

February 2009/VV01

Part of Circle Anglia

Welcome to the newsletter of the EPIC Volunteer Service created to promote the valuable work of volunteers across the EPIC Trust. This first edition tells the stories of two people, a service user and a supervisor, who have really benefited from having a volunteer supporting them. For those of you yet to meet an EPIC volunteer we tell you who they are and where they are (and how to get one of your own!)

Volunteers are good for you (pt 1)



Susan, a resident at an Islington-based supported accommodation scheme for people with mental health issues, spoke to us about her experience of being supported by Nicole, who volunteered at her scheme for 4 months.

"I found Nicole to be friendly and connected with her straight away. Before that I wasn't going out and felt I only had professionals in my life and my children. I felt that my life was full of care plans and risk assessments. I felt that Nicole was someone I could laugh with, talk about life and share my experiences with in an open way without being judged. I had been finding it very difficult to access a particular service that I desperately needed. Without the support and encouragement from Nicole, I would never have had the courage to go there."

Since then, Susan has been helping us to attract more volunteers by attending a Volunteering Fair at the London School of Economics; "I felt exhilarated; like I was walking back into the real world. Being on

benefits and having so many problems is not a nice existence. But for me, being there promoting volunteering opportunities that day felt like I was making a valuable contribution and was part of something important."

Susan has also been involved in interviewing potential volunteers and recently accepted a role to help deal with the dozens of volunteering enquiries we receive every week: "One of the best things about volunteering is that you end up doing things, and contributing in ways that you didn't believe would be possible. You feel like you are actually doing something worthwhile and valuable, you build your confidence and you surprise yourself."

Get your very own volunteer

- 1. Identify some activities that could really add something to the running of your scheme, project or team**
2. Make sure it's something a volunteer would also enjoy and benefit from doing
3. Talk to Neil, Phillippa or Susan at the Volunteer Service for advice around how volunteering works
4. Talk to your line manager or key worker about your idea (and get them to agree that it's a good one!)
5. Work with the Volunteer Service and your Service Manager to develop your new volunteer role
6. Wait patiently for your volunteer to arrive whilst we do all the hard work (recruitment, screening, etc)
- 7. YOU'VE GOT A VOLUNTEER!**

If you have some ideas about volunteering we'd love to hear from you.

So
much
more

Volunteers are good for you (pt 2)



Claudia Campbell
First Contact
Volunteer & Supported
Housing Volunteer

Claudia is unique amongst our volunteers in that she is volunteering in two different parts of the organisation; at Richmond Road Supported Housing & Floating Support Scheme for Young People and at the Alone in London Service. We asked her supervisor at Alone in London, Jan May, to talk about how Claudia supports her, and what makes Claudia's contribution so valuable.

“Claudia has brought freshness to the service and is able to look at things from a different perspective. Her practical ideas and her calmness have been invaluable, especially in setting up our new service at Provost Street when things were particularly stressful. Her interpersonal skills have been vital in working with more challenging service users, and in diffusing potentially difficult situations”.

Claudia supports Jan in delivering the First Contact aspect of Alone in London's service, dealing with all enquiries from young people and fellow professionals, and ensuring young people feel safe and comfortable when accessing the service. Once fully inducted and after weeks of shadowing Claudia began to take full responsibility for the front desk on two mornings a week. This enabled Jan to make external visits to other organisations to build relationships and promote Alone in London's work, to contribute to more internal meetings and gave her the flexibility to access more training.

“When Claudia manages the front desk, with all its complexities and challenges, I am confident that the day-to-day running will be smooth, in line with good practice

and procedures, and that any loose ends will be communicated to me or the relevant person. She is consistently warm, caring and genuine, and this comes across to young people. Claudia would be an asset to any service.”

Who & where are our volunteers?

Including **Susan** and **Claudia**, there are currently **30** volunteers supporting EPIC:

Naomi, Hina, Verity, Kalpna, Victoria, Joseph, Oyeyinka, Dotun, Nicoletta & Richard with Alone in London;

Anthea, Helen & Eboney with Elders;

Antonella, Joy & Melissa with HARTS;

Van with the Involvement team;

Maya, Nisha & Stephanie with the Learning Disabilities schemes ;

Nina, Leslie, Margherita & Sandra with the Mental Health teams;

Alisha with Tenancy Sustainment;

Natalie with the Young People's team.

Lauren & Mona with Islington Families

In addition to this **8** EPIC service users volunteered as interview panellists; our thanks to **Geena, Nora, Jenny, Jean, Michael, Alan, Janet & Lucy**.

Our thanks also to those former volunteers not mentioned above who have also supported our work. Speaking of which:

Congratulations!!

To Verona Marshall who has just been appointed as a Support Coordinator for the Young Mothers scheme in Haringey having previously been a volunteer at the same scheme.

To contact the Volunteer Service

Call **Neil, Phillippa** or **Susan** on **020 7447 3192**, come up to the top floor of Swan Yard for a chat, or e-mail us at:

epicvolunteering@Circleanglia.org