



March 2007 Issue

CARD AND PORCH NEWSLETTER

This is our first combined Newsletter for CARD and PORCH and it feels like a natural union!

Over the past few months it has become clear that there is much to bind the two projects together and we have a regular flow of clients who are involved with both. Clients for both projects often have accommodation and drug dependence issues. Relationships have been cemented with the merging of the separate Management Committees into one. These links are made all the easier now that ECI has expanded by boring through into 15, York Road, in which the PORCH office is based.

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See inside (page 3) for full article

CARD is now linked to the Offender Management Unit in HMP Exeter which is part of the new National Offender Management System (NOMS.) This gives sharper focus for our work across the wall. The external evaluation is unfolding steadily, a major report is due in the summer.

Our mentor strength is now really impressive and our work ahead is to match them all. We are reminded again as the financial year draws to a close that funding regularly has to be secured and we are pursuing potential sources of support.

PORCH has consolidated its position amongst local agencies and has been well received and supported. It has been important to establish close and productive links with the Prolific and other Priority Offender Unit, which we have achieved. The experience so far is that there may be more scope to work with the private sector market than we first thought, with one or two possibilities under consideration.

It is always the case that the health of any project is measured by the outlook and buoyancy of all those associated with it. It gives me real pleasure to reflect on the commitment of Claire, Carol, Sarah, Michelle, Kevin and Tanya, plus all the CARD mentors, who breathe life and passion into what they are doing. Oh, yes: and a sense of fun-an added bonus!

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Experiences of a new CARD mentor (page2)

Perspective from a new CARD mentor

I am still getting used to the word 'mentor' as that is not quite how I see myself. The men involved in the CARD project are in prison and when released are in such different circumstances to mine that I cannot 'walk in their shoes' - mine are so much more comfortable in every way. But I can walk alongside them and be a friendly and non-judging companion on their way.

It was with great eagerness that I joined CARD and I have only had one mentee so far. The training I undertook was friendly, supportive and realistic as to what could be achieved, so I felt well prepared when I met my mentee. There was instant rapport and I felt no qualms about meeting with him as long as he felt it helpful. He was released into the chilly depths of winter, so his task was doubly difficult as he strove to avoid previous encounters and get himself straightened out

I became aware in graphic detail of the difficulties facing a repeat offender with little or no support on the outside. This only increased my respect for him as he struggled to maintain a positive outlook. I would return home sometimes feeling saddened at our society's lack of understanding and the quickly-made judgements we hear all too often. Appreciation for my own life came welling up and this has fuelled my enthusiasm to do whatever I could. Away for a period, I am viewing this small start as a promising beginning. I am also resolved not to give up on anyone and to go back again and again if necessary since that may be what it takes.

Mentoring and Befriending Foundation

CARD has received conditional approval to be an "Approved Provider" for The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation.

Once the last of our evidence has been approved we will become a fully accredited "Approved Provider".

MBF promotes best practice in mentoring and befriending schemes in the UK

CARD mentor training

The sixth Mentor Training course was held at the end of the year and, apart from one or two minor hiccups, went very well and provided CARD with a group of 10 new mentors. This means we now have a pool of 34 fully trained mentors, of which half are already matched with men either in Exeter Prison or the community. Our new mentors come from all walks of life bringing with them a wide range of skills and experiences, which is important when working with a diverse group of mentees.

Unlike previous courses, this last one was held over five full days instead of 10 half days. It's impossible to fit the training in to everybody's busy timetable but as the attendance rate for this course was 86%, I think we did the best we could! CARD's mentor training programme is Open College Network accredited so all our trainees are given the opportunity to gain a qualification if they wish and the majority of the last group chose to "go the extra mile" to do so.

CARD continue to offer monthly training sessions with "experts" coming in from other agencies to give information and advice on topics such as domestic violence, drug abuse, HIV & AIDS and homelessness. Please see the Schedule of Events for 2007 in this newsletter for information and dates.

Interested in finding out more about volunteering as a mentor?



Contact Carol or Claire on 01392 256246 or info@eci.org.uk

**Welcome to Tanya –
PORCH Community Support Worker**



I have recently joined the PORCH team with Sarah and Michelle, I would like to say hello and introduce myself.

I have been working supporting clients within ENDAS drug service & the Prolific Offender Unit for the last 18 months. I started out working for the Department of Work and Pensions; my benefit knowledge has stood me in good stead many times since. I spent two years working for Progress to Work in Torbay where I developed my passion for working in this field.

Along side working I have been studying a Diploma in Counselling at Plymouth CFE while volunteering as a Counsellor for Devon Partnership Trust. I qualify in July, thank goodness!

In my new role I hope to bring extra support to both PORCH clients and Sarah & Michelle.

I will be out and about meeting as many providers and partnership agencies as possible in the next few weeks so I hope to meet you all soon.



CARD Mentor Training Schedule 2007

- February Wed 28th
HIV - Hepatitis Awareness
- March Wed 21st
'Focus' Meeting
- April Wed 18th
Gabriel House (Hostel) Tour and Talk
- May Wed 23rd
'Focus' Meeting
- June Wed 29th
P.O.R.C.H Housing options
- July Wed 18th
BBQ
- August (Holiday)
- September Wed 19th
'Focus' Meeting
- October Wed 24th
EDP/ENDAS Drugs training
- November Wed 21st
'Focus' Meeting
- December Wed 19th
Christmas Do

PORCH experience

My name is Nick and I was sat in ENDAS for the tenth time probably, asking for a script because I slipped once again on the gear after a few days of coming out of jail for the 15th time.

Feeling like life is worth nothing, my councillor said the word PORCH, I had never heard of it but I gave it a go.

PORCH is run by two wonderful people who really care about you. I have now got a lovely room and been clean for three and a half months. The support from PORCH is there whenever I want, which really helps.

Thanks to Nick for this article

Update on the PORCH project

The PORCH Project began working with Prolific and Priority Offenders (PPO) in September 2006. The Project staff aim to find accommodation for and provide support to PPOs who are released to the Exeter, East and Mid Devon areas.

There has been no shortage of offenders needing help with accommodation issues. Since September PORCH has received a total of 35 referrals.

How PORCH works

When a referral is received Project Staff meet with the offender in prison and plan for their release in conjunction with probation, police and health colleagues. PORCH's role can involve filling in applications for supported housing, negotiating with family so that the offender can return home or liaising with Local Authority Housing Departments, as well as to support an offender to settle into their accommodation on release. Support is ongoing and reduces as the offender's ability to live independently increases.

PORCH is currently supporting 24 clients, 13 in the community and 11 in custody. Of those in the community, all have a place to stay.

Types of Accommodation

It is a constant challenge to find suitable accommodation for an offender leaving prison.

The lack of affordable housing in the South West is well documented. With demand outstripping supply in the housing market and several people competing for each vacancy, offenders can be perceived as being less than ideal prospective tenants. However, thanks to the generosity and cooperation of some private sector landlords we have succeeded in placing 6 PPOs in private accommodation. They have all maintained their tenancies well and this has had a significant effect on their ability to stay drug and crime free.

Nick has been living in his accommodation for 3 months and has contributed to the newsletter about the difference that having somewhere to live has made to him.

Private Landlords

We would like to thank two landlords in particular for their cooperation and support and for providing much needed accommodation for PORCH clients. So a big thank you to Frank and David for all your help.

PORCH is always looking for innovative ways to find and keep accommodation for PPOs. If you are a private landlord and have accommodation that you would like to rent, please get in touch to find out more about PORCH on 01392 205850.

PORCH has undergone some staff changes recently with Laura O'Connor leaving us for pastures new. We are delighted to welcome Tanya Hall as our new CSW who, with her experience and commitment, has already proved a real asset to the team.

FOR MORE INFORMATION



CLOSING A REVOLVING DOOR

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Telephone: 01392 256246

Address: 14 York Road, Exeter, EX4 6BA



<http://www.eci.org.uk/porch.htm>

Telephone: 01392 205850

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