



# The Wise Owl

The **athena** Project Newsletter

## Staff Conference Presentation

### athena News

- \* Feedback from Certitude
- \* Peer Support Providers' Forum
- \* A mentor writes
- \* Train the Trainer course

On Friday 27th November the **athena** Project gave a presentation at Hexagon's Staff Conference. The Project was put together and is managed by Hexagon, and this was a good opportunity to ensure all the staff the staff understand it. The Project Coordinator, John Lake, talked about the origins of the project through Southwark's Innovation Fund. He then introduced two mentors, Catherine A. and Garry E., who explained the role of a mentor, and what they have been doing on the project. It was touching to hear them talk about their own mental health difficulties to such a big audience. Well done!



Wiggle those fingers! The Staff Conference

One of the people who watched was Scott Crowley, the IT manager. He had this to say: **"The mentors were engaging and clearly passionate about using their own experience to help others. I feel proud to be part of an organisation that does this important work."**

## Thank You Lunch

On Friday 4th December the **athena** mentors were treated to a mini-lunch by to say thank you for all their dedication and work on the project. This year it was a fun event and a good chance for mentors to get to know each other.



Silly hats and crackers at the Thank You lunch

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## Update from a Mentor

“Two examples of mentees I am working with:

Mr A, who is very nervous about

moving. He feels safe staying in his flat on his own for much of the day. However he does like a visit from me and occasionally his older sister and we are currently helping him get online at home. I plan to slowly introduce him to websites that may encourage him to venture out sometimes.



Garry Ellison

Ms B has been in supported living for 2 years and has been very pro-active in her ongoing recovery. She has now moved into her own furnished flat and although she feels quite overwhelmed with moving in, she is glad to have moved out of the supported living setting and the privacy that she’s longed for.

I’m excited about the potential of the peer mentoring approach and the [athena](#) Project allows for ‘fresh thinking’ and peer led innovations, so things can only get better!!”

Garry Ellison

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**“I’m excited about the potential of the peer mentoring approach “**

**Garry**

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## Training Plans

The [athena](#) project has recruited a group of people to start on the next Community Development Training from January 2016.

The training takes place on Mondays throughout January and February at Hexagon’s Head Quarters in Sydenham. The certificate provided by this training is nationally recognised and can help

people apply for a variety of social care positions.

Later in 2016 we hope to offer a new qualification in Mentoring, to give more specific skills for those seeking a role as a Care Worker.

Speak to John Lake for more information.

## Feedback from Certitude

In issue 1 we shared that the [athena](#) project had started working with its first clients from Certitude, which has projects in Southwark including housing at East Dulwich Road, where we are supporting a number of clients. The mentors have been working there now for 6 months, and one of the staff there, Jacqueline Holda-Martin, had this to say:

**"I feel the [athena](#) project is working well. It is very beneficial for the customer to have a transitional worker for some time after they move on as there will always be unforeseen issues for the person. I feel they have been trained well, [here she gave the example of Catherine who we**

**certitude**

interviewed in the last edition of the Wise Owl]

**The peer supporters I have met so far have been punctual, relaxed, polite and enthusiastic. Hopefully it is as much a fulfilling experience for them as for the customers they are supporting.**

**I feel that the unintentional role modelling which the peer supporters will be doing naturally may show our customers what they can achieve. You may even find more recruits!"**

Thanks to the [athena](#) mentors for their good work!

## Train the Trainer Course

"On the 19th October I was one of a group of nine, to attend the first [athena](#) Train the Trainers course which will allow us to gain employment as trainers for future Athena mentors. I am especially looking forward to the opportunity to co-run two training sessions with a qualified Sostenga trainer.

I enjoyed the sessions because they were packed with practical exercises. These exercises were designed to enhance shared learning, and encouraged us to



Cheryl B, a mentor

take part in every aspect of the training.

What I am most proud of is being part of the [athena](#) Team, and the vision we hold to actively support mental health in the community as needed. This training enables us to make use of our own experiences and shows us how to encourage and support others. Best of all are the valued interactions, connections and relationships that are formed through involvement with the project." **Cheryl B**

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## Peer Support Providers' Forum

athena is a peer support project because our staff have lived experience of mental health issues. There is lots of different peer support happening across London at the moment and I have met people who work for some local organisations that provide this service to a variety of people: to the homeless, to those with learning disabilities, etc. I met with workers from some of these organisations and decided to combine our skills in a group, allowing us to learn from one another.

It is called the **Peer Support Providers' Forum** and we meet once every two months to learn from the different approaches taken by members of the forum, to support each other in our work, and to help present a united front to our councils, Southwark and Lambeth.

Our next meeting is on **Tuesday 5th January 2016**. Please contact me if you would like to join in.

John Lake



John Lake

The athena Project provides peer support to people in Southwark with mental health issues who are looking to move out of supported living into independent housing. It is initially funded by Southwark Council's Innovation Fund and trains people with personal experience of mental health difficulties to become paid mentors.

This quarterly newsletter aims to keep people informed about the progress of the Project and to keep interested people connected.

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