



Domestic Abuse & Mental Health



By

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Voices of Experiences (VOX)



Aim and Objectives

The project aim was to raise awareness on how mental health can be affected by domestic abuse and recovery. Talking about domestic abuse and mental health, sessions were generated and four volunteers were involved in achieving the projects aim.

- To promote better understanding of what is mental health
- How can domestic abuse have an impact on mental health & recovery
- Tackle stigma related issues in open group discussions
- How to identify signs
- How to help our mental wellbeing
- Provide information on support and services available for help
- Signpost
- Moving Minds festival

Planning

Planning and information gathering started by sharing experiences of victims of domestic abuse and how their mental health had been affected. This was to get a better understanding on how to facilitate topics which related to issues on domestic abuse and mental health.

- Researching / exploring information on Internet
- Community leadership meetings
- Interviewing victims of domestic abuse by questionnaire
- Visiting women's aid to get more information on what kind of support is available

- Exploring/Creating art activities to help open discussions related to stigma and mental health

Community Leadership Meetings:

| Date | No of Participants | Details of Meetings |
|------------|--------------------|--|
| 13/09/2014 | 7 | Session planning, using resources on domestic abuse information to understand what helps in mental health. Brainstorming ideas on how to engage with groups |
| 18/09/2014 | 5 | Session planning. Exploring ideas how to tackle issues with language barriers. Practicing delivering session |
| 26/09/2014 | 5 | Practicing delivering session. Collecting art material, ideas how to utilise art into information. Shared experiences from the domestic abuse victims to help understand it better |
| 29/09/2014 | 3 | Finishing art design which is to be exhibited at moving minds festival. Preparing materials |

Talking about Domestic Abuse and Mental Health Sessions

Facilitating groups by general information on mental health and including art activities were used to engage participants in conversation and discussions. This was to help participants to identify issues affecting their mental wellbeing and their lives due to domestic abuse and to share experiences, information and understanding on related topics. This also helped in getting a better understanding of what support the participants were seeking and how to signpost relevant information in any related issues on general mental health.

Here below is a table which shows how meetings and groups were facilitated during the process of the project:

| DATE | No of Participants | Details of session | Outcome of Session |
|-------------|---------------------------|--|---|
| 15/09/14 | 9 | Understanding domestic abuse and mental health raising awareness and Signposting. The session was an opportunity for the group members to think about themselves, the issues affecting their personality, having a better understanding of their needs and the impact of these issues | Participants found the session very useful. Signposting information was all new and informative. The group wanted to make changes to the community by sharing the information they had collected. They showed interest in other topics of mental health and want more sessions on how they can look after their mental wellbeing. The group made some positive messages on a poster which was to be exhibited at the moving |

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| | | on their mental wellbeing. | minds festival. |
| 19/09/14 | 8 | Talking about general mental health and the impact of what domestic abuse can have on a person. Signposting and evaluation of what participants find useful in support they need. Engage them into group discussions and share experiences. | Ice breaking and group discussions lead to a new positive understanding to the group of how mental health can be affected. Stigma has been a barrier in the community and the groups discussed on how to tackle the issue. Participants have showed interest in more sessions and activities. |
| 30/09/14 | 10 | Talking about stigma related issues with domestic abuse and mental health. Signposting and art activity. Discussion was also to find out about the important topics for the group members and what they would like to achieve as we go along the project | Participants had a short exploring activity to identify signs on a person suffering from mental health issues. It led to a new understanding on how we all can identify and help each other when in need. Simple tips and experience stories were shared. |
| 30/09/14 | 10 | The session was to engage with the group into thinking how can we look after our mental wellbeing and what services can do to improve. Art activity was | Participants opened up to a lot of experiences in relation to how they look after themselves, what helped them recover and what didn't. They explored ideas of what they can do to improve their lifestyle and mental wellbeing. |

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| | | also involved. | The group found this session very informative and enjoyed the memory box art activity. |
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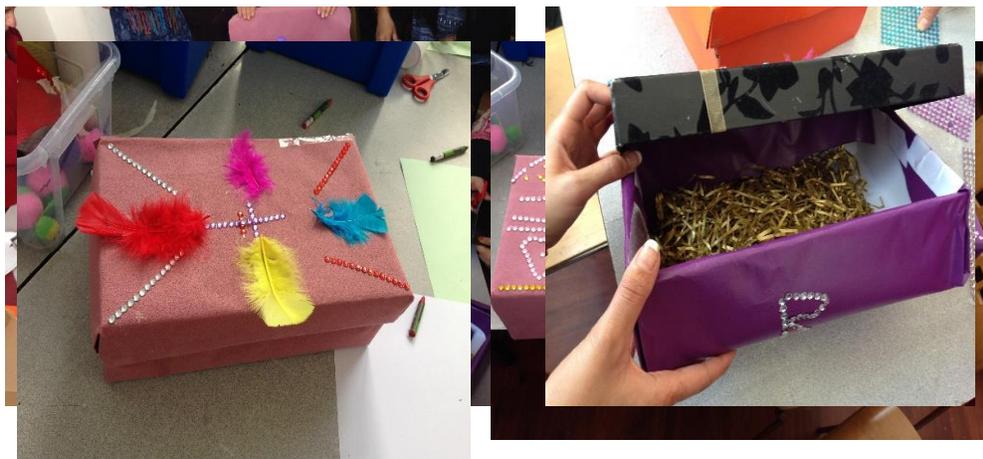
Art Activities

Art activities were involved in every workshop that was delivered. This was not only as an activity but also a form to open a dialogue between the group members to talk about their mental wellbeing. Including an art activity with each session left a positive impact on participants. Drawing, making and colouring is a form of transforming their perspective of how they think of life and mental wellbeing. Valuing their own ability to create a card with a positive message for loved ones made them happy. This enhanced their self-confidence, understanding their own feelings through art. Many participants expressed that art has given them to express themselves about issues affecting them, and a way to share it with friends, family and community. This also helped the group bond with one another throughout the sessions.

Here is a list of art activities and how they were carried out:

- **Card Making** – making an inspirational card for a loved one, family or friend. Leaving a message inside reflecting their feelings or leaving a positive message.
- **Picture messages** – writing a positive message and decorating it. Then if the participants wished, a picture can be taken to display at the Moving Minds Arts and Film Festival or, they can take away home with them. This was to make the group end a session on a positive note. To make them think positive, that at the end of a dark tunnel there always is a light.
- **Memory Box** – a shoe box decorated into a memory box which was decorated with colourful stickers and wrappers. Each group had one box to decorate and to

take away. This was to make them think about the good memories and what made them special, what are positives in their lives and how to get rid of negative thoughts?



Moving Minds Festival

Moving Minds film festival was a success in promoting positive message and achieving projects aim. Two volunteers were involved and helped create a questionnaire which was generated to help peoples understanding of what is domestic abuse and mental health. This influenced members to sign up to VOX membership to help volunteer in promoting positive mental health.

An exhibition of art work called coat of arms was created by the group members to display at the moving minds festival to promote the project. Coat of arms was to give an idea of the project aims and objectives. It was divided in four sections.

Section 1 was to give an idea of the barriers and impacts of domestic abuse on mental health. Section 2 was negative thoughts which come when domestic abuse can occur.

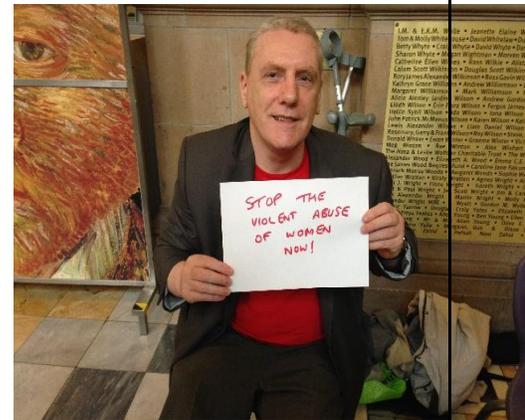
Section 3 positive messages, in 4 different languages including English to promote positivity and hope amongst the communities. Section 4 the future of the project, insight of the plan which we will be leading going ahead. The stall was a success and achieved its aim. This was appreciated by the audience at the festival as it opened up a lot of

misunderstandings of the word domestic abuse and mental health itself. It gives us an idea that stigma not only holds back, but how gender inequality can affect people as well.

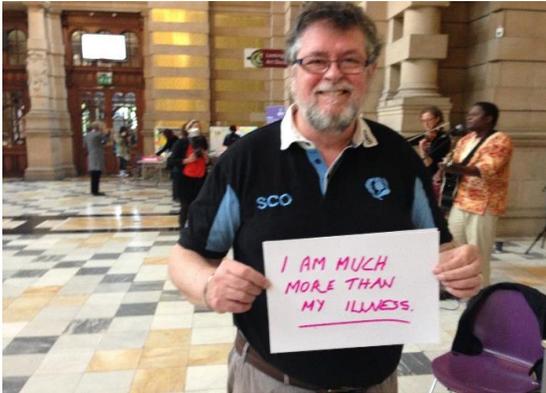


Coat of Arms

Here are some positive picture



messages which audience at the festival participated in taking to promote the project aim.



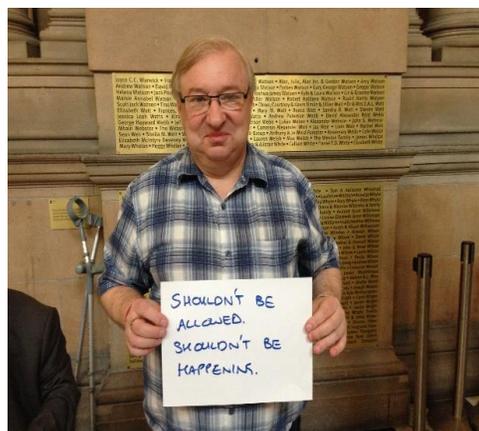
Summary

Overall the project achieved its aim. There were challenges and success factors that the participants had raised during the sessions. Group activities shaped the whole aspect of the group work and fulfilled the expected outcomes of the project. Evaluating each session at the end helped get a

better understanding of the members and the outcome of This helped the project reach the understand any further needed. It was important to members about the and usefulness of their discussions and group work and suggestions, ideas and sharing



group the session. target and help information reassure effectiveness participation in how their experiences



helped the project to have positive outcome. Talking, listening sharing experiences encouraged the

group work and members to talk openly about stigma related issues. Reflecting and observing along with evaluation helped plan future work with the project.

Gender inequality was one of the main issues; domestic abuse not only affects women but men also. Participants raised the issues that there are very few places for men to go for help in such cases which can create stigma.

The project also made a difference to VOX and its wider networks. It also helped to promote membership of VOX for people with experience of domestic abuse and mental health. The project helped to gain access to new interest people to voluntarily help further development of the project.

Here is a list of the challenges:

- Language barrier
- Gender inequality
- Bereavement
- Childcare
- Stigma (being in abusive relationships)
- Depression
- Loneliness and isolation
- Don't want to take medication (addiction fear)
- GP only gives medicine
- Family

The groups have raised interest in more future session focusing on different mental health topics such as depression, stress, stigma, bipolar and schizophrenia.

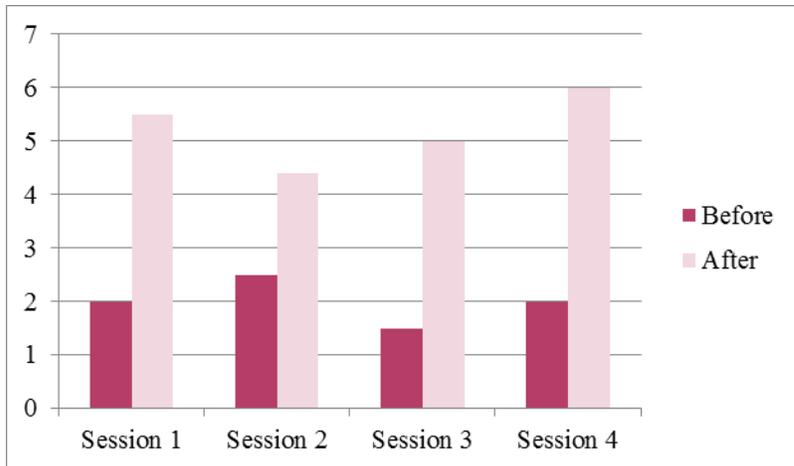
Here is a list of future work the group raised:

- Provide more information sessions, such as on GP practices and alternatives to medication.
- Get more women's aid and other service users to join groups
- More information on where men can get help
- More art activities

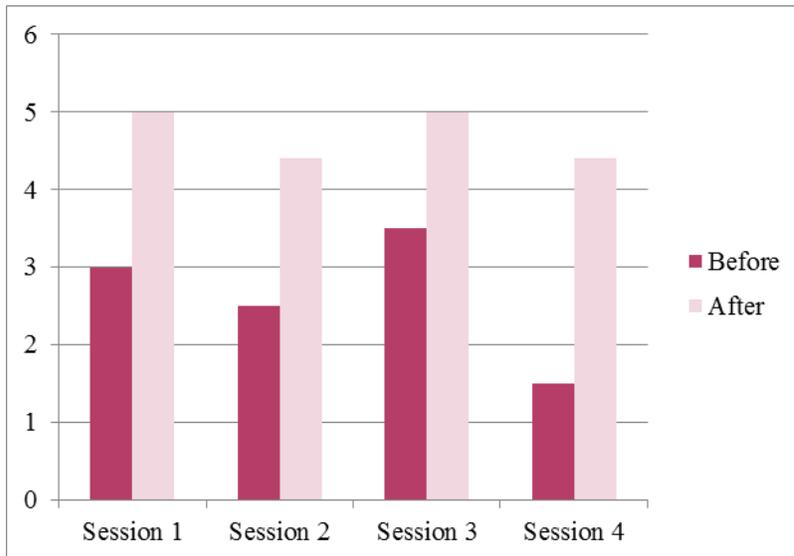
- **Here are some messages and quotes from the members:**
 - “I will always approach a negative thought with a positive one”
 - “Talking can make a difference”
 - “Help is always out there...”
 - “There’s light at the end of the tunnel”
 - “VOX is a great organisation...”
 - “This group”

Here are charts showing results of evaluations that were carried out at the start and the end of each session.

This chart shows how much of understanding of domestic abuse and mental health issues the group had before and after the sessions.



This chart below shows how much the group's members understanding stigma and discrimination around mental health issues



Case study of a participant who wrote a short story about how the project has helped her.

“I’m a single mother and I work part time. I don’t have many friends or have any family here, as I recently moved to Glasgow after my breakup with my husband. I suffer from anxiety and depression which has impacted on my lifestyle very badly and I can’t talk to anyone because no one would understand. I suffered domestic abuse and feel no one would understand my mental health issues. However, after coming to talking about domestic abuse and mental health group I have become very confident and happy to know that I can talk with people about my issues. I made new friend. I enjoyed the activities as it was different and made me happy. Stigma is no longer with me I feel happy. I hope we could have more sessions like this as it helps build confidence”

