

VOLUNTEERS' NEWSLETTER

August 2008

Please welcome....

...Natasha Roberts at the Women's Group and Creative writing, and Louis Assenally as a volunteer trainer.

Also, we are delighted to welcome back Timothy Norvell at Rainbow.

Farewell and thanks

Carmen Gray is taking a short break until Christmas time.

It was with great regret that I received Maureen Skwara's resignation - she is unable to drive in the dark and therefore decided it was time to stop her work at the Rainbow. Thank you Maureen for your faithful service.

Congratulations to Claudia James on her new job but we will miss her at the Creative Writing group.

In Memoriam

We were all very sad to hear of the death of Joan Tompkins.

Joan was our Honorary Treasurer for about six years until she retired from the role in March 2006 as her health deteriorated.

We owe Joan a great debt of gratitude for all her hard work in keeping the Association on the financial straight and narrow.

Creative Workshops

Many of you will know that Jean Wallace, one of our Creative Writing facilitators, has unfortunately been unwell since April. She is making good progress and hopes to return soon. Graham Buchan is covering for her and Margaret Bookless has agreed to do some sessions.

The art continues to attract members.

I would keen to hear from any volunteers who would be interested in leading the Well-Being group when I am not available and perhaps supporting it with me when I am.

Brighton Trip

There was a very successful outing to Brighton on 19th July. Normally most people who come are self-supporting but this year we had four people who needed a great deal of support.

If this happens again then we may need more formalised volunteer support for the outing.

Trustees

So that we can get back into the correct rhythm of AGMs, we will hold the AGM for the year 2007-08 on 5th November 2008 at St Mildred's.

It will be a very low-key event again as we had our 20th birthday celebration on 31st May. We had a great day and thanks to all who came.

Support Group

Apologies that I have not written up the last Support Group - I hope to get round to it eventually!

Honorary Treasurer

We would be most grateful to anyone who is willing to take on this role. It does not involve day-to-day book-keeping but rather a capacity to oversee the financial position of the Association. Please call the office if you feel you can help.

Andrew and I are revamping our training course. We have been doing the same training for many years and wish to make sure that what we do is more relevant. Thanks to Louis Assenally for his assistance with this. The training course should be ready for delivery in the New Year and we hope that those who have started volunteering with us recently will be able to attend.

Quiet Day

Saturday 27th September at St. Mary, Farleigh.
To book your place please call Andrew on 020-3228-4361

Social Inclusion Recommissioning

The Trustees will be discussing the following at their next meeting.

The PCT/SS commissioning team have been working on plans for a Social Inclusion Service which meets the needs of service users and is in line with Government guidance.

The approach of Government, ie. Department of Health, can be summarised as encouraging services to be outward-looking and facilitating individuals to participate in mainstream activities rather than in specialist mental health settings.

To this end the commissioners in Croydon intend to establish a Bridge-building Service, located within the CMHTs, and a Community Development Worker. The former will work with service users to help them access the mainstream services whilst the Community Development Worker will work with colleagues, leisure centres, etc. to enable them to understand the needs of mental health service users.

There will also be a Social Network Service located, it appears, at the Fairfield Club, which will further the social inclusion needs of individuals. The exact difference between the work of the Bridge-builders and the Social Network Service is a little difficult to work out.

There will be a range of employment services commissioned from Mind and Status it seems, using the individual place and support (IPS) employment service model.

There is an intention to have a Volunteering and Befriending service – they seem wedded to the idea that one organisation should provide both services.

The Drop-Ins are our real area of interest as an organisation although until we see the detail of the specification we will not really know how much we will want to be involved. The idea is to have six Drop-Ins services. Three will be based on the existing Kingfisher Association, Purley User Group and Thornton Heath User Group. Three will be new – one general, one for BME and one for older people.

Our own Drop-Ins are unaffected by these changes.

At the time of writing – 4th August – there is no specific detail about times or locations for these services. It is clear that user involvement in the running of the Drop-Ins is required but that staffing will also be available.

We need to consider how we will respond when the specifications are made public and the degree to which we would like to participate in partnership work with Mind in Croydon. Assuming that the specifications are not available before our meeting, I believe the Trustees should make some decisions about how we should proceed when they *are* published.

Trustees will be pleased to know that all individuals affected by the changes (ie. the people currently attending Lantern Hall and Fairfield Club) will be given individual assessments, to be carried out by independent people employed for that purpose.

The timescale is that the formal tendering process begins in September, with contracts awarded by December and start up in January 2009. The advertisement asking for expressions of interest should appear in the national press in August.

We obviously need to think very carefully about the implications for us of involvement in further work in terms of the size and shape of our organisation. I have suggested that our primary interest will be in Drop-Ins but Volunteering and Befriending may also be of interest.

The time scales are tight so we need to be prepared.

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■ **Sue Albery will be on holiday for the first two weeks in September. In case of** ■
■ **concern please contact Andrew Wilson on 020 3228 4361** ■
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