



The Wise Owl

The [athena](#) Project Newsletter

New Mentors on the Way

athena News

- * New course starts
- * New clients on board
- * A mentor writes
- * A tutor's story

A new [athena](#) course has begun, training 14 people to become mentors to clients in Southwark as they move to independence. The course for people with lived experience of mental health difficulties who have participated in community events. It focusses on Community Development, looking at different types of communities and examining how the students have been developing their communities: all the students have some community development experience such as volunteering or unpaid caring.

The training takes place on Mondays at the Employment Academy, Peckham, until 6th July. On 13th July students will hand in a portfolio of evidence of their community development work, before attending a discussion panel in early August when hopefully they will gain their certificate and begin working as paid peer mentors.

Graduation Day

On 17th March, the first 6 [athena](#) mentors graduated with an award ceremony at Hexagon. Each person spoke about what had got them involved with the role.

In the picture, you can see them with their certificates in Community Development. The head of Hexagon, Tom McCormack, presented the certificates and spoke about how excited Hexagon is to see the [athena](#) project begin. The next graduation will be in July.



The first Athena mentors and Tom McCormack: 17th March

Hexagon

A Mentor's Story

As someone who has made the challenging shift from supported living to living in my own flat I



Garry, a new Athena mentor

can feel the potential of the [athena](#) project to help people move in the same way. I certainly believe there is a need for the mentoring service as I still see people in supported living wanting to move forward but hindered by self-doubt and fear.

"I can feel the potential of the Athena mentoring project to help people move"

Garry

What I've got from the [athena](#) project so far is a deeper understanding of community development concepts and more insight into how we can be more effective in helping those using mental health services in our communities who still struggle with some of life's challenges like managing moods and adopting healthy coping strategies

Our team so far are all very enthusiastic and we have all got to know each other and the project's facilitators well.

New Training Course

If you would like to become an [athena](#) mentor another training course starts in October 2015. It runs on Mondays for about 9 weeks: we pay your expenses while you study at £10 per day.

To apply, contact John on jlake@hexagon.org.uk You have to fill in an application form, and if you meet the criteria will be invited for interview in late Sept 2015.



Two current mentors

You can then become a paid peer mentor: you will work less than 16 hours a week and be paid £9.15 per hour, the London Living Wage. You will be on a bank/casual contract.

Research

The [athena](#) project is brand new and unique. It is funded by Southwark Council and we want it to be independently evaluated so we can understand how well it supports people and also trains people.



find out what they think works and what needs changing. Interviewing will happen when people start to use the service, and about 9 months later when they finish.

We are currently in discussion with organisations that can do this. There will be interviews with people who use the service and with people who work on it to

We hope to get the research published late next year and to share it with neighboring boroughs who are thinking of running similar projects.

From the course tutor

My name is Janet Clarke and together with Heather Bartley and Alana Gooding from Sostenga we deliver the workshops and mentor the participants who have been recruited to the [athena](#) Project. Participants on this project attend both workshops and mentoring sessions.



Janet Clarke, course tutor

It all starts with participants telling their 'story', a bit like a light bulb switching on or a flower blooming.

The course is short but participants engage very well and their stories are material to be proud of. Come and join in!

First Meetings with Clients

The athena Project has been assigned its first clients from the supported housing provider Certitude. These people all want to move into independent living and would like support from an [athena](#) mentor, so they have met for a chat with the



Coordinator and will soon be assigned a mentor for weekly support meetings. Mentors will first get to know them at their home then continue supporting them as they move on.





The athena Project Newsletter

Hexagon Housing Association
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London SE26 5JY

The athena Project is designed to provide peer support to people in Southwark with mental health issues who are looking to move out of supported living into independent housing. It is being set up with money from 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. For more information contact John Lake 07961 108588.

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Coming up in September's issue...



John Lake

- An interview with one of the people currently training to join our second batch of mentors.
- A report on our presentation at SLaM's Recovery College. We've been asked to run a session at the Employment Academy as part of their Independent Living course.
- If you have any suggestions for articles, or other material you would like to see here, please contact John Lake on the email above.



The goddess Athena

