



# Newsletter

October 2010

## **This Issue Includes:**

- **AfOP news update**
- **Project updates**
- **Volunteer News**
- **Training opportunities**

## **AfOP NEWS UPDATE**

### **Changes in staff**

Eleanor successfully secured funding from the City Bridge Trust that enabled us to recruit a specialist dementia advocate. Angelika Welzel joined the team in June and has been busy establishing her new project working in the community, in sheltered schemes and in care homes across the borough.

We were sad to lose our admin worker, Florence Bonte, in August but we wish her great success in her future career. We are very grateful for the valuable contribution that Florence made during her time with us.

### **Update - BLF Project**

The Big Lottery Project has been running for almost two years now and is firmly established as a point of contact for older people looking for help. Our outreach work in publicising the surgeries through presentations, leaflets, mail outs and newspaper advertisements has certainly paid off because more and more older people are using the drop-in's to access the service. Word of mouth, of course, generates more new partners than anything so that we are very pleased with the positive feedback we have generated in the community. We have been actively recruiting volunteers to assist in this work and must give special mention to Jeff Jeffries who has devoted many hours of sterling work to the development of the drop in's as well as working with partners in citizen advocacy partnerships.

### **New - Dementia Advocacy Project**

The dementia project has now been running since June. As it is a new specialist project to AfOP we are still at the early stages of shaping the project and most importantly promoting the service not only to older people themselves and services but also carers, as we have found that they are more likely to refer their relative or friend with dementia to us. Therefore listening to their fears and concerns and providing advocacy for the older person with dementia has proven so far to be invaluable in ensuring the person's wellbeing. Dementia advocacy brings other challenges with it in regard to capacity and consent the advocacy provided is most likely to be longer and slower in pace.

To date we have a small number of partners who are at different stages. We have established good relations with a couple of the care homes and are planning to set up and run reminiscence groups in these homes. We are looking for more Volunteers who like to be involved in this project, both as a one-to-one advocate and/or help run the reminiscence groups. At this point we would like to say a big thank you to Duncan Stirk who has contributed in establishing relations with one of the care homes and is doing valuable and excellent work with some of the residence. We want

to thank Jeff Jeffries for his excellent work with the other partners who live in sheltered housing, his support has meant they can retain their independence for longer.

## **Strategy Review Day**

We held a strategy review day in February 2010 which was attended by staff, some volunteers and our hard working Management Committee. In light of Eleanor's successful campaign to raise funds to consolidate and expand the scope of the organisation, it is crucial to review our progress and set new milestones in developing the project to meet the changing needs of our client group particularly given the likely impact of the new 'Personalisation' care agenda on our most vulnerable partners. We are grateful to Leslie Douglas who was kind enough to give a presentation on her perspective as a long standing and committed volunteer and to Florence our versatile admin worker who also contributed a very moving account of how she sees the daily work of the project and its impact in the lives of those most in need.

On the basis of these discussions, we have now put together a three year Development Plan (2010-2013) which is available from the office. This will provide a way of moving forward and we hope to not only sustain our activities but to expand the scope of our work.

## **VOLUNTEER NEWS**

### **New volunteers**

We have been lucky enough to recruit some new volunteers through our recent training and recruitment drive. Joan Healey has generously offered to work one afternoon a week and give us the benefit of her long experience in working with older people locally. We welcome Olasimbo Ogunyemi, a very dynamic presence to assist in our outreach work and who is ready to take on partnership work with us also. Tina Disu has completed our volunteer training and is in the process of being matched with a partner who will, undoubtedly benefit hugely from Tina's involvement.

Duncan Stirk has offered us the benefit of his experience and we are very pleased to welcome him to the team. Duncan has been literally thrown in the deep end undertaking work on both the BLF project as well as dementia work in care homes. Caterina Coates has proved a hugely dynamic presence providing us with ideas and inspiration as well as giving a partner support to tackle difficult issues. Gemma Khan has been giving us her time to do assessment work with Gina on the BLF project. This enables us to tackle our waiting list a great deal more quickly and effectively so it is a vital role filled by a very reliable volunteer.

We would like to offer particular thanks also to all of our long standing volunteer advocates without whom we could not reach into the lives of so many.

And finally, congratulations to Colin Kavanagh, our very hard working volunteer advocate who is taking up a paid advocacy role with another charity. Colin has kindly offered to maintain a long standing partnership with us alongside his new position and we are pleased to have been part of his journey into paid employment.

### **Partner reviews**

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Abiodun Oke for her ongoing work in helping us complete partner reviews. It is essential that we continually canvass service user views on the services we provide to ensure that we are succeeding in our aims. Abi assists in the office and in direct partnership work also and has volunteered regularly for us now for two years and her contribution to the organisation is greatly valued

## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

### **AGM**

The date has now been set for the Annual General Meeting, Monday 29<sup>th</sup> November. Notices will be going out over the next few weeks. This year the theme will be Dementia and Angelika will be talking about the new project. We also hope to have two outside speakers to add to the debate.

### **Volunteer Support sessions**

We are planning a series of regular get-togethers with our volunteers to exchange ideas, do some extra training and catch up with news. The first one is set for Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> November from 6.30 to 8.30 which we hope will suit most of you. If not, please let us know. We will use this first meeting to talk about what kind of training needs you have and to get feedback on how we can best support your volunteering. One of our trustees, Ian Dallaway, will also be offering some training on Communication and Negotiation Skills.

We hope that this will be an opportunity for you all to meet other volunteers and network as well as to update us all on what's been happening with you. The event will take place at Mycenae House and we will be providing refreshments. We look forward to seeing you all then so don't forget to save the evening in your diaries please!

### **Christmas Lunch for partners**

We do not yet have a date for the partners' lunch but we will let you know as soon as we do. We are already getting enquiries from partners about this very popular event!

### **Christmas Party for Volunteers**

We will be holding the Volunteer Party on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> December from 7.00 to 9.00pm at Mycenae House.

## **TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES**

### **So far this year....**

We have run three training events to raise awareness of the need for advocacy in the community. As the impact of the recession is now beginning to be felt in swinging cuts to front line public services and will disproportionately hit the most vulnerable older people, awareness of the role of advocacy support becomes still more important. We hope to greatly increase the number of volunteer advocates who work with us and so raise our capacity considerably.

Eleanor has also been working with Greenwich Borough Council to raise awareness about advocacy more broadly and has run two training days on advocacy and personalisation in collaboration with Advocacy in Greenwich, GAD and MIND.

### **External Training available for volunteers**

There are a lot of free or inexpensive training opportunities available in the borough. We will bring some detailed information to the meeting in November.

***Advocacy for Older People in Greenwich***  
***Mycenae House, 90 Mycenae Road, London SE3 7SE***  
***Tel/fax: 020 8269 0298***  
***[advocacy4olderpeople@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:advocacy4olderpeople@tiscali.co.uk)***  
***[www.afop.org.uk](http://www.afop.org.uk)***