

Westminster Homeless Health Action Group Meeting Minutes

Tuesday 2nd October, 10am – 12pm

Venue: 29 Francis Street

Attendees: 21

Victoria Aseervatham (Chair)

WCC Rough Sleeping Commissioner

Lucy Iodo (minute taker)

St Mungo's HHCP health promotion volunteer

SERVICE PRESENTATIONS

Victoria Aseervatham commenced the meeting by leading the round table introduction of attendees.

1. **Alison Fraser from the Oral Health Promotion Team-NHS**

Alison spoke about improving the oral health of particularly the homeless in a walk in Medical Centre at 13 Great Chapel Street London. This was explained with diagrams of different tooth and gum diseases. She explains that homelessness causes dental ill health with poverty and bad nutrition as the leading factors. She added that visits to the dentist is more than just teeth and gums, as general health is all inter-connected. The service works with second year dental therapy students who teach and provide toothbrushes and advice to patients to be mouth aware with information packs and leaflets on brushing and overall dental care.

They promote overall dental care and treatment, including crowns and dentures; made and fitted (cosmetic not included). Anyone can be seen irrespective of their nationality status. They also carry out informal oral health sessions and staff training in hostels aiming at reducing phobias associated with dental care amongst the homeless. Patients are signposted to other services such as quit smoking services depending on their need. The service is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

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2. Victoria Aseervatham (WCC Rough Sleeping Commissioner) and Natalie Isala (clinical psychologist)

They gave a brief overview on what PIE is and how it can be implemented in homeless services. Also the input of creating a Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE) in the client's journey of recovery. She explained that PIE is a positive approach that promotes the psychological and social elements, reconsidering individuals' past experiences (which in some cases are traumatic), identity, relationships, and engaging with them gradually in order to understand their world. PIE informal groups are undertaken in a more homely physical environment. Staffs are presently receiving PIE training in hostels to helpfully respond to clients.

To understand the PIE concept, two great places to start are this toolkit and PIE Link:

<https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Creating%20a%20Psychologically%20Informed%20Environment%20-%202015.pdf>

<http://pielink.net/>

3. Louise Simonson (service manager for Street Buddies Westminster from Riverside Care and Support)

Louise spoke about the role of volunteers in supporting clients in her service. She explains that the 'Street Buddies' is a pathway to employment for homeless clients who are stable, ready and in a position to provide support to other clients. The volunteers are able and more likely to gain trust from homeless persons, having been homeless themselves. She added that providing Peer Support to others turns their negative experience into a skill, promotes their identity and confidence within a team of people who have had similar experience. Homeless persons are engaged in a friendlier environment such as McDonalds', where they could talk freely over a cup of coffee. Assessments are flexible in terms of location. Street Buddies work with individuals who have had challenging experiences (some traumatic), live in uncertainty, distrust and some do not claim benefits.

She added that use of Street Buddies who have been in same situation makes the homeless person less conscious. The service is founded on compassion and non-judgemental. With the application of PIE and trauma informed care, the service works more with intuition in a safe way via round table discussion. The service currently has about 10 volunteers. Volunteer development depends on the volunteer needs which are aimed at building their confidence. Examples are First aid and IT course.

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Date of next meeting: 4th December 2018