

SISTERING

Sistering Advisory Council Meeting Agenda

April 12, 2018

Working Women Community Centre 533C Bloor Street West

6:00-7:30pm

In Attendance:

Chair Judith Taylor (resident), Shelley Walters (shopkeeper)

Claire Burns Community Advisory Associate

Guest Speaker- Robin Griller, Executive Director St. Michael's Homes

Stephen Spencer-Davis

Samantha Vite- Resident/Community Worker

Ann Ball- Resident

Angela Burns- Resident

Pax Layla Gale-Santos- Cristina Martins Office

Isabella Tatar- Resident

Sally McLean- Resident / Sistering Volunteer

Simone Weir- BIA

Sonya Williams- Paradise/Resident

Angela Surdi- Councillor Layton's Office

Robert Cerjanec- Councillor Bailao's Office

Melody Grant- Sistering Drop In Coordinator

Kiera Tofflemire- Resident

Jessica Smith - Paradise/Resident

Robin Griller Talk

- Previous Work Experience: Toronto Drop In Network, Agincourt Community Services Association, St. Stephens (ran homeless drop in, addiction counselling, housing), Inner City Family Health Team.
- Current gig: St Michael's Homes (addiction service provider)- houses on Rusholme and Northumberland, supportive housing for men in recovery
- Example: Chesterlea Community Housing in North Scarborough, very isolated community, drug gang related violence, city have a townhouse in the community and a staffing person (basically given \$35,000 to "fix" the community)
- In Chesterlea they set up a photography program sponsored by TPS, IBM had computer/digital hub set up in the Community

- Change actually happened when community mums took control and broadcast their investment in the community space
- Teenagers didn't want the workers there, thought they were like cops, a lot of intimidation and fear, when the mums got invested the bullying between the teens tended to diminish
- The work in Chesterlea- similar to Bloorcourt, is not problem-resolution but rather community development
- Example: St. Stephens in Kensington Market 730-1130 am program- the neighbourhood is bohemian, accepting of difference and variety, odd mix of business and residences, lots of neighbours
- Clients would start to show up at 430am (50-100 homeless people showing up *that* early- there were some issues with residents- Robin had to troubleshoot)
- Example: St. Michael's Homes (residential program) issues on Rusholme with neighbours mostly have to do with loitering and smoking but these complaints are less than the drop in because of the Home's policy on curfew and sign in

Building Community

- As the Community Liaison Robin attends residents association meetings, BIA meetings- communication re. What are the community's issues
- Staffing person who is dealing with complaints needs to be particularly adept- one point person who is dealing with the issues- worst thing that can happen when people aren't happy is that they feel that they haven't been heard- really transparent communication
- St. Stephens has a "Good Neighbour's Policy": the people who use our program are members of our community, we expect our businesses and neighbours to be inclusive to them, this expectation is also presented to the clients (drop in centre vs. treatment program) The policy lays out really clear expectations ie. don't stand on the street corner swearing, don't go for walks in groups of 15, map on the neighbourhood on the wall where you can and cannot smoke and stand
- Becomes more challenging when dealing with clients who are predominantly mentally ill
- Live in treatment program Good Neighbour Policy more restrictive than Drop In Policy
- Ex. if you're using the program you're not sitting on the neighbouring restaurant's patio
- Community Liaison person needs to be responsive but can't promise things you can't deliver
- Have to be really clear about what input people have and what they don't have and what we can do and what we can't do, don't promise things you can't deliver
- Don't take responsibility for things that aren't our responsibility ie. Neighbours complaining that ANY time there's noise, problems in the community MUST be the fault of St. Stephen's (untrue)
- Job is to build trust with neighbours in terms of validating some complaints, taking responsibility for clients but not taking responsibility when it's not the clients
- Most stressful part of his job bar none is dealing with angry neighbours. Advice: you will never make everybody happy, but many people who start off angry can be quite friendly

- Annual BBQ- huge backyard on Rusholme (St. Michael's Homes has been there for 42 years) current residents, board, staff and alumni usually 50-80 people, having an open house, inviting people to an event a nice way to un-intimidate the space itself
- How does staff talk to clients to make sure that the issues are heard by them but not have them feel stigmatized? (ie. you can't stand outside that house and smoke and talk loudly) They use the analogy of "but if you had kids.."
- Mental health first aid training program- people who don't work with mental health and addictions (get info about this program)**
- Individual conversations with different business owners to try to negotiate, identifying which folks are more hostile, which are more supportive, mutual respect between complainants and clients, if the clients can't follow the rules they get barred from the drop in
- Door person at St. Stephens- always have a staff at the door- identifiable person for shopkeepers, residents to go to if there's an issue (very important job)

Council Brainstorm

- How do we as "good neighbours" engage with people who are struggling?
- How do we come up with actionable ideas that can achieve the community development work with a transitory client base? Constants are the residents, the shopkeepers
- How do you make a welcoming community with body language? Chit chat? What are the small things we could do to build a better community?
- Melody hasn't found mental health training that encompasses everything you need- but working with people with lived experience really helps (Hearing Voices Training U of T), crisis intervention training, Canadian training institute (de-escalation training)
- If someone is really angry there's stuff you can do- don't stand in the doorway, stand far enough apart so they can't swing at you, how to talk a person down, last thing you'd want to do is make them feel like they have to defend themselves and/or act tough, learning to speak to people
- how to learn how not to inadvertently make clients feel disrespected; volunteering is an opportunity to learn more about working/living among the mentally ill
- Big problem is that they shopkeepers and residents can't seem to get past the outside of Sistering itself- is there any outdoor monitoring during the day?
- Yup- three cleaning shifts outside, peer staff monitors during the evening hours, next week there will be a full installation in the walkway/doorway
- Robin- says that at St. Stephens there was a door person who was a huge help in keeping the front of the building clean
- "Going for a smoke is going for a walk", for a drop in program it's a real challenge, cause some of the women are there for 24 hours and they're smoking every 20 minutes, space is really a challenge, more complaints, more women there in the day
- Signage about what's going on- women selling crafts, peer workers can really help with community building (ie. hiring peer workers as door person)
- For St. Stephens the most important thing about the corner drop in was the sense of community it brought to the clients

- Sistering has a rights and responsibilities document/framework for clients in terms of their behaviour in the drop in
- Robin was reactive to complaints because they predated his being hired, since then has been proactive
- Unravelling the mystery about what is happening behind the closed doors, city funded St. Stephens for street outreach workers really helped a lot in terms of dealing with community issues
- Mission of low barrier service defines leniency re. Behaviours vs. St. Michael's Homes 10 week treatment program- it's not necessarily because the clients are women vs. men, it's that Sistering is specifically low barrier, Sistering is also hesitant to create clear cut rules because every client has different experiences

Next Meeting

- May 10 location TBD