

The impact of genuine client involvement

Recent years have seen real innovation and great success in the development of St Mungo's services and working practices, with clients heavily involved in shaping services.



St Mungo's adopted the Recovery Approach in 2007. Key to this is the belief that clients' recovery will be faster if their individual ambitions are central to the services provided.

Client involvement at St Mungo's has made a real difference.

- Client satisfaction with services has increased, from 83% in 2006 to 93% in 2008.
- Clients tell us that we are listening more; in 2008 88% say they have an input into how projects are run, compared to 81% in 2006.
- St Mungo's has gained valuable insight that is informing work across, for example:
 - Bullying
 - Work with women
 - Learning and development
 - Staffing and recruitment
- Projects now regularly engage clients in local procedure development, shaping visiting policies, and rights and responsibilities charters. In 2008 50% of projects involved clients in their business planning process – up from around 10% in 2006.
- As of June 2009 St Mungo's had 32 staff who are former clients - 3.9% of the workforce. The target is 5%. Our pilot trainee scheme has proved a success.
- A client inspector is now part of the team of regular internal inspections.

St Mungo's prides itself on the pioneering nature of our work. By listening to and respecting our clients, we have the opportunity to understand their needs better and to work towards more creative and effective solutions.

Charles Fraser, Chief Executive

Peer research – to ensure we really are listening

In our peer research project, members of the research target group adopt the role of active researchers, interviewing their peer group about their experiences. This approach assists with recruitment of research participants, and can help the researcher to develop new skills and knowledge, which can increase confidence and help with recovery, as well as making the research very open.

St Mungo's has conducted three major client research projects:

- **A Better Deal For Women** is an investigation into why women clients at St Mungo's are currently achieving poorer outcomes than men and what can be done about it. The results focussed on issues around children, health, personal safety, staffing and meaningful activity. This research will inform the development of St Mungo's women's strategy.
- **What Works** looked at St Mungo's service delivery through the eyes of its clients. One of the main findings matches with a key principal of the Recovery Approach - that recovery happens when services are staffed by people who are compassionate and competent, something we emphasise in staff training.
- Having been concerned about bullying across the homeless sector, St Mungo's developed and trailed a '**Bullying in Hostels**' toolkit. Peer research was key in the pilot's evaluation and helped in understanding the complexities of bullying. Information gained will be used in supporting the development of an anti-bullying strategy.

The staff here are open to new ideas, particularly from residents, and my experience has only been positive.

Resident, Cromwell Road

Real opportunities, real jobs, real prospects – why St Mungo's is developing its trainee programme

In 2008 St Mungo's took on 12 trainees with first-hand homelessness experience to well paid, fully supported one-year work placements. The structured programme offered trainees the opportunity to gain the skills and experience needed to equip them to work in front-line services in the homeless sector. The scheme, funded by the Learning and Skills Council, attracted over 400 enquiries, and 70 formal applications.

All 12 trainees completed the programme, with a number applying for permanent jobs at St Mungo's. Following this success, the 2009 trainee scheme will grow in numbers and scope as St Mungo's looks to build a better understanding of homelessness into all areas of the organisation.

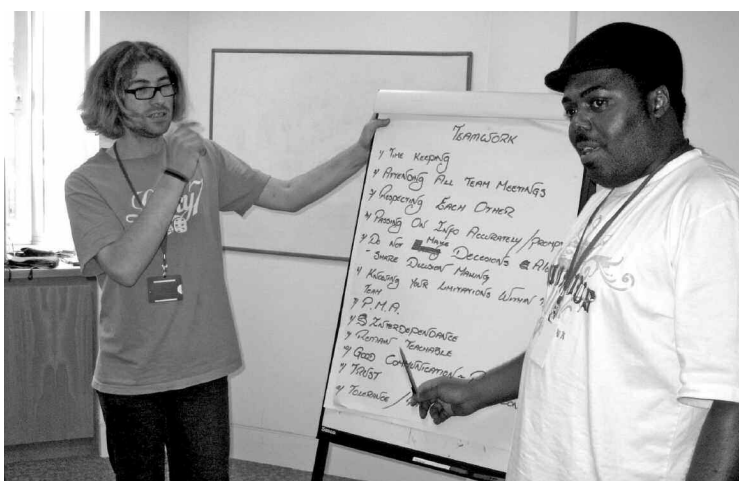


Outside In – an independent client group

Outside In is an independent group of St Mungo's clients which works to promote, develop and support user involvement in partnership with St Mungo's. The group's aim is to ensure that the experiences, skills and talents of St Mungo's clients are recognised and utilised in tackling the problems that St Mungo's and the client community face.

- Outside In meets with St Mungo's directors and board members every six weeks to represent clients - putting forward their concerns and ideas and helping to set the agenda for future developments.
- Outside In members are often involved in staff recruitment, induction, training and appraisals. Last year 55% of services involved clients in the recruitment and interview of new staff (up from around 20% in 2007), and 12% involve clients in staff appraisals (up from 0% in 2007).
- Since September 2008, Outside In member Edwin Hilliard has been a member of St Mungo's board.

You can find out more by contacting outsidein@mungos.org



Getting involved

EM had been living in a semi-independent house for three years and had become bored and unmotivated. She was relapsing into occasional drug use and had lost interest in being resettled. Her keyworker encouraged her to attend a training session to take part in staff recruitment panels and at this session she found out about Outside In. She attended a few Outside In meetings and was soon visiting projects promoting the A Better Deal For Women peer research project. Her

keyworker commented that she was now happier, motivated, and resettlement was a priority again. Through Outside In she became aware of more opportunities and successfully applied for the client inspector volunteer role, a six-month back-to-work placement. She is now registered with St Mungo's volunteer and employment teams, is due to start training in peer facilitation and the Recovery Approach and wants to apply for the client trainee scheme in 2009.

Conclusions

Client involvement at St Mungo's goes far beyond just consultation - the aim is to work in partnership to continually improve services. As well as having a major impact on the programme of activities, involving clients in this way has helped them to gain experience and confidence - empowering them to move away from dependence on services.

The impact of genuine client involvement has had clear results. St Mungo's annual client satisfaction survey shows satisfaction with St Mungo's services going from 83% in 2006 to 93% in 2008. In 2008, 88% of clients said that they had the opportunity to be involved in how St Mungo's projects are run, compared to 81% in the 2006 survey.



We are London's largest charity for homeless people. We provide over 100 accommodation and support services day in and day out.

We run **emergency** services - including street outreach and emergency shelter. We support homeless people in their **recovery** - opening the door to safe housing, health care and work. We help more homeless people into lasting new homes, training and employment than any other charity. We also **prevent** homelessness through our complex needs housing and support teams for people at real risk.

By opening our doors, and our support services, we enable thousands of homeless and vulnerable people to change their lives for good every year.

**For more information on the projects highlighted here, please contact Elizabeth Harper,
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