



'Back on My Feet'

The Story

This is a story about how a group of residents, working to recover from drug and substance misuse at King George hostel in Westminster, came together with staff and consultants from 'Appreciating People' to co-create new ways of thinking about their lives and the ways they wished to travel forward.

The intention was to:

- ✓ support hostel residents to develop resilience as they take their next steps
- ✓ set up small communities of peer led support
- ✓ enable future residents to anchor the newer ones through peer led groups

The work began with a 3 day workshop with residents and staff held between 20 & 22nd July 2010 where participants conducted an 'appreciative inquiry', learning about their best strengths and aspirations for the future and creating new ways to make them happen.



"The workshop was very well structured for the 3 days with the entire team going through a journey of self realization by exploring the nuances geared towards self actualization. The atmosphere was congenial and generative hence engendered lots of positivity. The engagement levels was very high and free flowing with all the participants making an attempt to get a lot of issues of the past from their system to ensure a sturdy transition of life's challenges." George Bossman

One resident described being:

"overwhelmed with the maturity of the entire team resulting in a very good team bonding." He mentioned his key worker being a source of inspiration for him and ready to get on with doing positive things. He said he *"is ready to let go off the past and stop thinking about the negative....he saw this as a new beginning."*

Another mentioned that the workshop was:

"a watershed in his life giving him freshness" and it *"taught him the essence of commitment"*...a new beginning especially regards his budgeting and drug use.

A third resident said he has really struggled to deal with the bitterness and resentment to his mother. After the workshop he stated that:

"..the baggage feels lighter.."



Some Roads to Recovery



- Acknowledge what is happening
- Ask someone what is happening
- Find a way to control what is happening
- Work on awareness

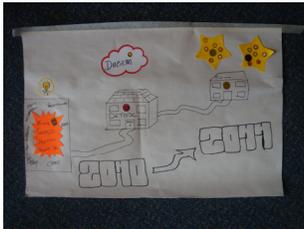
1. Get methadone down to manageable level - get GP to drop 5ml each month
2. Meet key worker for talk - have detox and rehab options by 3rd August
3. Start college Sept for 9 months, 1 day college, 1 day placement

1. Mentally prepare myself, get all my training gear together
2. Make sure I eat well enough to get good energy and strength
3. Go at least 3 times a week and continue this for at least 6 months

.....
 Go to college next week to start my pottery course which lasts 8 weeks, this is to do something constructive with my hands instead of reaching for the bottle all the time. This has already been put in place. I am following up an assertive training course for my short temper, my work mentor is following this up for me In September I start a 2 week job placement 2 help me get back into work for the future cos I am fed up in not having a job

Roads to recovery emerged in response to questions like these:

- Q: What do your friends/staff most appreciate about you?
- Q: Of all your personal strengths which are the ones you are most proud of?
- Q: What's the most difficult thing you've done really well?
- Q: Your life is getting better and better. What would be happening? What are the small or big ways that you contribute to this already?



Q: It is summer 2011; your participation in this programme has been very successful. You've achieved some key goals for yourself, and some of you have become mentors for the 2 other groups going through the programme.
 The hostel has been asked to share its experience of the programme with other hostels, and some of you have also engaged in that. You are looking back and seeing what you've achieved.....you feel satisfied and proud.
 Where are you, what has happened over the year? Who else has been involved in your progress? What do you feel most pleased about?

And afterwards staff noticed:

"All participants had a deeper understanding of their needs, acknowledging what needs to change and developing a plan of action to attain their goals."

"How well, as a group, whilst we were away, the level of maturity that everyone displayed. The group seemed to have bonded well and the barrier of staff and resident was invisible."

"In terms of the Appreciative Inquiry, the visions that the guys came up with were inspiring and motivating and created an excellent atmosphere. Many of the guys have already made significant steps."



"For all residents the motivation generated was strong.... Overall I thought it was a fantastically planned few days. To get such a challenging client group to respond so well to serious content was inspiring to see, and I'm sure everyone has got something unique and useful to them out of it."

"Community and partnerships are built by focusing on the gifts and strengths of the people, rather than focusing on the deficiencies; if we want to make partnerships stronger then we should study assets, resources and talents" John L. McKnight, Institute for Policy Research N Western University