

Psychology Service User Involvement Group (PSUIG) Newsletter

Issue 5 Autumn 2013

Welcome to the fifth edition of the Psychology Service User Involvement Group (PSUIG) Newsletter. PSUIG aims to promote high quality, recovery focused user involvement in psychology services throughout the Trust. This newsletter has been developed to keep you up-to-date with innovative involvement activities and projects taking place within the Trust. In each edition we will showcase a project that represents an inspiring example of service user involvement, in addition to other related activities taking place around the Trust. If you would like to contribute to future newsletters, please email either:

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More information about PSUIG can be found on the intranet here:

<http://sites.intranet.slam.nhs.uk/psychology/sui>

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The Tree of Life Workshops on the Wards Project

The Hopes of the Project – *'The Branches of the Tree of Life'*

The aim of this project is to implement and evaluate the Tree of Life approach in the form of a 2-hour workshop to all 16 adult acute mental health wards in SLAM over 2 years. We hope to use it as a multicultural tool to promote the recovery approach to mental health on inpatient wards by building more positive and collaborative relationships between staff and service users. This will be measured by asking staff and service users to complete questionnaires that explore their experiences of the workshop and how it has affected their relationships with each other and their attitudes to recovery. The development of the relationship between staff and service users could lead to improved engagement with mental health services and foster a greater sense of recovery for all involved in the care of an individual. Another key element of the project is the involvement of service users trained to facilitate the Tree of Life workshops on the wards through links to community voluntary organisations.



Background – *'The Roots of the Tree of Life'*

The Tree of Life is an approach, based on narrative therapy, that focuses on strengths, culture, heritage and hope. The approach uses a tree as a metaphor for someone's life; different parts of the tree represent different aspects of an individual's life. For example, the roots are about where we come from both physically and in terms of the values and commitments that influence us, the trunk represents our skills and resources, and the branches our hopes and dreams. It involves drawing a tree and writing about the parts described above. The trees are then put together on a wall to make a forest and we comment on everybody's strengths and resources as a group.

'The Ground (work) of the Tree of Life'

A pilot project was carried out at Lambeth Hospital in 2012. 4 workshops took place on 3 different wards and 24 service users and 9 members of staff participated in the workshops. Of the 24 service users, 14 different ethnicities were reported, with 4 % describing themselves as 'White British'. In addition, few of the service users had any previous experience of psychological therapies, thus demonstrating a good level of engagement from a very diverse ethnic group.

Staff and service users were asked for qualitative feedback following the workshops and one of the themes that stuck out was on reconnecting to roots 'I learned about other peoples' origins', 'it took me back to my roots' and 'it helped me write a different story about my root of life'. The staff responses to what they learned from the workshop were very positive and inspiring 'I feel I really got to know the patients in more depth outside of my HCA role, which was definitely enjoyable' and 'it gives deeper understanding of the patient view of themselves'. The pilot workshops that were carried out at Lambeth Hospital were very well received and ward team leaders have endorsed the approach stating their approval of its continued implementation across SLAM.

Significant people Involved – **'The Leaves of the Tree of Life'**

Tree of Life workshops have been running in the Lambeth community of SLAM since January 2011. We have made links with voluntary organisations such as Missing Link and Peckham Befrienders as part of the recruitment for the project and have already trained 10 service users from the community to co-facilitate Tree of Life workshops on the inpatient wards. These Tree of Life facilitators will also be part of the promotion and evaluation of the project by helping to present the project and results to wards and service leaders. This has the added value of contributing to the personal recovery and skills portfolio of the service users involved.

Julie Fraser &
Adrian Webster

Focus Group Croydon Early Intervention Team (COAST)

It is important that service users receive the best possible experience and care, and a good way of helping to improve this is through gaining feedback from those who use our service. We therefore ran a focus group at COAST to enable us to gather information on what service users really thought, how it was helpful for them and what did not work, so that we could make changes where possible.

Setting up a focus group involved many steps, some of which were quite challenging. Gaining approval from the research panel was time consuming and then recruiting a service user consultant also proved problematic, however Annie Jordan fortunately joined the project. In order to take on this role Annie had to be placed on the service user involvement register, which involved obtaining a reference and she had to take focus group training. The involvement register offers focus group training, which is really helpful, although as there is only enough demand for two sessions a year, there is likely to be a delay.

We thought the main challenges were behind us, but recruiting participants for the focus group also proved difficult. An invitation letter detailing the nature of the group, date, time and venue was distributed to the entire caseload at COAST, however only two were able to make it due to various reasons such as childcare commitments, other appointments and prior engagements, and some were not interested. Suggestions for aiding recruitment may be to get care co-ordinators involved, asking them to speak with their clients so they are aware prior to being contacted. As the attendance was small, it was decided to keep the focus group less formal, although still following the format of a semi-structured interview. Annie's input as service user facilitator was very helpful, as she was able to facilitate from a position of lived experience. This really added to the project and we would recommend to others that they involve service users in this way. Annie's feedback was that she enjoyed the focus group, felt part of the team, and that it is great experience for service users and something we should encourage our clients to do as part of their recovery.

The focus group was run by Annie, Rhian and Steven. Annie is a former COAST service user.

The main topics related to participants experiences of using the team, both positive and negative; relationships with professionals; activities on offer; facilities at Westways Resource Centre; medication and diagnosis and other treatments.

Overall, the feedback about care received was positive. Focus group participants spoke highly of the care team and of mental health services in general. In terms of activities available to our clients, the overall consensus was that they do not appeal to their interests. Alternatives to the activities were to have more of a focus on employment and finances. Possible suggestions include social skills training, computer classes etc. A spirituality group such as yoga was also mentioned. Participants felt that their diagnoses were explained thoroughly. They did however ask for more interaction with the care team to discuss medication and prognosis in more detail. The focus group seem to have an awareness of a range of other treatments aside from medication.

In conclusion, people were really pleased with the service they received. Comments were predominantly positive. It is important to bear this in mind, as service users and carers usually give us feedback only when they have concerns and complaints and this does not reflect the majority of clients who are satisfied with the service and do not usually have the opportunity to feed this back.

Rhian Tait, Assistant Psychologist
Annie Jordan, Service User Consultant
Steven Livingstone, Clinical Psychologist

PSUIG AWARDS 2013

Have you led a project that involves service users? Are you involved in a project you want to shout about?

PSUIG (The Psychology Service User Involvement Group) announces its call for nominations for the 2013 Involvement Awards.

Each year PSUIG awards an exemplary team a cash prize of £200 to spend on their project and a framed certificate, as well as the opportunity to share their work through an article in the PSUIG newsletter.

Service users judge each nominated project on:

- The difference it has made to the service or to learning about involvement techniques
- The depth and breadth of user involvement implicit in the project's design and execution
- The way the project has been evaluated and
- The extent of innovation displayed

This year we are especially interested in projects that articulate compassion and how it can be played out in our relationships with each other (staff and service users alike). Please contact emma.harding@slam.nhs.uk or matthew.richardson@slam.nhs.uk for a nomination form. We accept self-nominations and entries from service users are particularly welcome.

The winner and runners-up are announced at the Trust Psychology Conference. Entries should be received by 18th October.