

Meeting on 17 August between Wandsworth Social Workers and Voluntary Groups

This was convened by the Information section of ADSS to help social workers know more about the services and activities run by voluntary groups in Wandsworth.

It was attended by 16 social workers including 3 or 4 information staff and 16 representatives of voluntary groups in Wandsworth. We were sitting around 4 mixed tables and after introductions about the purpose we had to have 3 minute chats to several people in the room getting to know them. I spoke to a social worker in Battersea, a mental health social worker and a new person at Alzheimers.

Gathered into one meeting again each person had to introduce themselves and explain what their job entailed or for voluntary groups what their group did.

Next we had table discussions about there could be better information sharing and particularly information on voluntary group activities for social workers where there is a high turnover and, I think, at present 14 % agency workers. At my table we had people from Carers Centre, OP Forum, Voiceability(advocacy for people under sections of the Mental Health Act), Thrive, two social workers and one information person. We discussed induction and training which the ADSS staff thought could be improved by information about voluntary groups, on one page only suggested, and visits to voluntary groups. Visits would be good for existing staff as well as new ones. The social workers said they sometimes think about it but find it difficult to make the time although one suggested doing it together with new staff as part of their induction. Social workers do not usually see the Forum newsletter and we should think about how we might get it to a place where they would see it. The information person said the former ACIS site had been updated and should be a useful resource now www.careplace

A second discussion session was on co-production. There is already a co-production group, so far two meetings, which Su attends. The information people were keen on doing life stories for clients. I told them about histories that had been done in the past by Age Concern and Furzedown project and some published books, eg Alice from Tooting. One social worker was indignant that it seemed to be suggesting that they did not find out the story of their client's life which he said he always did, trying to find ways of getting the client animated about something. Others agreed clients were nervous and suspicious about having a social worker interviewing them.

Lilias Gillies

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