

The Merton Women's Support Group

Reading on Tuesday 5th March

Poets : Debjani Chatterjee, Moniza Alvi
and Jo Silver (a local poet)

Photographer : Kate Peters

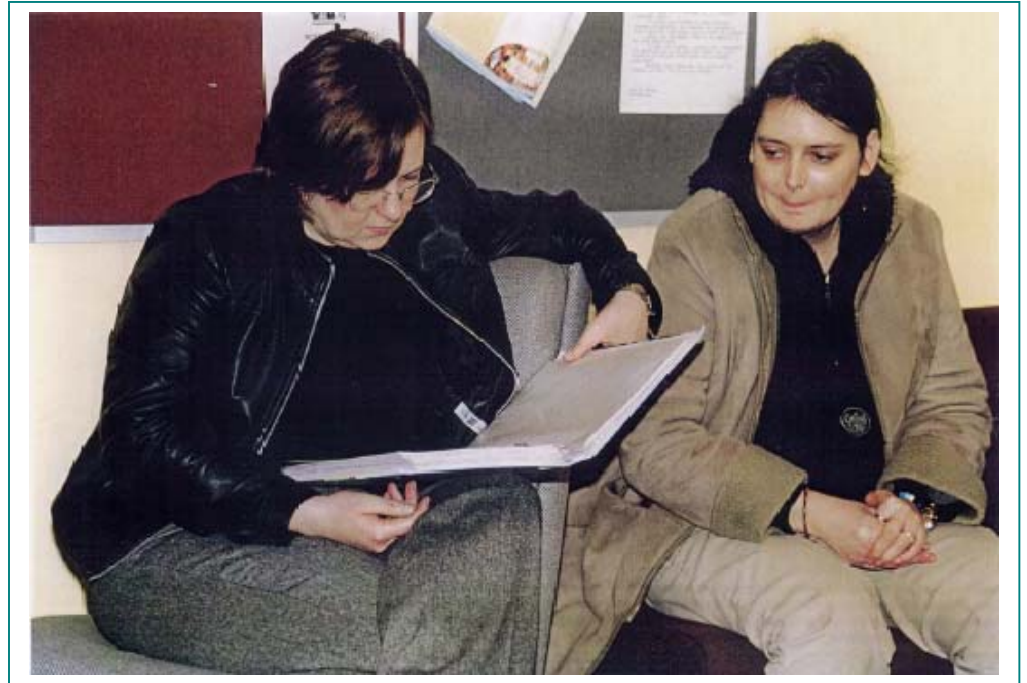
Report by Debjani Chatterjee



Some of the group with Anne (standing), Moniza and Debjani (on yellow sofa)



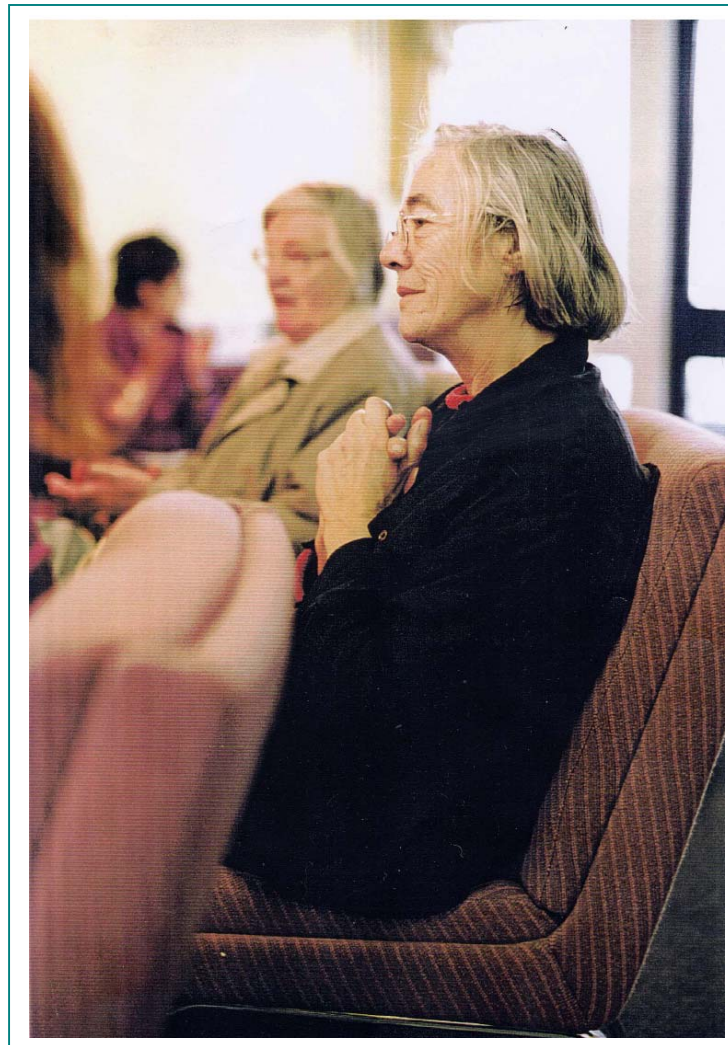
The support group takes place weekly, in a local youth club. At the time of the reading, the group was co-ordinated by Anne, a member of staff from a nearby psychiatric community centre. The group was long-established and knew Anne well. She had prepared carefully for the reading, and made it part of the group's celebration of International Women's Day.



“...Anne had put on a bit of a spread for International Women's Day – fruit juices, hot cross buns, Indian sweets, etc. [She] had all the waiting room poems in a folder on a low coffee table....”



*“...The audience was very attentive,
friendly and appreciative...”*



“Moniza & I more or less kept to both the Waiting Room idea and the 'International Women's Day' theme,



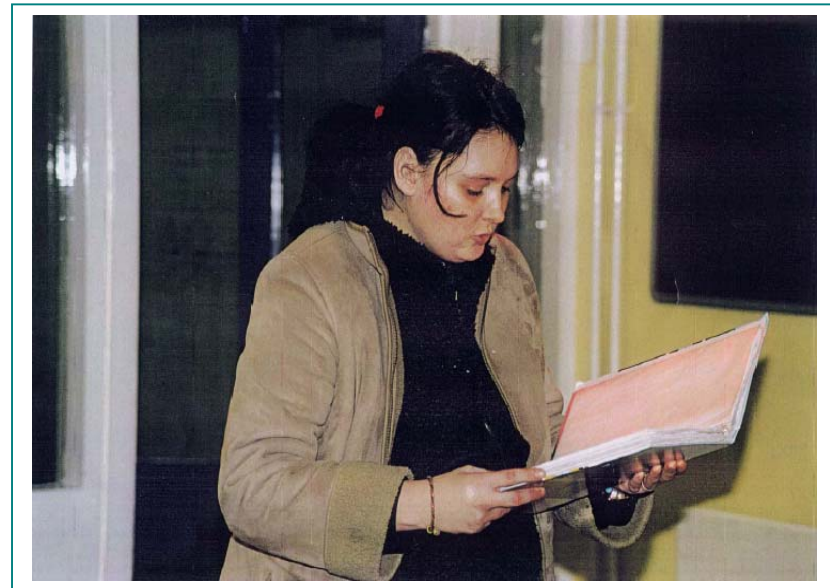
and Jo read a Wendy Cope poem [from the King's Fund collection] called 'Bloody Men'.....

I think there were between 18 & 20 women there, including a few volunteers..."





*“...2 women in the audience
read a poem each...”*





"...Afterwards there were quite a number of questions, e.g. "how do you go about getting published?" "How did you get involved with the Poems for the Waiting Room project?" "Do you mind if an editor asks you to make changes? etc. etc."

I think if there had been more time the questions would have continued.



A number of women, both elderly and young, said afterwards that they now want to join some writers' workshop or a creative writing course and get writing like us! ..."



“...I think Anne was very pleased with the afternoon. Afterwards she presented Moniza, Jo & me with a little hyacinth plant each...[and] a couple of women asked us to please come again.”