



Being Alongside/APCMH

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Action Sheet: *Setting Up a Drop-In*

TRAINING is vital and begins to equip volunteers for their role so that their confidence can help create a relaxed, welcoming and secure atmosphere for those who will come.

HELPERS who reflect the variety of backgrounds and traditions that members come from and can build links between individuals and groups who recognise and value the spiritual dimension of life. Ratio of about 1 volunteer to 5 members seems to work best.

ETHOS - work to avoid a 'them' and 'us'. How can you involve members? Need to work towards good mental health for ourselves as well as others. Consider how we create places which reflect the core values of the Association; warm, welcoming, safe environments where people choose to come.

DEVELOPMENT - hesitant starts are common; the group will learn, grow and develop it's own identity. Successful groups have started in a gentle and hesitant way. Small may be beautiful!

RULES — a few basic guidelines drawn up by everyone can help people feel more secure and know what to expect, (e.g. Alcohol and non-prescription drugs free, lending money, smoking, confidentiality, boundaries etc) Based on BA / APCMH core values. (*see our leaflet*)

ORGANISATION —how will you involve users in this? Their opinions are essential if we are to meet the needs of those who come. Needs a small committee /rota organiser? Ideally volunteers will be on a rota. Once every 3-4 weeks is a long term sustainable commitment for most people.

POUNDS AND PENNIES! - how much will it cost to run? Funding from - Local Authority grant, donations, fund-raising etc? Room provided by local church community? Small charge for tea/coffee from members helps dignity and self respect.

INVOLVEMENT — and a say for everyone. Doing things with people rather than doing things for them encourages a more equal relationship. We do not need to be busy to be involved - sometimes just another presence is all that's required.

NEEDS — is there a need in your area for an BA / apcmh drop-in, which will be different in essence from other groups in your area? A place where people can just BE together - valued for who they are, rather than what they do.

SUPPORT - how can this be provided to volunteers? Perhaps a local Chaplain or mental health worker could run a regular support group where any problems could be shared as a team. Volunteers need to know who they can turn to for support, if need be.

ACTION / TIPS

Form Steering Group

A few people may come forward from an awareness raising meeting. Recruit from church /other faith groups: Community Health Council, Volunteer Bureaus, user forums, mental health resource centres, newspaper articles or letters, library. _ Contact Mental Health or hospital Chaplain. Affiliate to BA?

Set up committee:

Steering group to appoint a committee of Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and 6 - 9 others. Should include at least 2 mental health service users.

Budget and funding

Research possibilities: Cost of venue a room? Refreshments, training for volunteers, advertising, stationery /postage costs. Fund raising? Create a year's budget and research possible sources of funds.

Establish the need:

What else is happening in your area? Talk to people in local group homes, resource centres, and other voluntary groups. What is needed and at what times and where?

Recruit volunteers:

Advertise in libraries, local volunteer bureau, User groups, local churches and faith communities, Resource Centres, talk to groups. Write a letter to the local paper. Ask people - and ask them to ask other people! Word of mouth is the best advert. What are you looking for in a volunteer? Make time commitment clear.

Arrange Training Course:

Ideally this should give information about local services, help people to look at attitudes and assumptions, develop listening and group-work skills and consider the place of spiritual needs and resources within mental health. By using an experiential approach participants are involved in their own learning and develop sensitivity to group needs. Mental health practitioners can be asked to lead different sessions.

Find a venue. What day/time?

Try for: Warm, comfortable venue on good public transport routes. Is the building / place easily identifiable ? Are there refreshment facilities (other food being served involves strict food hygiene regulations) ? Room size? Size for 20-30 seems about right. Smoking area? Rent? Who contributes?

Check Health & Safety:

Access to & use of fire extinguishers: Do volunteers know how? Fire exits? Blocked? Are kitchen facilities clean and hygienic? Toilets - adequate and clean? 999 & key phone numbers? Is there a mental health crisis response number, MH Chaplaincy or a link with local psychiatric hospital or resource centre?

Advertise for members:

How will potential drop-in users find out about it? Try fliers in Doctors surgeries, libraries, psychiatric hospitals. Mental Health Resource Centres, other voluntary agencies, SANELINE, MIND info line, NSF contact line, from CPNs, Psychiatrists, Social Workers, ministers of religion - anywhere that people might pick up information. Be aware of equal opportunities issues - how will you welcome people from all sections of the community?

Organise rota:

No less than 2 volunteers on at any time. Ratio of approx 1 volunteer to 5 members is recommended. One person to take the responsibility for drawing up a rota and sending it out. Will one person take responsibility for the evening - opening and locking up, buying refreshments? Share the jobs as a team. Volunteers take responsibility for being there themselves or finding someone to cover for them. Where does the buck stop?

Support Groups:

Confidentiality and boundary issues e.g. not meeting individuals outside the group, exchanging phone numbers etc. Practical problems shared as a team. 12 or 6 times a year - one hour session? Selecting someone with experience to run it?