



**AGM, April 2012** *Royal Beach Hotel, Portsmouth*

### **Speech given by Volunteer Coordinator**

I have been employed by Aurora for just under a year and I began my time at Aurora working as an ISVA - an Independent Sexual Violence Advocate. I feel very proud to say that I was Aurora's first paid member of staff - having said that, for a few months I was Aurora's only paid member of staff!

Those first few months were quite lonely but, during this time, I never once questioned my decision to take the job, neither did I question my faith, and the faith of others, that Aurora would work and be successful.

Before joining Aurora I was employed as an ISVA for the local authority and it could very easily be seen as a risky thing to have done, to leave the local authority and all its benefits for a very new voluntary sector organisation. However, I felt passionately that what Aurora was seeking to achieve matched my aims and so, I decided to join.

The role of an ISVA is to offer support and advocacy to survivors of sexual violence, whether or not these survivors are reporting to the police. I found this role very rewarding, and, while it was at times difficult, as you can imagine, I enjoyed my time as an ISVA and I admire all those who continue to offer support in these specialist roles and the women and men that have survived sexual violence and domestic abuse.

I especially enjoyed supporting survivors at court. The court support was challenging, rewarding and hard work but we had some great results. What I will take most from supporting survivors at court was not necessarily about the result, but about the survivor having the opportunity to stand up to the perpetrator and say 'what you did to me was wrong'.

Survivors were constantly surprising me, and I believe themselves, with the strength and determination that they had in relation to taking back the control that the perpetrator had taken from them.

I enjoyed my role as the Aurora ISVA immensely but, I have recently been offered, and have accepted, the new role of Volunteer Coordinator for Aurora New Dawn.

Aurora has been awarded funding to set up and provide an 'out of hours' volunteer-led domestic abuse information, support and advocacy helpline and referral service. Aurora New Dawn will work in partnership with Health, Naval Police, Naval Personnel, Hampshire Constabulary, and take referrals from within these agencies. The volunteers will also take offer self-referrals over the phone and offer a helpline for survivors. This service will provide early access to and referral to specialist services, and wrap around support for survivors.



The service will cover Portsmouth, Havant and Fareham and Gosport and we, at Aurora, believe it will bridge a much needed gap for agencies wanting to refer out of hours and for survivors seeking support and information at times when other agencies are closed.

Initially, New Dawn will offer an out of hour's service in identified 'peak times' but our long term aim is to offer a 24hr service with the existing services complimenting this approach including a sexual violence service. Volunteers will also enable increased staff cover at specific events where research shows there is an increase in domestic abuse, including national holidays, football events and other sporting events, such as the Olympics. New Dawn will also work in partnership with the Portsmouth White Ribbon Campaign to ensure awareness raising also goes hand in hand with support should anyone wish to disclose abuse.

### **Why did I join Aurora?**

There were many considerations in my decision to leave Portsmouth City Council and join Aurora.

I was very excited by the prospect of being involved at the start of something special. I was very keen to help shape the future of Aurora. I felt strongly that it would succeed, grow and develop.

I chose to take the offer at Aurora because I felt it gave me room for growth, both professionally and personally. I did not expect the professional growth to happen so soon but I am very excited about the challenge of setting up and managing this new out of hour's service, multi-agency working and recruiting and supervising volunteers.

I also believe that Aurora offers a new and different dimension to the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence services already operating in Portsmouth and the surrounding areas.

Shonagh's incredible passion and her enthusiasm for making Aurora work is highly infectious and it was not a case of getting caught up in it **But** wanting to be part of it – of something new and exciting.

The enthusiasm, passion, focus, vision, and fun that we share as a team makes Aurora an amazing place to work.

Working for Aurora is the best experience and the most enjoyable working environment of my working career.

Aurora New Dawn, in my opinion, is a fantastic organisation and we thank you for supporting us now and in the future.



I will be around afterwards, hopefully eating cake, if you want any more information about the New Dawn volunteer service.

Thank you