



ADA Service User Event 26th June 2017 Key Findings Report



ADA held its annual service user engagement on Monday 26th June 2017 at the Town House in Aberdeen. 52 people attended which comprised of 36 people who have used /or are currently using services (10 of those are currently volunteering with ADA) and 16 staff/board/stakeholders. This is an increase on our first event last year where we had 16 service users attend and 9 staff, a strong indication that our service user engagement is gaining momentum.

The purpose of this year's event was to:

- ✚ **Service users to have their say on ADA services**
- ✚ **Service users to hear about all groups/activities available to them**
- ✚ **Service users to join groups/volunteer/become members of the service user forum**

The event was planned in partnership with the ADA Service User forum to ensure we made this an event which was engaging, interactive and informative for all service users. The format provided lots of opportunity for interaction/questions to be asked and information on how people could get involved was provided using a range of methods. We also had an open floor discussion which gave everyone present the opportunity to raise questions and ideas.

We are grateful to all members of the ADA service user forum, ADA volunteers, service users, staff and stakeholders who helped make the event a success.



Feedback on the event

Other than 3 comments on the poor sandwiches and lack of time for fuller conversation which was noted by 3 people, feedback from those who took part in the event was overwhelmingly positive.

A common theme in the feedback was that the event was informative and explained well the wide range of groups and activities available to support recovery.

The event itself provided a useful point of reflection for some service users, highlighting how far they had come on their journey, with many people feeling inspired and encouraged to progress their recovery as a result of discussions and connections made at the event. It was also repeatedly noted that people left with a sense of being part of a bigger, supportive community, which was a strong outcome from the event.

The venue, format and way the event was organised created a welcome atmosphere and should be replicated in future events. It was suggested that future events could include group taster sessions to further increase interaction.

It was noted that to encourage uptake for future events, consideration should be given to the role of ADA volunteers in 'buddying' new people to attend.

Consideration should be given to having smaller engagement events in community locations, which may help people at an early stage in recovery/people with childcare/transport issues attend.

Learning and improving for future service user engagement events

- ✓ Keep the same format, providing a welcome, supportive and informative environment
- ✓ The event in itself is an important validation/therapeutic tool for some service users
- ✓ Consider ADA volunteers 'buddying' people who are at an early stage in recovery to support attend
- ✓ Consider group activity taster sessions
- ✓ Consider community locations and hold a series of smaller events which may support engagement

Themes for service delivery/improvement

As well as the information provided on all ADA and related activities for service user information, a key aspect of the event was to provide an open opportunity for service users to discuss perceived gaps in services or areas for improvement. Service users were also invited to participate in a

consultation on the ADA strategic plan which will be analysed separately as part of a wider consultation exercise.

The feedback was generally that there was high satisfaction with ADA services but the event provided space for discussion about areas of frustration/gaps for service users which were as follows:

One service user noted that there were such a lot of groups and activities that it can feel overwhelming and difficult to know where to begin. This was felt to be a concern particularly for people who may still be using substances in a harmful/chaotic manner or where there are coexisting mental health issues. The need for simplified information, with details all on one sheet was requested.

Several people fed back on the day that there is a gap for support for adults whose children are outwith their care or for adults who have their children permanently removed. Some described the loss of their children as a major traumatic event similar to bereavement and coming to terms with this was a major barrier to recovery. It was suggested a support group where people could share experiences would be beneficial, as well as advice and support for adults where children are temporarily out with their care.

Some conversations on the day highlighted that service users who are doing well in their recovery can feel anxious that if they appear 'too well' support from services/benefits may be removed too soon, before they are ready. Examples given were relating to nurses and social workers where there is a perception, that due to high caseloads, there is a pressure to close people, who in early recovery, feel that ongoing support is essential.

It was noted that travel is a barrier for Aberdeenshire residents and it was suggested that funds be made available to allow volunteers to drive people to and from recovery activities. It was recognised that this was an ongoing challenge and a suggestion was made that this could be explored by the ADP community forums.

It was noted that access to childcare and the timings of DART is a problem for some people who would want to engage in the recovery coaching programme. It was agreed that this would be looked at by ADA in partnership with the new third sector consortium (RAFT) when this was operational later in the year.

Feedback stated that more needs to be done to communicate the range of supports and services which are now available in Aberdeen. Suggestions were provided including putting more posters and flyers in community venues, as well as more regular updates to volunteers and service users within ADA to inform of new groups/activities.

Taking forward these ideas for improvement

Since the event, staff from ADA have met with the service user forum and agreed the following areas will be taken forward over the next year and will be a focus for the ADA service user forum:

- ✓ Communication: the forum and ADA will support the development of the Volunteer Recovery Ambassadors who are in place now and beginning to go round communities with posters.
- ✓ The ADA internal comms group will ensure that other media such as social media short films etc. are developed to increase awareness of activities.
- ✓ A simple flow diagram was suggested to explain how all the services and activities work together. This will be considered by the service user forum.

- ✓ ADA staff and representatives from the service user forum will create a small working group to explore the possibility of developing support for parents who are no longer have children in their care.
- ✓ ADA and the forum will consider suggestions for how service users at point of closure from treatment services are passed on to support from ADA/peer support. This could include a welcome to your recovery letter provided at closure, a more recovery focus at the Timmermarket with engaging visuals on the recovery process and volunteers meeting people whilst in treatment to encourage and support engagement with the wider recovery community.
- ✓ ADA to ensure some DART courses are delivered at times and venues suitable to people with children over the coming year

Three words to describe ADA, as completed at the event:

Helpful – Learning – Give Confidence

Hope – Support – Friendship

Help – Recovery – Maintenance

Encouraging – Supportive – Brilliant!

Supportive – Innovative – Optimistic

First step – Hope – WOW!

Caring – Friendly – Informative

Open – Available – Accessible

Supportive – Non Judgemental – Flexible

Open – Supporting – Listen

Client Focused – Understanding – Knowledgeable

Friendly – Support–Knowledgeable

Family – Useful – Important

Lifesaving – Respect – Friendly

Friendly – Safe – Organised

Support – Good Advice – Understanding