



HearME Event – Aboyne 5th April 2018



MyLifeDynamic is a suite of services throughout the whole of Aberdeenshire to support people with mental health problems and those with Autism on their wellbeing journey. These services look and feel very different to the traditional models of support and are based on fundamental principles of empowerment, resilience and hope.

The HearMe element of the service offer our communities and stakeholders the opportunity to have their voices heard in relation to mental health support and care throughout the area. The World Style Café events are but one of the service user involvement tools delivered by the Community Peer Facilitator across Aberdeenshire. The findings in this report are the result of three World Café type events held at the Deeside Community Centre, Aboyne on Thursday 5th April 2018. The event is part of an on-going series of World Café events which are part of the HearME element of the MyLifeDynamic service delivered by SAMH throughout Aberdeenshire.

The World Café feedback events come from the recognition that in order to deliver and adapt services to the changing needs of those experiencing mental ill-health there must be mechanisms in place by which to capture the feedback of those both with experience of mental ill-health and of those working to support them. The questions developed therefore bear this in mind.

It is the intention that feedback taken from these events will influence similar future events and help us shape and influence our services in order that we can deliver the best support possible.

Invites for the event were sent out to partnership services and service user peer groups across Aberdeenshire. Five people participated in the event, of which three were persons with a lived experience. We have taken learning from the event to enable us to upscale future events and achieve far higher levels of participation from individuals who have personal experience of accessing services.

The theme of the events examined what mental health resources are available in our communities and in what ways does this help strengthen recovery capital and help improve the quality of our services. The questions used were developed with the input of attendees from previous events.

The Questions

The intention of the questions posed is to try to best understand a persons lived experience, therefore they are formulated in a way to best capture this. Usually this will be asking the attendees to reflect on their own direct experiences, rather than posing questions of either a hypothetical or of a closed type. We have tried to develop questions which can best capture this. Bearing this in mind we have used any feedback given on the quality of the questions in developing them further for upcoming events.

There were five questions posed at each event, where attendees are given twenty minutes to answer each. The questions posed at the events were:

Q. 1) - What do you appreciate about existing mental health services?

Q. 2) – Thinking about your regular wellbeing priorities and practices, which of these are most important to you?

Q. 3) – Thinking again about your own journey of wellbeing, how can these priorities and practices be used by services to better help you achieve your resilience goals?

Q. 4) – How can existing providers build upon their strengths?

Q. 5) - HearME is committed to capturing the discussions that are important to people – what should we be asking you\ talking about at future events?

Key Points and Recurring Themes

As might be expected the questions generated vibrant and engaging discussions around the tables. The most important key points and themes noted underneath in summary:

Better signposting, central info hubs, making for easier access to information and resources about mental health awareness available and visible in our communities.

Easily accessible, highly visible information available throughout our communities and community spaces, in GP's surgeries, schools, libraries and community centres and promoted more through media campaigns on television, social media and the press. Following successful examples in North Aberdeenshire, specifically in Fraserburgh (Hear For You Centre) and Peterhead (Compass Point), the idea of single point of access hubs was again raised, the need for the creation of local one-stop-shops\signposting hubs was recognised as a much needed and important resource. The Aboyne area has been especially hit hard due to the downturn in the oil industry, and that this had a significant impact on peoples mental wellbeing. Attendees felt more support should be available to people experiencing episodes of mental ill health through unemployment.

Services networking and sharing ideas on a regular basis.

Attendees had seen the value in other areas of Aberdeenshire the value in having regular service networking events, which bring partnership services together regularly to share ideas, service information and develop deeper working relationships. From this also came the suggestion to hold regular regional health conferences, inviting all services and community members to attend with the focus on having a day with key note speakers, world café style conversations and short activity based therapeutic sessions running throughout the day.

What people regard as essential to their mental wellbeing has more to do with activity, connection and purpose than it has to do with the clinical support they receive.

People report that their communities are where their wellbeing is 'topped up.' Activities such as exercise, having outdoor pursuits, having a purpose, spirituality, being around others who can relate, and talking are found to be most therapeutic. Very few people report that medication is most important to them. Community based information points and signposting services, as well as peer support and therapeutic activity groups are what people value most when looking for connections and information on what's available in their areas. Feedback also suggests that volunteering opportunities and support into employment in the mental health field is important to those with lived experiences.

We're getting it right most of the time and we're getting better at getting it right.

Stigma is less of a debilitating factor since mental ill health is becoming more widely spoken about, HearMe events contribute to this. People feel it is easier to talk about and to ask for help than previously. GP's and services are more informed, more flexible in their approach, and more easily accessible to those seeking help. Our services continue to focus on the person-centred approach, while also delivering services which vary widely from each other. One significant point made was that there seems to be a clear lack of services on offer at weekends. Attendees felt there should be more provision during the weekends as peoples' wellbeing needs doesn't stop on a Friday evening.

Feedback and suggestions for future HearMe event topics.

Attendees in the Aboyne area felt that the event could have been promoted more publicly and not just through services. Attendees would also like to see more events involving family members and wider members of the public, perhaps those not personally affected by debilitating mental ill health. Attendees also felt that an action plan could be created from the input that may be used as focused goals in the formation of community forums.

Actions to be taken by MyLifeDynamic

Improve and broaden the opportunities for the voices of those with lived experiences to be heard. HearMe Community Peer Facilitator to initiate and host a series of 3 additional informal opportunities (one north, one central, one south) by end July 2018. Also to look at the feasibility of holding an annual regional health conference attended by both community members and service staff, to take place perhaps late 2018 – early 2019.

Contribute to and promote opportunities for training and support for volunteers engaged in group and individual support settings. HearMe Community Peer Facilitator to develop and deliver volunteer peer support training by end of August 2018.

Contribute to increased visibility and promotion of mental well-being throughout Aberdeenshire communities. HearMe Community Peer Facilitator to develop various workshops designed to promote and support resilience and well-being throughout Aberdeenshire by June 2018.

Organise and participate in regular partnership working meetings, events and discussions throughout Aberdeenshire. HearMe Community Peer Facilitator will endeavour to continue engagement and ongoing discourses with partnership agencies throughout 2018.

These actions will be an ongoing task for the Community Peer Facilitator and the rest of the MyLifeDynamic team throughout 2018.

Summary

Stakeholder views and feedback is very important to SAMH and the MyLifeDynamic service is strongly committed to service improvement through direct interaction and regular discourses with its stakeholders. We are already achieving this through the regular HearME events being held throughout communities across Aberdeenshire. In this way, by bringing the issue of mental health into our communities in a highly visible and accessible way, we are helping tackle the stigma around mental ill-health. We will also extend and develop this system of gathering views and opinions by various mediums so that we can best capture what our stakeholders needs are, and use this to better develop our service, while rigorously adhering to the values and principles that make our service both unique in experience and empowering to those who wish to engage with us. We will continue to develop and deliver our means of capturing feedback from those with lived experience so as to enable us to continue improving the MyLifeDynamic service. Further, we will also seek to contribute the feedback to help influence and affect the wider agendas of services provision - those aspects which pertain to our Local Authorities and Commissioning Boards, to ensure their ongoing accountability to our communities.

We also endeavour to continue a commitment to working in connection with other partnership services to ensure our stakeholders receive the best quality of engagement possible. One of the ways this takes place involves the MyLifeDynamic service participating in various steering groups, such as with the suicide prevention service Choose Life. We also ensure that our signposting knowledge is up to date and relevant and that we work closely with local signposting services.

Currently in development at MyLifeDynamic are our volunteer programmes which will offer individuals with lived experience the skills with which to support others within a peer support group setting. We will also train individuals to organise and deliver events and community engagements throughout Aberdeenshire under the scope of the HearMe service. We will also be looking for volunteers appropriate to helping deliver our Listening Project and Cultivate services. These volunteers will be trained and supported to the highest standard which will enable them to confidently support individuals referred into the MyLifeDynamic service, providing the unique opportunity for anyone looking for experience volunteering within an exciting and dynamic high quality service.

It was highlighted again at the event that one very noticeable gap in provision in some of our communities was in the availability of central information and signposting hubs - places in our communities where someone looking for help or support could go to find out more about what's available in their area. There are already places in which these central information hubs have been established in parts of Aberdeenshire, which are proving successful. Therefore it is recommended that more provision is made in communities across Aberdeenshire to provide adequate information centres to ensure our communities are

provided with the most relevant information and signposting tools relating to local support services as possible. MyLifeDynamic are committed to this through the inclusion of the Know Where To Go element of our service and in addition through our ongoing dialogue with other key stakeholders.

David Beedie

Community Peer Facilitator, MyLifeDynamic

March 2018

