

# Lived Experience as knowledge - the evolution of a study group to learn about the KAWA (river) model of Occupational Therapy, Sarah Paynter, Mapula Phete, Natalie Quansah, Jane Willdigg



## Developing and supporting our AHP workforce

### What was the problem?

- Western-centric assessment tools and 'ways of knowing', in diverse communities.
- Positions staff as experts.

### Aim(s)

- To learn about KAWA through mutual support.
- Applying a theoretical model experientially.
- Exploring a radical, dynamic OT model.
- Identify an approach that reveals Service User narrative and context.
- To highlight the limitations of the expert lens.

### What did you do?

- Monthly group, reading and discussing a chapter
- Staff drew and shared their own river models.
- Members trialled using the KAWA with Service Users in different contexts i.e. reflexive learning.

### Data



**Rock** – an obstacle (injury)  
**Driftwood** – hobbies cluttering space  
**Environment** – trees = family = roots to hold the ground  
**Flow** – OT supports shift in perspective, Music and hobbies to enable river flow.

### How did this work improve the lives of our service users or staff?

The study group provided a space for learning and reflection that felt very safe and supportive which enabled effective learning and improved staff wellbeing.

Sharing lived experiences not only enabled staff to understand more deeply how it feels for Service Users using the KAWA model, but also developed and deepened the connections between members and self-understanding.

Staff developed the confidence to use what was a very different type of model with service users - sharing and talking about the results gave staff confidence to use the model in their clinical practice.

### Learning and what next?

- Group members using the KAWA model to provides a more meaningful non-western centric assessment tool to work with diverse communities.
- Completed education session to Newham ELFT OT's.
- Trying out the model on ourselves enhanced learning – we will promote continuation of this method.
- Exploration of staffs' lived experience enhanced staff relationships and empathy towards Service Users.
- This 'self-work' teaches how to effectively engage with therapeutic use of self.