

# Introducing yourself

## DEAR MRS SUNDERLAND,

### INTRODUCTION

#### Purpose

This activity helps the student to understand that the process of intervention and assessment starts from the very beginning of contact, including the writing of a letter of appointment.

In order to prepare for the first encounter with people it is important to try to anticipate their likely feelings and thoughts. This sense of anticipation is sometimes called 'tuning in', and it requires time and rehearsal to become an integral part of the student's practice.

#### Method

The student reads the brief background to Mrs Sunderland's case and writes a letter of introduction on the basis of this information.

The student then reads the four letters and discusses with the practice teacher the merits and disadvantages of each one.

The student re-writes their introductory letter and discusses the original and the revised letters with the practice teacher, explaining the reason for the revisions, or lack of them. (About one hour total).

#### Variations

*Dear Mrs Sunderland*, can be adapted to various situations. In informal settings, such as a Drop-In Centre, parallel exercises can be developed to help the student think about the feelings clients or users are likely to have as they approach the Centre. The student, as somebody new to the Centre, is in a good position to monitor how somebody new to the Centre might feel. For example, is the front door well signed? What kind of 'signals' does the building give off? Who or what is likely to greet the newcomer? What is the likely response of old hands to a new face?

It is fairly simple to devise an audio-taped method of simulating initial encounters. Tape four or five brief audio vignettes which reflect the agency's work and portray 'door step responses' to the student's arrival. For example, you might tape yourself as an older person saying, 'thank goodness you've come - I need loads of shopping and there's dust all over the place.' The student listens to the audio-tape, then comments or writes about what they would then say or do.

## Introducing yourself

### DEAR MRS SUNDERLAND, Activity

*Mr and Mrs Sunderland are in their eighties and have daily help from a home warden. You are the new worker. Their previous worker, Carmen Rainier, was unable to introduce you personally to the Sunderlands before she left, but promised that you would write a letter of introduction. The case notes are brief, but you read of complaints relayed via the warden that Mr Sunderland has struck his wife on two occasions, but no note of this being discussed. Mr Sunderland has complained about damp in the council flat and Carmen has written a memo to the Housing Department about this.*

**First:** write your own letter of introduction and DON'T READ ANY FURTHER YET  
**Next:** discuss the four introductory letters below  
**Last:** re-write your own letter in the light of this discussion

Edith Sunderland,  
1, Evry St.,  
Town. 15th November

Dear Edith,  
I'll be in your neighbourhood and I'd like to pop in to say hello and talk about the damp. If there are any other problems, it'll be fine to talk about those, too. I can also bring some info about local day centres and volunteer help groups.  
I hope Tuesday the 17th at about 3 in the afternoon suits; look forward to seeing you then. Don't wait in specially; I'll call back if you're out.

Chris Brown

Ms Edith Sunderland, CONFIDENTIAL  
c/o the Day Centre,  
Another Street,  
Town TN2 6AR 10th November

Dear Ms Sunderland,

*Carmen Rainier mentioned your difficulties with your husband and asked if I could make contact to see if I can help in any way.*

*I will be calling at the Day Centre on Tuesday afternoon and Aisha Ryan is happy for us to use the quiet room if you'd like to talk things over. Aisha can join us if you'd like that.*

*I look forward to meeting you on Tuesday.*  
Yours sincerely,

Jay Khan  
Social worker (student)

Mr and Mrs Sunderland,  
1, Every St.,  
Town, TN3 8YB 10th Nov.

Dear Mr and Mrs Sunderland,

*I am Pat Jones and I am a student social worker at Town Social Services, where Carmen Rainier used to work. Carmen asked if I could get in touch, and I wonder if it would be convenient for me to call on Tuesday (the 17th) at 3.00 p.m? I'm looking forward to meeting you both and I hope I can be of help.*

Pat Jones,  
Student social worker

Mr and Mrs P Sunderland,  
1, Every Street,  
Town, TN3 8YB 3rd November

Dear Mr and Mrs Sunderland,

I work in the same office as Ms Rainier, who left for another post. Unfortunately, she had some crises in her last week, so could not introduce me to you personally.

I know you are experiencing some difficulties and I would like to call to see if there is anything I can do. Perhaps we can look at your problems, focus on one and work to achieve a goal?

Please telephone to tell me if it's convenient to call on 17 November at 3.00pm.

Yours faithfully,

P. Smith C. Boss  
Social Worker Supervisor