue/3/sw/sw3012.cfm> or contact Sinclair Coward at: s.coward@londonmet.ac.uk

■ In the Autumn semester 2008 a partnership grew between LMU and a service user organisation called MELLOW. Mellow are part of East London NHS Foundation Trust and they aim to address factors that influence the mental health of young African and Caribbean men and their experience of mental health services.

■ Karen Robinson was appointed Service User and Carer Co-ordinator in January 2008 and has been working hard on developing the payments policy. This is vital work as the policy aims to ensure that no individual will be financially at risk for their contribution to social work teaching and learning at LMU. LMU have commissioned Milton Keynes Citizens Advice Bureau to provide a dedicated helpline for service users and carers involved with the social work section at LMU. Karen Robinson introduces herself below.

■ On 4th July 2009 a conference entitled 'Social Work: Finding a Voice' is taking place at the Graduate Centre on Holloway Road. It is being organised by the London Regional Social Work Action Network (SWAN). For more details contact: Suzanne Cooper Tel: 020 7233 5242 or go to: www.londonmet.ac.uk/depts/dass/events/swan-conference.cfm Concessions are available.

■ Many thanks to Tom Smith and Debi Grainger for their hard work on this edition of the Newsletter.



Karen introduces herself

I am the Service User and Carer Co-ordinator in the social work section at London Met. This is a new post which started in January 2008. My role is to co-ordinate the involvement of service users and carers in the selection, teaching and assessment of social work students, both on the degree course and on post-qualifying courses. I work at LMU 3 days a week.

I became interested in the involvement of service users and carers in professional education, and in research, as a result of my own experience of accessing the mental health service. I have had obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) all my adult life but delayed 24 years before seeking help. My initial experiences going through the mental health system were often distressing. However, over the last five years I have had specialist cognitive behavioural therapy for OCD, which has proved completely life-changing.

I decided to train as a service user researcher and studied for an MSc in Mental Health Services Research. I have also been involved in the education of professionals, from a service user perspective, and have given feedback on research proposals. I try to draw on this experience in the course of my work at London Met.

Over the last 18 months in the post I have met many members of the Service User and Carer Network at London Met, and learnt about their work over many years. As the post was a new one I have spent quite a lot of time doing infrastructure tasks including helping to develop the university policy for paying and reimbursing service users and carers. I anticipate that the role will become a more outgoing one this coming academic year! Thank you to everyone for their practical and emotional support as I found my feet!

Social work practice with children and adults is being reviewed by a Government appointed Task Force. The Task Force has been consulting with practitioners, service users and other stakeholders and will be reporting in the Autumn 2009.

If you have any related announcements and updates that can be included in the next issue please contact Karen Robinson on the contact details below.

For more information about the Service User and Carer Network at LMU please contact: Karen Robinson Tel: 020 7133 5222. Email: K.Robinson@londonmet.ac.uk or write to her at: London Metropolitan University, Department of Applied Social Sciences, (DASS) Ladbrooke House, 62-66 Highbury Grove, London N5 2AD. The service user and carer website can be found at : www.londonmet.ac.uk/dass/serviceusers