

Report from Hearing Stories

July 2010

The Hearing Stories event was for individuals working with people that have mental health issues and for organisations supporting them to discuss issues that are important to us all. The event offered the opportunity for 5 voluntary organisations (4 were faith-based) to raise issues in the form of stories that provided discussion on the many topics that were raised. The 50 delegates came from the voluntary, faith and statutory sectors.

Outcomes

Overall the message was, from most groups, talk about mental health in the work place and with appropriate groups, seek support and train / educate to be more familiar with the subject to destigmatise mental health.

CIRDIC offers a supportive environment but would benefit from a greater input and advice from community mental health services, Talking Therapies may prove helpful. There is stigma about mental illness and the fact that men are frequently less forthcoming about their problems. More health promotion is needed, geared towards destigmatising mental health & that it's not a sign of weakness.

As a carer there are opportunities for training, free counseling and partnership work, with being open as there are people that can help which will relieve isolation and provide mutual support.

In the workplace bullying, making mistakes, over work can lead to mental illness, talking to someone is the first step and support groups are a good sounding board. Counselling and reflective practice are helpful tools.

For our future story the work place and schools need to identify mental health, understand and encourage students and workers to seek help early.

Integration and a holistic view for workers in mental health support roles are being resisted.

The conclusion, from the Integration group, recognised the dichotomy in how patients are treated and how staff are treated in various mental health settings. It seems patients are allowed and encouraged to explore their spirituality but staff are expected to expunge theirs during their working day. Faith groups could join together to encourage mental health organisations to allow both patients and staff to share the part of them that is spiritual. This is not about evangelising, recruiting or manipulating anyone but simply sharing who one is

as and when this occurs naturally in conversation. It is possible that such a change will have unforeseen consequences.

Feedback

Delegates stated that the event provided them with lots of information to access relevant services. They mostly enjoyed the varied programme and the small groups they attended, although some found the time was too short in groups. One delegate pointed out that the local authority could have had a stall for the services they offer.

Participants

From Churches in Reading Drop in Centre, Clare Palmer presented **Inclusion** 'What support is there for homeless people in the Mental Health arena?'

From The Princess Royal Trust, Carer's Service, Catherine Cox offered **Caring and Coping** 'How can carers overcome some of the difficulties they encounter?'

Susan van Beveren from The WELL Centre introduced **Managing mental health and work** with 'Where is the support from sick leave to the work place?'

Sarah Mayhew from CommuniCare proposed 'Where is the support in the community?' and exploring the '**Future of the story**'

Finally Shirley Anstis from Envision Counselling expounded on 'Putting the pieces together' in the group **Integration**.

Rev Rachel Wadey introduced the event Hearing Stories which had emerged after the former event, Hearing Voices in July 2009, to hear more from those with mental health issues; and to launch the Resource Handbook, which lists information from the Community Mental Health Team, voluntary and statutory groups, faith based agencies and contacts in faith communities in Reading.

Derek Mitchell gave an informative presentation on the Community Mental Health Team's work and launched the Resource Handbook 'Information and Advice Resource Handbook' for faith leaders and carers on mental health matters.

Judith Chapman expanded the story theme to illustrate Talking Therapies, Improving Access to Psychological Therapies Service.

Rabbi Zvi Solomons closed Hearing Stories with a few stories from his experiences in mental health within his family and community.

Small Group Key Points

Inclusion

Key Points

Early intervention may prevent a person deteriorating but CIRDIC needs the knowledge of where these services are and a simple referral system. It was agreed that the development of the Talking Therapies Service would prove helpful if used appropriately.

It was felt there is a need for more health promotion geared towards destigmatising mental illness and enabling men to understand that it was a not a sign of weakness, and early diagnosis can help prevent further deterioration and restore good mental health.

Coping and Caring

Key points

Training (an awareness of difficulties)

- Using free counselling services available
- Being recovery focussed (positive) avoid negative company
- Partnership work (carer and cared for – statutory and voluntary services)

Be open about difficulties

- Talk about it – people listen & somebody may help
- Knowledge about respite care, eg emergency respite services – Crossroads

Managing mental health and work

Key Points

References and mental health

You can ask for 'open reference'. No comment on employee required. 'Closed reference' cause for concern for people with mental health issues. Employer has to work within discrimination guidelines.

Bullying in the workplace

Future of the Story

Key Points

Education

In the work place and schools to identify mental health, understand and encourage to seek help early.

Framework for coping

Clear fair equal boundaries

Integration

Key Points

Workers in mental health support roles are not allowed / encouraged to have conversation on faith as it is not acceptable / allowed

Spirituality needs to be considered as part of the process (not as an add-on) as a holistic way of dealing with mental health issues.

Further information on the summaries of the group outcomes is available from Jan Hearn jan@strongertogether.org.uk

And online at www.readingfatihforum.com/eventsandmeetings.aspx

