

Matching Volunteer Peer Mentors to Clients

The Aurora Project Lambeth matching procedure was developed by following good practice and advice issued by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation.

Much of this good practice indicates that organisations should value the safety and wellbeing of both volunteers and clients when designing matching procedures. Sue Renton from The Mentoring Plus project in Lincolnshire says “It would be remiss to discount gender, although positive relationships have developed with cross gender matches.” Renton goes on to outline a variety of evidence outlining how gender appropriate matches have better outcomes, as in general females relate better to other females and males to other males. Renton explains that the variety of volunteers she has worked with in the past feel safer being matched to clients of their own gender. (Mentoring and Befriending RAPPOR, 2007).

With this evidence in mind, and after talking to our volunteers about who they would feel most comfortable working with, it was decided that Aurora Project Lambeth will only match female volunteers to female clients and male volunteers to male clients.

When making volunteer and client matches Aurora Project Lambeth also takes into account the following factors:

- Age, we try to match volunteers with clients of a similar age range
- Personality, hobbies and interests
- Support Needs of clients and expertise of volunteers
- Physical or Mental Health issues identified

The matches are made by the Service Delivery Manager, and are based on her knowledge of the volunteer, their background, what type of client they would prefer to work with and what their background is. This information is used in conjunction with her understanding of the client and the information presented in the referral form. Once the Service Delivery Manager receives a referral form, she will call the referrer and double check that the information presented is correct and find out any further information if needed, to gain an insight into the personality of the client.

The Service Delivery Manager then calls the clients and discusses Aurora Project Lambeth, what we do and who we are, and the client’s needs and expectations. Only after this conversation has been had does the Service Delivery Manager make a match.

The first meeting between a client and a volunteer is usually held at the Aurora Project Lambeth office, unless there is a request to meet at a Consortium Partner service. In some cases a key worker may suggest a 3 way meeting with the client, volunteer and themselves. This is agreed on a case by case basis, always taking into account the client’s wishes.

We don’t always get it right!

Sometimes matches don’t always work out, despite the steps we take to get it right. In training volunteers are told that if at any point they don’t feel like they are making a connection or can’t get

on with their client they can speak to the Service Delivery Manager at any point, who will make recommendations on how to build the relationship or if necessary rematch the volunteer to another client.

When a client first meets with their volunteer, the Service Delivery Manager will speak to them first, outlining a bit of background about Aurora Project Lambeth and what they can expect from their mentor. During this conversation the Service Delivery Manager will let the client know that should they feel they are not getting on with their Mentor, they should let Jenni know and they will be issued with a new Mentor.

If either party is unhappy with the match, the Service Delivery Manager will speak to each individual separately to assess the situation and act accordingly, with sensitivity and respect.