

New Directions **You're Not Listening To Me!**
in the Study of communication, effectiveness & appropriate delivery
Alcohol Group service users, practitioners & management

NEW DIRECTIONS in the STUDY of ALCOHOL GROUP JOURNAL
Papers from the NDSAG Annual Conference 2008, Salisbury.

The NDSAG conference represents a wide range of thinking on subjects related to alcohol. Speakers bring individual experience and scientific anecdote from a diversity of alcohol agencies - social, health and academic – not forgetting the personal. The NDSAG journal seeks to publish some key presentations that show the range, but also which can be as thought-provoking on paper as they can in attendance.

This preview condenses the essence of NDSAG by introducing the papers with key paragraphs, just to give an illustration of how the themes are explored.

For more information, check our website ndsag.blogspot.com and if you are interested in purchasing copies of our Journal, please contact Adrian Brown, Ade.Brown@nhs.net

Street Encounters (Douglas Cameron, Leicester)

“An advantage of living and working clinically in the same place for a long time, in my case for more than thirty years, is that one bumps into ‘ex-customers’ on the street from time to time. It is surprising how little information one requires to be able to recall even substantial case histories. So the answer to an informal question like “How are you doing?” often provides enough cues for one to engage in a perfectly meaningful but brief follow-up interview.

“At this totally anecdotal level, there seem to be four kinds of responses worth mentioning. These are:

1. The turning point
2. Things were different then
3. I was different then
4. Things happened later”

Children: Not seen and not heard? (Wendy Robinson, Whitstable)

“Most people will be familiar with the 15th Century English Proverb: “Children should be seen and not heard”, and we probably like to think that we have come a long way since then, welcoming the presence of children in our lives and wanting them to feel cared for and valued in our adult-centric world. This paper is going to explore this a little and see if, in reality, we pay attention to children, listening to and hearing what they have to say. I will suggest that perhaps things might not have changed that much over the years, and that we are actually quite ambivalent when it comes to really seeing and hearing children. I will also offer some thoughts about why this might be, and what happens when we choose to ignore children. Conversely, I will say something about what happens when we listen to children and offer some ideas about how we can become more attentive to children and young people.”

Therapeutic Listening – or “It Ain’t What You do” (Bill Reading, Canterbury)

“Expensive and elaborate studies such as Project Match (1997) and the United Kingdom Alcohol Treatment Trial (UKATT 2004), reveal little significant difference in the effectiveness of competing treatment approaches yet also reveal the powerful impact of the therapeutic alliance in determining the quality of outcome. Estimates as to the effect size of the alliance upon outcome tend to range about 10% to 50% with this effect being almost certainly more pronounced in those clients who manifest with initial low self-efficacy. Even at the lower margins of this range, we are talking of an effect which far exceeds anything one expects to find when comparing one treatment approach or model with another.”

Turning points, values and narrative identities (Anja Koski-Jannes, Tampere)

“Constructing stories is something fundamentally human. It is something that we do naturally day by day, hour by hour without much conscious effort. Stories help us understand our experiences and ourselves and to find meaning for our lives. Meanings do not exist as entities in themselves. We create meanings by seeing events or things in their connection with other things. Stories provide a way to build these connections between events taking place over time.

“Since the main focus of this presentation is on narrative identity and its role in desistance from addictive behaviours, I will use the data from this study to draw attention to two essential elements of this change process. One of these elements concerns turning point experiences and their role in making a personal commitment to change and the second deals with the change of values supporting the new sober identity.”

Making sense of the mess in my head (Wulf Livingston, Gwynedd)

“The model has been developed with reference to a number of contexts. It is something which I sometimes use to aid my teaching and training work with generic staff and in particular social workers and social work students. It is the response of a social worker, with a belief in radical social work theoretical constructs, to a decade plus of working in a field dominated by medical and psychotherapy approaches and increasingly, short term criminal and health outcome focused commissioning processes. Finally, it reflects some of my own understanding as a drinker.”

The Tales People Tell (Ron McKechnie, Dumfries)

“We know from many years of research that the most important ingredient in achieving good outcomes is that the client felt heard. In order for them to feel heard it is essential that we paraphrase their story with their emphasis so that they know we heard what was said and understood it. If there are competing narratives within their story we should draw attention to these gently to establish to which the greatest weight is being given. Further into our relationship with the client we may wish to challenge some aspect of their story. This should be done in a tentative fashion so that any misunderstandings have the opportunity of being cleared up. Having one’s story heard and validated by being taken seriously has an essential role in establishing a therapeutic alliance. This is a form of acceptance.”