

Mental Health Awareness

As an organisation that prides itself on supporting volunteers and trainees from a variety of backgrounds – including those who are long term unemployed, those with disabilities, ex-offenders, the young homeless and those being re-housed from domestic violence – probably *THE* most common thread that affects us all – young, old, the disadvantaged and the not so disadvantaged – is mental health issues.

Although we have developed a reputation for supporting those working through mental health issues and have built a certain expertise through our experience, we have long wanted to build on this reputation by further developing our skills with specialist training and support systems.

A grant from **Ecominds**, the Big Lottery in partnership with Mind, in December last year will enable us to build the capacity of the team – both volunteer and staff – to strengthen the support we can give each other and to our service users.

We are hoping that a programme of staff awareness will transform the quality and range of support we provide. Some of you are already benefitting from this and have attended workshops on a range of topics such as Learning Disabilities, Challenging Behaviour and Domestic Abuse. We will also be accessing training and awareness sessions on working with ex-offenders, ADHD and making sure that as many staff and volunteers as possible get the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills as part of a much wider staff and volunteer development plan.

We will also be setting up a system whereby we can offer one to one support to new volunteers by developing a team of peer mentors so that those who have experienced mental ill health can go on to help others on the road to recovery. There will be some mentor training and support available for mentors. More on that later!

All this will be supported by a programme of Mental Health Awareness workshops for all staff and volunteers which will cover recognising mental health problems, how to help and help prevent problems becoming more serious, how to support others whilst raising awareness of mental health to reduce stigma and discrimination.

So if any of you have either expertise or even a little knowledge you would like to share or would like to know more then let us know. If you have ever thought 'It would be really good if we could...!' tell us!

Gill Green
Training and Development Manager

