



***Being Alongside* / APCMH**

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Registered Charity No 1081642 Limited Company
No.3957730

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Action Sheet: *Setting Up a Training Course*

Topics. It is important to relate the topics to the aim of the course and the relevant target group. What is it that you want people to know and learn? Then find speakers.

Recruit speakers who know their subject and are also able to put it across. Tell them the number of people and the type and purpose of the group. Are flipchart, pens, paper etc. needed? Suggest time for information giving as well as some activity, and a break.

Advertising is very important in attracting people to your course. The main points need to be communicated quickly and clearly and in a way that grabs attention.

Information needs to be communicated in ways that everyone understands. Beware of "jargon" and abbreviations that can be divisive and leave some people feeling lost or stupid.

Non-judgemental It is important to promote a non-judgemental atmosphere where people can feel safe to explore new ideas. Setting some group "rules" at the start can help. What do group members need from the group?

Inclusive language is vital. We all have mental health needs; it is not about "them" and "us". Gently challenge comments about "them" and what "they" do that promote stigma.

Need to explore pastoral care. What do we mean by pastoral care? People organising the course need to be good role models in valuing and respecting those who join.

Group work is important in learning to work as a team, recognising others and our own strengths and weaknesses and understanding ourselves and our roles in groups better.

Co-ordinator for the course helps hold things together and can be referral point for enquiries. Could also host each session or could be another person with experience of group work.

Organisation is important in promoting your message. If everything is disorganised and unprepared people may lose interest and become bored and critical.

Understanding mental health as a continuum is an important concept as is understanding the differences between mental health difficulties and learning disability.

Recouping costs may be done in various ways. A Church or agency might donate use of a room. Charge for the course? Ask for donations? Fundraising? Local Authority grant?

Spiritual needs are something we all have. What are they? How do we meet our own? How do they relate to mental health? How do we ensure they are not neglected?

Experiential learning mat involves participants and helps them to think through issues will aid real learning and personal development. Role plays, case studies, working together on group tasks, practising listening and responding are all useful ways to do this.

ACTION / TIPS

Form Planning Group: *Is there one person who can co-ordinate the course? Maybe a mental health professional or local mental health Chaplain? Involve people with personal experience. Maybe invite someone from Community Health Council, local Voluntary Action group, local Church representative etc.*

What is the aim of the Course? *To train volunteers for a drop-in or one to one befriending? To provide more information about mental health to pastoral workers? To give further training on specific issues to existing volunteers? What do you want people to learn?*

Plan the Course: *Title? Topics could include - Information - what is mental illness? What are its effects? Professional m h workers - the teams and their roles. Developing skills - listening, confidentiality, maintaining boundaries in groups, understanding spiritual needs. Role of a volunteer - befriender? drop in worker? Health and safety? Dealing with difficult situations?'*

Finding speakers or leaders: *A person with personal experience, a Chaplain, a Psychiatrist or Psychologist, a CPN, a Project Worker from a day or Resource Centre, a local priest or minister, a carer or befriender. Local mh organisations may suggest people, B.A. may be able to suggest contact people.*

Venue and considerations: *How many people? Size of room. Availability of refreshments. How many sessions? How long? What time of day? Consider your target group. Easily accessible? On a bus route? Car parking?*

Who is it for? *Anybody? To recruit volunteers for a particular project? Specifically targeted at religious or faith groups? Will you charge for the course or will it be free?*

How will you advertise? *Volunteer Bureau? In Churches and other faith communities? Library? Leaflets and fliers? Local newspaper? Consider the timing of publicity. Word of mouth? How do you attract attention? Title? How and where can you target the kind of people that you are trying to recruit?*

Budget and funding? *How will you recoup any costs or expenditure?*

Registration process: *Will participants need to complete a form to register or let someone know they are coming or can anyone turn up? Do you expect commitment to a certain number of sessions?. This may depend on how the course is funded.*

Coffee rota: *Will you serve tea and coffee in the break? Social times allow participants to share and consolidate information and experience. If so, who will make it?*

Helping the group gel: *A good facilitator or co-ordinator is required. Keep speakers presentations short. Make time and opportunity for small group work and shared experience. Value contributions and respect course members. Understanding ourselves helps us to understand others. Expect differing personal agenda and allow space. Be flexible.*

Course evaluation: *if the course is for "would be" volunteers, will there be a selection or vetting process? How will you know what has been successful and what might need to be changed for another time? How can you value achievement and commitment?*