



# Our Project: Our Vision, Our Values

Helping us develop a shared responsibility and approach to how we work, behave and communicate in and around Brighton Oasis Project.

## Introduction

Brighton Oasis Project has a strong commitment to protecting and improving the wellbeing of our service users and our staff team. We recognise that people who use our services may be experiencing, either currently or historically a range of complex issues. These can lead to feelings of vulnerability, hostility and anxiety when accessing services. As service providers we are also aware that an imbalance of power is created through being a provider or a recipient of care. We seek to proactively reduce these inequalities through a culture of inclusivity and involvement.

We recognise this means we need to develop a shared understanding of how we can work together in a way that acknowledges diversity of personal experience and fosters learning and growth, rather than reinforcing destructive relationships and behaviours. Our vision for Oasis is to develop a strong and cohesive community where all those involved take responsibility for modelling the core values and behaviours we have adopted and are set out in this document.

This document represents a shared commitment to promoting agreed behaviours, language and expectations for all people at Oasis. It has been developed in full consultation with service users, staff and The Board of Trustees.

## Background Information

During 2013-14 we carried out several service user consultations. The feedback from these was largely positive however, we recognised some recurring themes and areas for improvement; ***confidentiality, shared purpose, friendships and communication of rule and agreements.***

## Confidentiality

Services users often have complex histories and inter connected relationships within the substance misusing or treatment community. As a result anxieties around confidentiality and how information is shared in and around the project can surface from time to time. Often highly personal disclosures are made within group situations and even where clear group agreements exist, the potential for confidential information to leak out is high. Further exploration of this issue revealed that women felt that their confidentiality could be better safeguarded in and around the project and that this in turn would allow them to engage more effectively in treatment.

## Shared purpose and friendships

Differences also emerged in how people understood and interpreted their role and responsibilities around the project. One service user highlighted that confusion can arise as a result of Oasis not being wholly abstinence based. This means that some people using the services are required to be abstinent

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and others are not (as a result of a mandatory requirement). This meant that there is not necessarily a shared commitment among the women to completely end their substance misuse. Further confusion has arisen around the development of supportive networks and friendships extending beyond the project. Staff were seen as actively discouraging friendships while service users saw these as essential to their long term recovery.

### **Communication of rules and agreements**

Service users highlighted that they would like methods of communication (how agreements and rules are made and adhered to) to be reviewed by staff and service users. They found the experience of being 'told off' in public humiliating and were also concerned that at times rules were unfairly applied. Oasis also acknowledged that an authoritarian approach could reinforce power relationships or replicate past relationships with authority figures that led to feelings of anger or shame.

Solutions were discussed which placed an increasing emphasis on staff enforcing the rules and agreements and taking punitive action against those people who were failing to observe them. This feedback led us to consider how we could begin to engender an increased sense of responsibility between all staff and service users at oasis. We wanted to create an environment where services users were active participants in setting, maintaining and challenging boundaries and behaviours. Over time we hope that this would lead to a strong sense of shared ownership of project vision and values which could be articulated by staff and service users alike.

### **Our aim**

In October 2013 we initiated our 'Vision and Values Project', a six month collaborative project between staff and service users. The project initiation document (appendix 1) sets out the activities we planned to undertake during this period and the overall aims of the project. Our anticipated outcomes of the project are summarised as follows;

- To develop a shared vision and unified sense of purpose for all who work in and use Oasis
- To develop a set of values and principles which underpin our vision and behaviours
- To develop a shared responsibility toward informing, advising and promoting our vision and values in Oasis and with external stakeholders
- To create a safe, supportive and empathic culture by modelling our vision and values
- To safeguard and promote the psychological health and wellbeing of our staff and service users
- To increase our understanding of the impact of social environment on clinical outcome

## Developing the Vision

*'A magnificent vision articulates people's hopes and dreams, touches their hearts and spirits, and helps them to see how they can contribute'.*

Oasis provides a broad range of services to people from diverse backgrounds. They have different pathways into and out of support services with different goals, beliefs and fears. Our vision provides a strong anchor for ourselves and others, particularly when we face personal and professional challenges and difficulties. It provides a unified reason for being here and reminds us of the importance of our overall purpose.

Our vision is described below and explains our hopes and aspirations for all people at Oasis. Our vision was achieved by reviewing our previous mission statement and integrating some of the key responses to the consultation question (4), 'What 3 words can help us to continue to support women and families in the right way?'.

***We work together to support positive behavior change and growth in women, affected by substance misuse. Our aim is to instill hope, nurture courage, create opportunity and restore personal belief in what is possible and achievable for women, children and their families.***

We believe our vision makes a clear statement about why we exist. It conveys our purpose and a picture of the future that is relevant and meaningful for all, regardless of their experience.

## Developing the Values

Many organisations like Oasis experience continued uncertainty about their future. Changes in policy and the economic climate mean we are in an increasingly competitive environment where there is a growing emphasis on doing 'more for less'. We believe it is vital for us to continue to adapt, grow and flourish so we can continue to meet the needs of women, children and young people. In this ever changing environment it is important to us that we do not lose sight of our core beliefs.

Our consultation helped us reach a deeper understanding of what was important to staff and service users alike, what behaviours helped us achieve our vision and what helped us be more effective and adaptive in our dealings with others.

The responses revealed a high correlation of themes with no significant differences between the responses of services users and those of staff. We asked respondents to,

Q.1 Name three words that best describe how you would like to be treated at Oasis

Q.2 Name three words that describe how you have been treated here

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Q.3 Name three words that best describe how you think others should be treated at Oasis

Q.4 (as above)

Q.1	Q.2	Q.3	Q.4
Respect	Respect	Respect	Support
Non judgemental	Listened to	Empathy	Listened to
kindness	supported	Kindness	opportunities
openness	welcome	How you would like to be treated	openness
valued			Integrity
			inspiration
			compassionate

These words represent our shared values and describe the behaviours we would like to experience and to practice on a day to day basis. These values provide us with a framework for decision making and help us return to what is important and vital to sustain ourselves and each other in the ever changing and ever challenging environment.

We have grouped some of the above together where there is a close correlation with another word or a similar meaning is implied. We feel that the list below encompasses all of the values resulting from the consultation and have subsequently adopted these as our organisational values.

***Opportunity;*** *By creating a suitable time or advantageous set of circumstances we make it possible to achieve goals and aspirations*

***Openness;*** *By being attentive and honest and trying not to hide things we create a space that invites others to explore new experiences, behaviors and ways of doing things*

***Respect;*** *We recognize that negative or destructive behaviors can grow from adverse personal circumstances and show admiration and regard for peoples good qualities, strengths and achievements*

***Empathy;*** *We are able to identify and respond appropriately to the emotional state of another person and to offer understanding, validation and perspective*

***Support;*** *We build positive, bounded relationships which show interest and concern for the wellbeing of each other without compromising our own needs*

***Integrity;*** *We operate in a truthful, fair and consistent manner according to the above set of beliefs and values*

The second phase of our consultation invited us to consider some key questions,

- How can we ensure that our values are evident in everyday life?

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- How can we ensure that our values are passed on and shape the organisational culture?
- How will we know that we have achieved our ambition?

### **Recommendations**

The questions raised provoked some interesting discussions and are being taken summarised in a list of recommendations below.

#### ***Speak our language***

Service users wanted to ensure that the vision and values was clear and jargon free, that it was stated simply in language they could own, share and understand.

#### ***Directness and honesty***

Be clear about expectations and where problems arise explain clearly what the issue is and why. Don't treat us like children

#### ***More informal/peer support***

Peer led welcome meetings would help reduce anxiety about coming for the first time. People felt comfortable raising questions in a peer led environment and described feeling overloaded by information from staff at the induction phase. This could act as a barrier to processing information as well as reinforcing an authoritarian culture

#### ***Visual reminder***

People would like to be involved in creating a visual representation of the vision and values. This could appear on annual reports and our website so that what is important to us is clearly communicated.

#### ***Motto/words of wisdom***

People would like to be involved in creating a motto that can be a reminder of how and why we have adopted our vision and values

#### ***Continuous improvement***

We need to ensure that we are continually reviewing our progress and exploring ways to improve our understanding and shared commitment to the vision and values. This means regular discussions at team meetings, peer groups and board meetings and tabled consultations.

### **Summary**

It was clear from the beginning of this project that we were embarking on a lifelong process which would not have a finite end or necessarily a clear measurement of success. This process however, marks an important endeavor to rediscover and re invigorate our vision and values and to create a meaningful culture which moves toward greater responsibility and involvement by service users in maintaining stability and harmony as well as encouraging feedback and respectful challenge.

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We have discovered some reticence from our service users to taking greater responsibility for shared behaviors. For many, the experience of having their own behaviors scrutinized and regulated by others is an unwelcome but familiar experience. Our new vision and values requires us all to think and behave in new ways and in doing so create a more enabling environment in which to attain our individual and collective vision for the future.



## ***Our Vision***

***We work together to support positive behavior change and growth in women affected by substance and misuse. Our aim is to instill hope, nurture courage, create opportunity and restore personal belief in what is possible and achievable in women, children and their families.***

## ***Our Values***

***Opportunity; By creating a suitable time or advantageous set of circumstances we make it possible to achieve goals and aspirations***

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