



SMART!
INNOVATIONS IN DRUG SERVICES

life

SPRING...
INTO
PEER
SUPPORT

Welcome to the Spring Issue of SMART Life, the newsletter from the team and service users at Aftercare. In this issue we bring you an exclusive interview with SMART's new Director of Operations, as well as a look at Peer Support and lots more...

PEER SUPPORT: HELPING SERVICE USERS TO HELP THEMSELVES CLARE'S CORNER YOUR STORIES

HEALTH MATTERS

One of SMART's Health Trainers, Jo Moodey talks about how she helps people to work towards a healthier lifestyle by giving advice and support to SMART and Probation clients, as well as running a drop-in at O'Hanlon House (the Night Shelter).

Firstly I am very interested to learn that Jo is an ex-service user herself, having gone through the Portal Programme and then worked as a volunteer mentor, before starting as a Health Trainer in October 2010. "I found it very hard working at Probation at first, to be honest", Jo says, "as an ex-addict, with a criminal record, I felt like I didn't fit in, like I was on the wrong side of the desk... but now I realise I have got something to offer, I am as good as anyone else".

Moving on to the Health Trainer stuff, I ask Jo to take me through what kinds of advice and support are available through the service. "We can offer advice on a healthier diet, trying to do a bit more physical activity, and we are smoking cessation advisors as well... We can't tell people what to do, but if they want advice on nicotine replacement and that kind of thing, we can advise them." Jo goes on to discuss the Health Trainers approach to alcohol use, and sexual health, and what they will do if they are unable to advise on a particular issue. "We don't deal with alcohol if someone has an alcohol problem, but we can advise them on safe drinking habits, and sexual health... We do a lot of signposting, so if someone needs advice on something we can't deal with, then we know someone who can, and we will point them in the right direction... We're not medically trained, and we can't help people with their substance misuse issues, but if someone wants to improve their life with some healthier options, then we are there to advise them".

For more information or to arrange an appointment with a Health Trainer, please call SMART on 01865 403151.



CLARE'S CORNER

In a regular feature Clare, SMART'S very own complementary therapist, will be offering tips on making life that little bit easier. First off, she's looking at coping with stress...

1 Start the day off by positive thoughts about yourself – they work! You can be on your own side. Accepting our imperfections is such an important part of the journey towards inner peace, health and happiness. If you care about yourself you can make healthier choices.

2 Breathe deeply - Bringing your awareness to this fundamental life-giving function will bring benefits and more balance. Allow yourself to just take gentle deeper breathes (start with five to ten or whatever if it feels OK to you). Gently and slowly filling the lungs more fully (without straining) helps the body to have more oxygen available for it to use, releasing physical tension and congestion.

3 Do take the time to have breakfast, even it's just piece of toast, cereal or something more substantial. It will set you up for the day, energising your bodies rhythms and helping stabilise your mood. Eating regularly and drinking plenty of water avoids the stress of plunging blood sugar levels. Hunger and dehydration can make you feel of irritable and anxious.

4 Exercise - Moving your body is a powerful way to help burn off those stress chemicals and centre the mind. Muscles use adrenaline and cortisol to function and this lowers anxiety and raises mood, creating a feeling of well-being. Any exercise should be enjoyable, doing it for the right reasons is important, not punishing yourself. Even if its taking a ten minute walk will get the blood flowing and let off some steam, you will release endorphins and feel better.

5 Use heat therapy - Taking the time for some all-important self-care. Preparing a soothing hot bath or going for a sauna signals to the body it's time to slow down and relax, switching on calming brainwaves. These waves are a signal it safe to repair on the inside. A hot water bottle on aching muscles can do wonders too. It can also be used to wind down for some quality rejuvenating sleep - something which we tend to ignore if we are to wired – (no caffeine from late afternoon onwards helps too.)

6 Be realistic - Be sure not to overwhelm yourself with too many tasks in one go. Prioritise the important ones on a list and work systematically through them. If you are short of time don't waste it on negative thinking. Saying no to the overwhelming demands of others can be seen as saying "Yes" to you!

MY STORY

No issue of SMARTLife would be complete without a service user's story. Here, Nick tells us a bit about his journey and how SMART has helped him along the way...

"At the beginning I was desperate, I've always struggled with asking for help. I knew I was at my rock bottom but still I just didn't know what to do. I suppose I just started to accept this was my life, being a drug addict. But somewhere deep inside me was someone desperate to change. I asked my methadone prescriber what help could I get and she referred me to SMART. At first I attended various groups: anger management, relapse prevention. Initially I remember thinking "Is this going to help me get clean?" but over a few weeks I started to feel something was working and that there was help.

Then I applied for funding for detox and rehab. I must admit that when the day came and I was due to go, I was scared. But I survived and going to treatment was the best thing I've ever done. For all the years I took drugs I was chasing a feeling. I now have that feeling with out drugs: its peace, happiness and being content.

Now I've left treatment, I'm doing my aftercare package with SMART; I can't tell you how important it is to access these services when you leave treatment. It's critical to get support and structure and SMART is great for that. They offer lots of different things: one-to-ones; education with the Portal Programme; relapse prevention and so on. Its good to meet people in the same situation who can offer you peer support.

Whatever stage you are at in you process of getting clean, go to SMART as that's why these places are there: for us to get help and learn how to stay clean and sober."

AA AND NA

Due to the recent changes in how people are supported with drug and alcohol problems, self run support groups within the community, where people can find help and support from others who have experienced addiction themselves, have become more important.

Two long running and well established groups based on mutual support are Alcoholics Anonymous (dealing with Alcohol) and Narcotics Anonymous (dealing with drugs). Both have many groups within Oxford and the surrounding area. They are worldwide organisations, with thousands of groups and members, and so a person can usually find a group and support to drop into wherever they go.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) are mutual support groups with a focus on recovery, and are open to anyone seeking support for their addiction. The groups are made up of people from all walks of life, from housewives to students, to the homeless or lawyers. Who you are or where you come from does not matter. What matters is the mutual support from those who understand addiction and recovery, eventually leading a normal and happy life.

Many people, of course, are new and many people have years of recovery without falling back into the hell that is addiction and all the problems it brings. This mixture of people and experience is the very core of the peer support. Old timers can give new people, still suffering from addiction, help and advice in their recovery – they have been there and understand.

Alcoholics Anonymous - 0845 768 7555

Narcotics Anonymous - 0300 9991212

NA Meeting Line - 07502 154001

AI Anon - 0207 4030888

Oxfordshire User Team - 01865 209111

SCAS - 01865 455623 or 01865 455614

Residential Rehabilitation Assessment Team - 01865 455614

SMART Services Oxford - 01865 403151

Oxfordshire Womens' Service - 01865 793 880

Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Helpline - 0800 7310055

Connection Floating Support - 01865 711267

Oxford City Council Housing Needs Team - 01865 252858

Cherwell District Housing - 01295 221809

South Oxon Council Health and Housing Department - 01491 823325

Vale of White Horse Council Housing Team - 01235 520202

West Oxon Council Housing Services - 01993 861010

PEER SUPPORT

As important as meetings with the wonderful workers at SMART are, there is no substitute for the identification and support we get from spending time with our peers: people who have been where we've been and know what we are going through. So in this issue of SMART Life we are taking you through some of the peer support groups available locally.

A big thanks to Mike Evans and Dan Peacock for their work on this section.



A key belief in AA and NA is that recovery does not end after rehab, or 12 weeks going through the system, or learning some relapse prevention - but that an addict still has to live life and only through the support of people sharing experiences and looking into ourselves do we begin to really recover. A key principle is it is no good just stopping drugs or drink and thinking that's OK, a person must also change inside and try to live life by these changes.

HELP

STAR

Striving to Achieve Recovery (STAR) is firstly based upon a 'Mutual Aid' philosophy and self help and self awareness. The programme aims to assist addicts to look at their addiction and recovery in a person centred way.

The purpose of STAR is to support individuals who have chosen to abstain or are considering abstinence, from any type of addictive substances, by teaching how to change self-defeating thinking, emotions, and actions and to work towards long-term satisfactions and quality of life.

The approach to addiction recovery encompasses the following self help and addiction awareness tools:

- Teaching self empowerment and self reliance;
- Encourages individuals to recover from addiction and live satisfying lives.
- Teaches tools and techniques for self directed change.
- Provides meetings that are both educational and include open discussions.
- Will evolve as each group gains momentum and flourishes.

STAR Recovery offers tools and techniques for each of the following essential elements of recovery:

- 1 Enhancing and Maintaining Motivation
- 2 Coping with Urges
- 3 Problem Solving
- 4 Lifestyle Balance

Members receive a Member's Handbook which explains tools that can be used within groups to tackle specific everyday issues that may have led to the use of alcohol or drugs in the past. There are over 30 specific tools that can be used and taught to group members to use in everyday life whenever the need arises.

STAR Recovery aims to involve members in meaningful weekday or weekend activities, and chances to fundraise for the group to finance activities.

Groups are on Monday and Friday, 7-9pm at the Old Music Hall, 106-108 Cowley Road, Oxford. For more information please contact Glenda on 01865 209111

SMART Life is produced entirely by SMART's Aftercare clients. Unless stated otherwise, all articles and information are personal reflections from the authors. It is not intended as a statement of SMART's agreed policies or opinions. To find out more about SMART's work, visit www.smartcjs.org.uk. For information about SMART Life, please contact the Editor. SMARTLife Editor: Richard Turrell 07929 34 99 09 SMART, The Old Music Hall, 106-108 Cowley Road, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX4 1JE 01865 403151

EXCLUSIVE: SMART'S DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS TELLS ALL!

In this issue, SMART's new Director of Operations, Jon Perry, very kindly agreed to meet with our reporter Rich. Here's how it went...

I'm slightly apprehensive as I wait for Jon (Mr Perry?). I'm fairly new to this interviewing game, and this is something of a landmark in SMART Life's short history: an interview with a director of the organisation. So I am, it's fair to say, a little nervous. This soon changes. Jon arrives and instantly puts me at ease, apologising for his late arrival (by about two minutes) attributing it to SatNav issues (operator error, I wonder?). I notice Jon is sitting in his chair in a way that looks far from comfortable. Noticing my glance, Jon smiles and explains that he is suffering from a football related injury, which had happened the previous evening.

Having got the niceties out of the way, I kick off the interview proper, by asking exactly what his job is. "My title is Director of Operations, and I am responsible for the operational delivery of all [SMART] services." As to his history prior to SMART, Jon furnished me with the details; "I went to University, er, a long time ago" he smiles, "and came across someone who was interested in addiction, Professor Richard Velleman. I also had an interest in addiction, and he channelled that... I worked [with him] in mental health research, but he also ran [the equivalent of SCAS in Bath]. That was when I had my introduction to a professional approach to addiction." Jon goes on to say his interest at the time was mainly in alcohol treatment, alcohol and heroin being the only two substances for which there was any kind of addiction treatment at that time.

From there, Jon trained as a volunteer counsellor for people with alcohol-related addiction before managing the service he was volunteering at something which, he says, came as a surprise. "I started as a volunteer, and left as Chief Executive. As a volunteer, I worked in the needle exchange, and as Chief Executive, I worked in the needle exchange, doing a session there every week. That was the most interesting part of the work, and that really got me hooked into the business... because there were really interesting people, being very honest". Jon went on to run a Prolific Offenders Scheme, a Drug Intervention Program and DRR (Drug Rehabilitation Requirement). "I felt like I had set things up, I had taken things as far as I could." Jon felt he wanted to get back into drug treatment and when the job with SMART came up he went for it and started in his new role in December last year.

Moving onto more current matters, I ask Jon his views on the organisation and its future. "What I like are the opportunities in the organisation to use initiative, and be creative... the people here are absolutely fantastic ... [they] are here because they really want to help and make a difference... I get up in the morning and I think I'm really lucky to have this job."

Jon relishes the opportunity to get service users more involved, is setting up focus groups as well as meetings with groups of service users to discuss ways of getting them more involved. "I interviewed for a project worker at Howard House [SMART's new detox unit] last week, and had two service users on the panel, and it was fantastic... Service users should be involved fundamentally in every area of the service.. I see this as an opportunity to make a real difference in this area... If I can't justify what I'm doing to a service user, then I shouldn't be doing it".



Jon clearly feels very passionately about the industry he works in and is keen to discuss the impact of the new Government's drug treatment strategy. "Drug treatment isn't like mental health... its political. In drug treatment, because its such a political issue, it changes with the wind. Every time there is a change, not necessarily of government, but a head of department, or a minister, everything changes, and the changes are often challenging... Before 2002, we thought about individuals and outcomes. Then we focussed on treatment modalities. So you go into this modality, then that modality, then rehab, then structured day programmes... there has now been a change in the commissioning landscape that will allow us to focus on a holistic approach... I think the treatment modalities and the emphasis on targets has got in the way of treatment... What I intend to do is make us the best, most efficient organisation we can be; delivering real quality services and thinking about what the outcome is... Do you want to be drug free? Do you want to be in education, training, employment?"

Jon explains how strongly he feels service user involvement will be a key part of SMART going forward, having them involved in service design, strategy and delivery. "I hope people will feel a ripple of change going through the organisation following my arrival" Jon smiles.

I have to say the interview with Jon was not what I expected, he's a very engaging character and any apprehensions I had about meeting someone so high up in the organisation were quickly swept aside. I was really impressed with his passion for the organisation and the industry he works in. He clearly enjoys his work and genuinely cares about what he does and the people involved with the service at all levels; employees and service users alike.

A big thanks to Jon for taking the time to talk to SMART Life.

Bored? Lonely? Well you aren't alone!

Making new, like-minded friends after getting into recovery can be one of the most difficult challenges we face. Not being able to break free of our old connections can be one of the most common routes to relapse.

With this in mind, we introduce Smart!casual. By service users, for service users, this isn't groupwork or talking therapy; just a group of like-minded individuals who want to meet up and get involved with activities that are drug and alcohol free. We are having **our first event on Wednesday 25th May, 7pm at George and Delilahs, on Cowley Road** (just down from the Old Music Hall).

G&Ds is a great place to meet where the atmosphere is vibrant and cheery (as opposed to booze fuelled). There is also a **10% discount** card available to all people who join Smart!Casual. **Please join our facebook group Smart!casualoxford, or call/text Rich on 07929 34 99 09.** Whether it's just going for coffee or doing something you've never done before, you'll be in good company.