Great ideas for improving the lives of vulnerable people

At the SupportActionNet Conference 2008 delegates were asked to describe a great idea for improving the lives of vulnerable people in their organisation.

Winner:

Service users ‘bartering’ of services (ie gardening, ironing, baking, IT skills, DIY, decorating, minor repairs, etc – the list is endless) Would enable service users to use their skills and barter them for things they needed

Jyotika Patel, Apna Ghar Housing Association

Runners up:

Vox-pop video boxes in our young single homeless schemes giving unfettered communication to management and customer panel (Nigel Marrington, Pathway Housing Association)

Linking vulnerable people to dog walking/grooming starting by volunteering at places like Battersea Dogs’ Home (Aly Bingham, Lambeth Council)

A weekly creative writing group, which will produce an anthology/calendar for next year to be used for fundraising purposes and so people could tell their story in their words for others to hear (Tommy Cloherty, HOPE Worldwide)

Ask service users to make video diaries of their stay at the scheme and pass on to other new service users (Anne Wilde, Sanctuary Housing)

Worthy mentions:

- **Dog walking**: Support service users who want to volunteer with animals at dog kennels or want to help local people look after their pets.

- **10 things to do before you move on**: Help service users decide on and complete 10 small activities (e.g. ride on a rollercoaster) before they move on.

- **Singles club**: Run social events for service users who want to reminisce, make friends and have fun.
- **Allotments**: Rent a patch where service users can grow flowers and vegetables.

- **Slideshow night**: Run regular slideshow evenings to help older service users share their memories with one another, their families and the community.

- **Cooking groups**: Set up a group in which people take it in turns to cook healthy food for one another and their families.

- **Vox-pop**: Provide video boxes for service users to easily record messages which would be seen by the management or service user panel.

- **Creative writing**: Run a regular creative writing group which could produce an annual anthology of work.

- **SMS messaging**: Provide service users with mobile phones to allow them to text support workers with queries or problems.

- **Nurseries**: Start a nursery run in conjunction with service users.

- **Fundraising events**: Help service users to hold events to raise money for charity.

- **Dancing classes**: Help people to meet in a friendly environment.

Thanks to all who took part.