

Guidelines for the Options Groups

The Options Groups are a weekly 'preparation for therapy' group. The purpose of the group is for members to help one another begin the process of changing self destructive ways of coping and to think about the possibility of changing, and to enable people who are intending to join the therapeutic community to prepare themselves, and to get used to the way the community works.

When you join the group you will have a host for the first week, who can answer any questions you might have, and will help you find the kitchen, loos, and explain what is going on! The groups meet all year round with breaks at Easter, Summer and Christmas.

The opening and closing community groups are chaired by a member of the group. There is also a secretary to administer the diary, who steps into the chair if necessary. The community groups have an agenda, and start and finish promptly. Each week the chair and secretary are chosen for the following week, along with the activity.

Each week two members of the related Intensive Therapy Group also attend the Options Groups, and are available to give guidance and information about the Therapy Groups. If a member of the Options Group would like to start therapy, they can arrange with the therapy group members to visit the Therapy Group. Before arranging to visit the Therapy Group, members should have attended the Options Group for at least a month, and discussed with the group what issues they would like to work on.

After the visiting week you can arrange a case conference to present to the members of the Therapy Group what you would like to work on, and a vote is taken as to whether membership of the Therapy Group will be offered. People join Therapy Groups for 18 months.

You can be a member of the Options Groups for up to a year. If you decide to leave you will need to give the group 4 weeks notice. The Agenda for the opening and closing meetings includes a number of items, some of which are explained below:

Contacts: if members of the group have had any contact with each other since they were last at the group, or with staff members, this is the place to say. Contacts outside the group are discouraged.

People arriving or leaving: notice of new members joining in the forthcoming week, and if anyone is leaving the group this is the place you can give four weeks notice.

Individual updates and issues to work on: we go round the group, with each member updating the group on how they are doing, and noting what they want to work on and how their thinking is developing about how to take things forward. Other members may make suggestions or offer support.

Visiting arrangements: anyone who would like to arrange a visit to the Therapy Group should propose it here. The group will discuss if they support this.

Anything else: any issues that have not been addressed so far. Note that the whole agenda is not always covered, so if there is something you want to be sure to say you should bring it into your individual update.

Support slot: this comes at the very end of the meeting, and is an opportunity to point out to other members where you think they have done well, to offer verbal support for the challenges they face, or to anyone who is struggling.