

DECEMBER
2020
Xmas Edition



A Slice of PIE

PIE is all about relationships....A Psychologically Informed Environment is a place or service that has been purposefully designed to support the mental, emotional, relational, learning and social needs of both service users and staff.



COVID 19 and working during lockdown



2020 has not been an easy year for staff, volunteers and service users and this Christmas will not be the same celebration service users usually enjoy, but staff are already going above and beyond to make the festive season as special as possible.

Following on from the last *A Slice of PIE* bulletin, the following case studies from our schemes illustrates how staff have risen to the challenges during the pandemic and have come up with practical ways to ensure service users and colleagues can socially distance and self isolate and still meet the needs of service users.

Heather Lodge

Due to the national situation with coronavirus we had to look at ways to continue to deliver our service

to our residents whilst maintaining the restrictions imposed due to the covid-19 crisis.

This related to both activities and visitors within the project and partnership working with external agencies, with the understanding that these restrictions, although necessary for risk management around infection control, also would be likely to have a substantial impact on our residents.

The Enhancement

Through risk management and use of PPE we were able to gradually reintroduce face to face meetings in spaces where we would be able to socially distance effectively and were able to use speaker options on our office phones to help our residents to make necessary calls, whilst maintaining as much privacy for individuals as possible for this purpose.

We have a perspex shield over the office door which allows us to have a chat face to face, but still maintains a safe working environment. Whilst we cannot open the lounge at this time, the team have carried out a risk assessment around use of the IT room.





As an organisation PRHA has been proactive in terms of ensuring that we have suitable IT equipment for us to be able to participate in Zoom meetings and through this medium we have been able to take part in training as well as case conference meetings. This has been really positive and something that I suspect will continue as part of a multi-agency working approach after lockdown is eased.



The Outcome
Through the use of regular risk management reviews and planning we have been able to provide some

help to sustain a psychologically informed environment for our residents as far as possible and also to the staff team who have found this process challenging too.

This has been carried out by continuing to provide some minimal activities and regularly looking at how we can enhance this and also by continuing to carry out effective joint working during a time where we and our residents are unable to meet CMHT professionals and residents family members in the project. We have been able to now carry out more face to face meetings safely and can still provide direct support to our residents on a more regular basis.

Clare Mpofu—Heather Lodge Contracts Manager

***Seasons greetings to all staff,
volunteers and service users
and a very Happy New Year
2021.***



City Assessment Service (CAS)



Q came to CAS almost three months ago now. He was a daily Crack and Heroin user, and was well known in City of London by both the outreach teams and the local police for his prolific begging, which he undertook to finance his habit.

Q was still using daily but expressed a wish to get on script and get clean. He spoke of his passion for food and was proud of his past career as a chef, he said that he would love to be back in a kitchen cooking again.

Q agreed to engage with drug and alcohol services and has not only maintained his script for the last three months but has also begun to reduce his daily methadone amount. Working closely with Q he has cut his hair and shaved of his beard, begun to put on weight, exercises daily (on roller blades!) and has taken on a volunteering role organising food deliveries at CAS.

He has managed to sustain his recovery and recently went for a job interview and a trial shift at two different restaurants, which he said was a good experience and helped his confidence.

Q has grown since coming to CAS, the effort and energy he has put into positive action during his time here have had a visible effect which has been both motivational and inspirational for himself, other guests and staff alike.



We are always looking for feedback, comments, suggestions, articles and photos for the Bulletin. Please email:

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We welcome Cindy Li Pang, Contract Manager at Providence House



How long have you worked in the housing/homelessness sector and what do you enjoy most about your work?

I have worked in homelessness since 2015 when I started working in Tower Hamlets. Before this I worked in CQC registered sites with people with learning disabilities. I wanted to make the change to broaden my own skills and

experience and wanted to work with those who are at the edge of society.

My favourite part of my work is speaking to clients and hearing their stories. Everyone has a story and a chain of events that have led them to our projects, it is important to me that we do not forget them and the potential they have to return to independent living.

What would you like to do more of in your role?

I would love to be able to have more time to develop the service, and visit other services to share good practice. It is sad that I spend most of my time managing the service behind a computer.

I would love to be able to do more support side of the job and learn new ways of working to develop myself and my team.

What challenges you the most in your work?

I think the most challenging part of my job is having a full team, it's been difficult to manage a service when staff turnover is so high.

This is difficult for the residents too as they build trusting relationships with their key workers but those leave and new people join the team.

It's a challenging sector to work in and a great amount of skill needed which isn't always recognised by other agencies and professionals.

How does PRHA's work developing psychologically informed environments relate to your role?

I believe that PIE needs to be a belief shared from top to bottom. If PIE is present in all aspects of PRHA, I will feel this and be able to show support, consideration, empathy, and respect towards my team and those I work with - the same attitudes will filter through towards the residents we work with and any other individual we come across and support.

It's to see the service/staff/resident as a whole and provide holistic approach to support and promote independence and recovery.



Pielink is a practice exchange network for homelessness/resettlement and others wishing to develop Psychologically Informed Environments –PIEs.

Pielink aims to develop a community of knowledge and a community or practice; to provide information, inspiration, and a forum for discussion and exchange.

Search: <http://pielink.net/> to view and join.

More information can also be found on the G Drive under PRHA Referencing Folder: **G:\PRHA Reference.**

The PIE strategy team can also be contacted for more information and advice:

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A take on 'safe uncertainty'



- ◆ Uncertainty is a normal part of human experience.
- ◆ Resilience is built between people.
- ◆ We can feel safe with uncertainty.
- ◆ We can work with the positives of uncertainty without denying realities.

We don't need a machine for being confused. We're entirely capable of confusin' ourselves. It is a human achievement, confusion...'

Sir Terry Pratchett

This year the COVID-19 pandemic has left us full of confusion and uncertainty about the future and concern that *uncertainty* – which sometimes seems to be a code word for death, bereavement and discrimination - will leave us with poor mental health almost as if these were completely new experiences and not thought about before.

Yet we know uncertainty is part of human experience, so maybe we are good at uncertainty. Confusion and uncertainty are often magnified in the daily lives of homeless people and the staff and organisations that work with them. I am a huge Sir Terry Pratchett fan. His science fiction fantasy writing created The Discworld, based loosely on London (or Ankh-Morpork), amuses me wildly. Most importantly he taught me how not to be afraid of Death. Very useful. His writing reminded me:

'...there was no such thing as absolute control, not in a fully functioning universe. There was just a variable amount of lack of control.'

Now this doesn't mean we roll over and let life happens to us. We do things like bandy around words like 'resilience' as if this were a personal characteristic and we have it or don't have it. Sir Terry reminds us:

'...people aren't just people, they are people surrounded by circumstances.'



So sometimes we are 'resilient' and sometimes we are not depending on our circumstances and access to resources.

Barry Mason, a systemic psychotherapist, began to develop a concept of 'safe uncertainty' in the 1990's. Feeling safe with uncertainty is an interesting idea. Central to this way of being is remaining curious. So, given all the negative thoughts and feelings associated with uncertainty this year I am curious about the positives of uncertainty. Uncertainty can bring:

- *Rebellion, defiance, unity – I am reminded that 'The Everyone In' campaign at the start of the pandemic happened because people united in demanding resources for rough sleepers.*
- *A chance to do things differently, pushing at what we think we know.*
- *Focusing on what you CAN influence not what you can't.*
- *Adopting the attitude that we can and will work it out as we go along, rather than everything having to be perfect and certain.*

So whilst like many I have felt the impact of COVID-19; been reminded of discrimination at home and worldwide; been in awe of the creativity, generosity, freedom of spirit of many of the people I work with; have had a chance to comfort others and be comforted; I am starting to be in a position where I can genuinely notice and act on the positives that come with uncertainty without denying the reality of what hurts.

Wishing you a happy, healthy, safely uncertain New Year.

Dr Ché Rosebert, Clinical Psychologist

