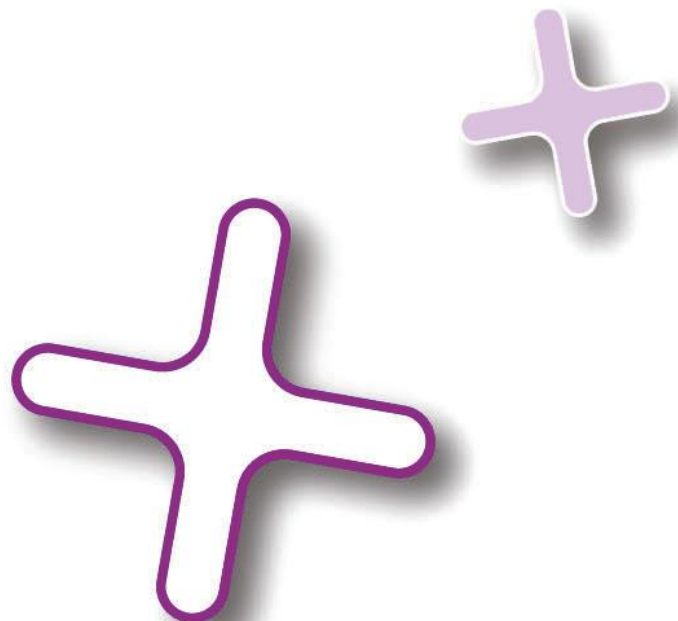


# Annual conference report



Developing the agenda  
for mentoring and  
befriending  
November 2009



# Annual conference report 2009

**The theme of MBF's 2009 national conference was "One-to-One Support: Developing the agenda for mentoring and befriending" and was held in partnership with the Prime Minister's Council on Social Action (COSA) in November.**

.....

## Overview

Last year CoSA was asked to explore what could be done by government, business, schools and communities to promote a greater focus on one-to-one relationships as a key way of supporting people and strengthening communities. The subsequent and influential '**Side by side**' ([http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social\\_action.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_action.aspx)) report setting out CoSA's work on one-to-one was produced and provided the focus for MBF's annual conference held on November 4<sup>th</sup> 2009 at the Inmarsat Conference Centre in London.

Nearly 300 people attended the conference, ranging from mentoring and befriending practitioners and leaders to policy makers, funders, commissioners and MPs. The key themes and recommendations within the 'Side by side' report provided the focus for the conference and in particular the **8 seminars** which took place during the day.

Delegates were also invited to write one or two words that conveyed what mentoring and befriending meant to them and these were posted on MBF's very own '**Mother Elephant**' as part of the **profile raising campaign** which MBF has committed to delivering. Words and phrases such as 'individual attention'; 'a future'; 'connecting people', 'change', 'support', 'trust' were included. 98% of delegates pledged their support to the national campaign to raise the profile of mentoring and befriending.

Yet again, the conference proved to be a great success, with the content and format rated as 'good' and 'excellent' overall and 93% of those who completed the evaluation stated that it had met their expectations. Comments included:

"Interesting themes, content and delivery"

"It was inspirational and innovative"

"Overall, I was impressed with the level of conversation and debate"

"Good choice of speakers to lead discussions relevant to our core work and will be attending next year!"



# Annual conference report 2009

## Keynote speakers overview

### Steve Matthews, Chief Executive, Mentoring and Befriending Foundation

The conference had a significant number of supporters and in his welcome, **Steve Matthews, Chief Executive of MBF** thanked the following: Office of the Third Sector (OTS), Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF); Business in the Community (BiTC), New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) and the Association of Adult Social Services (ADASS).

Steve went on to say that MBF's vision is of a society where mentoring and befriending can empower all people to reach their full potential and explained how MBF are going to achieve that vision. He spoke about the expansion in provision and the importance of demonstrating positive outcomes and value for money.

The recent MBF report '**Transforming lives**'

(<http://www.mandbf.org.uk/resources/publications/>) was based on organisations which demonstrated their positive outcomes, but recognised that the evidence base for mentoring and befriending isn't comprehensive and that more needs to be done. Steve talked of the need for practitioners to evaluate what they do and for government, funders and commissioners to ensure they support projects in evaluation.

He concluded by mentioning how MBF's revised **Approved Provider Standard**

([http://www.mandbf.org.uk/approved\\_provider\\_standard/](http://www.mandbf.org.uk/approved_provider_standard/)) would help to increase quality of provision.

### Angela Smith MP, Minister for the Third Sector

Angela talked about the increasing importance of one-to-one work as the global downturn impacts the social and mental health of communities. Using a Home Start project in her own constituency as an example (one which she had helped to set up) she described the increasing demand on services and in particular for volunteers to provide emotional support to families.

She talked of the lasting impression made on her of hearing about Becky and her mentor who are involved in a West Midlands project and that across government there is continuing support for mentoring and befriending through, for example, the DCSF Anti-bullying pilot ([http://www.mandbf.org.uk/projects/national\\_peer\\_mentoring\\_anti\\_bullying\\_pilot/](http://www.mandbf.org.uk/projects/national_peer_mentoring_anti_bullying_pilot/)) and the Home Office commitment to mentoring for refugees.



# Annual conference report 2009

## **David Burrowes, MP, Shadow Minister for Justice**

David described how his personal experiences as a youth worker and a solicitor working with young offenders had shaped his interest and belief in the value of one-to-one mentoring and befriending. In particular, the importance of offering positive role models to young men.

Through time spent with Chance UK he was given an opportunity to see how the lives of young people could be turned around by working with a mentor and how important it was to demonstrate the positive outcomes through evaluation and research. He was also enthusiastic in his support for the work being carried out by the St Giles Trust who have specially trained peer advisors to help support released prisoners. He also spoke of his personal commitment to championing the role of peer mentoring within the area of addiction.

## **David Robinson, Vice Chair, CoSA and author of the 'Side by side'**

David talked about two significant papers which were subsequently launched at the Chain Reaction event in London. **'Time well spent'**

(<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/309446/time-well-spent.pdf>) focussed on the relationships between advisers and clients in civil legal aid settings and concluded that good quality relationships help to result in better and longer term outcomes, which in term helps to produce long term savings.

**'People of Influence'** (<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/309443/people-of-influence.pdf>) analysed the unique nature of one-to-one relationships – and how this helps to develop the 'humanised' services that the public demands. He went on to talk about progress made on the recommendations within the reports including piloting a social impact model in three projects and the inclusion of mentoring as common core skills for those working within children.



# Annual conference report 2009

## Seminar overviews

### Seminar one

#### Why should commissioners and funders invest in one-to-one activity?

#### Seminar chair

Sally Cooke, Department of Health (and Former Third Sector Policy Consultant, Local Government Association)

#### Seminar experts

Carmel Austin, West Norfolk Befriending and June Stokes, Norfolk County Council  
Louise Middleton, Beth Johnson Foundation and Caroline Starkey, Leeds City Council  
Richard Walton, Northern Rock Foundation

**Caroline Starkey** spoke about her work in partnership council policy, with particular reference to intergenerational work. Leeds has a 'vision for Leeds' which all partners work from, one of the targets relates to having a robust system in place for clear and confident care for those who need it.

**Louise Middleton** then talked about a framework for intergeneration befriending being launched by Beth Johnson Foundation, showing the links to PSA National indicator targets and the Every child matters agenda, e.g. supporting young people to achieve. Following discussion five government departments have given £5.5 million in funding under the 'Generations Together' initiative to pilot intergenerational befriending, 12 local authorities have been in receipt of £145, 000 so far.

**Richard Walton** spoke extensively about the Northern Rock Foundation's funding to help 'build positive lives'. Northern Rock recognises the need for a holistic approach to help individuals have a better sense of who cares and the ability to build friendships and find somewhere safe to live. When tackling these complex issues one-to-one is the only way to make this occur. We are guilty in society of treating people badly and performing badly in giving people what they need, this often results in the 'revolving door' syndrome where people fall victim to their problems shortly after recovery. When funding programmes Northern Rock fund for at least 3 years and look for programmes that show they really value and use monitoring and evaluation techniques, as opposed to those who just treat this area as an 'add on'. In addition Northern



# Annual conference report 2009

Rock is not just looking for numbers they want quality, if a programme has achieved APS that ticks a box but is not essential.

**Junes Stokes** representing Norfolk County Council, spoke about the 'self directed support agenda', one of whose 7 key outcome targets is for older people to stay independent for as long as possible, befriending fits in here. When commissioning West Norfolk Befriending it really helped that they were going through APS. Commissioners aren't so concerned with the 'how' you do what you do but rather evidence of those changes. Norfolk County Council commissions for outcomes, often joint commissioning amongst teams including social workers and local operational services. In terms of befriending the council do recognise the need for long term befriending and want to be flexible, but if short term can be offered the council has an interest there. They have been working with West Norfolk Befriending to see how they can together develop unit costs for befriending so they can be looked at with regard to personal budgets.

**Carmel Austin** from West Norfolk Befriending then provided her perspective of engaging with Norfolk county council. The service started in June 2002 and has in some way been the victims of their own success. MBF and social services have helped them to develop a service specification and framework, this allowed them to link their work to the National Indicators and local outcomes as spoken about by June Stokes. Social services did joint reviews with them, the recognition from the local authority about the need to be flexible and not just focus on 'bums on seats' here really helped and resulted in them to provide a better quality service.

Carmel said it was hard putting together a unit cost but very useful. The personalisation agenda was scary and still is, though because of our partnership working with Norfolk County Council we feel reassured that we will be able to provide interim support to those who may not yet be ready to make the move to personal budgets. There are some barriers to the agenda, one of which is what do we do now, we can't be reassured of our 3 years funding and have to start planning for the uncertainty. Everything else is very positive and our partnership has been a great success. Things that were key are; open communication, at the 'coalface' so to speak, the fact that commissioners came out and talked to clients and befrienders, this enabled them to see first hand what is going on, prior to this commissioners had no idea of what we were doing and how much we were doing! Opening dialogue was key to show depth and quality of what is out there in terms of befriending, social workers were also at a loss as to what we were doing, putting the service specifications together in partnership and with users made it easier, we also had the help of MBF. Achieving APS was also pivotal.



# Annual conference report 2009

After all the speakers had given their perspectives chair, Sally Cooke, identified the key themes that were spoken about. They were; outcomes, identifying shared objectives, open communication and dialogue, relating what you are doing to stakeholder priorities and involving users in identifying the outcomes they need to achieve. Questions from the floor were then taken.

**Question 1 - There is an increasing struggle at Reading matters to get secondary schools to invest, getting volunteers isn't a problem, but the outcomes seem to get lost as they come about outside the school setting. How can we get investment for intergenerational work?**

Caroline Starkey responded that there is a need to capture the reciprocity of intergenerational work and use it as a hook for further funding, intergenerational work opens up huge understanding between the parties involved.

Richard Walton commented that from a funder's point of view 'near to peer' was some of the most successful and effective work that Northern Rock fund. Catherine responded that at Reading Matters they find the opposite, what they see in intergenerational work is amazing and strongly contributes towards community cohesion.

**Question 2 - What is the relationship with APS and commissioning?**

June Stokes from Norfolk County Council felt APS was a great way of looking holistically at what you are doing and is a good benchmark standard for the council to use when commissioning befriending.

**Question 3 - How will the Personalisation agenda transition be managed with regard to universal services such as brokerage and advocacy?**

June Stokes responded that there is a need for pilot sites where lessons could be learned, at Norfolk County Council there is a commissioning team looking at infrastructure services where funding needs to be continued.

**Question 4 - How do we show evidence of dimensions such as happiness and community cohesion, what is a suitable index?**

Carmel Austin responded that case studies are often used. June Stokes recognised this issue and reiterated that there is a move at Norfolk County Council towards 'commissioning for outcomes'.



**Question 5 – How do we contact commissioners? My job is in sustainability, what shall I do? Bang on the door?**

June Stokes responded that you need to find out who your social work team locality manager is and make contact with them.



# Annual conference report 2009

## Seminar 2

### Social Return on Investment (SROI) – a help or hindrance?

#### Seminar chair:

Jeremy Nicholls, SROI UK

#### Seminar experts:

Lucy Heady, New Philanthropy Capital (NPC)

Rob Owen, St Giles Trust

Gracia McGrath, OBE, Chance UK

**Jeremy Nicholls** talked about SROI which started in the USA about 15 years ago and is a framework used for accounting the value that organisations create. Its underlying principles are: involving stakeholders; understanding change (what changes for people); valuing (using financial proxies); focusing on what is significant; not over claiming (credibility) and being transparent (external validation).

**Lucy Heady** then spoke about how we need to look at the value of social outcomes as well as profits and to put time and effort into measuring outcomes effectively which is not always easy especially with soft outcomes. The evidence base for mentoring and befriending is held back by the development of lots of bespoke tools which doesn't bring together a coherent evidence base. A concern with SROI is that in practice people don't live by its principles but it can be useful if based on accurate measurement. Need to build robust measurement. NPC recently developed a wellbeing questionnaire (see NPC website)

**Rob Owen** stated that SROI is a tool, not a golden bullet. There has never been a greater need for us to demonstrate that we produce extra value due to the government cuts that will fall in 2011. By next spring, they will be looking to fund those things that will create longer-term value which can provide opportunities. The Social Impact Bond (where private sector companies invest in organisations who show savings and can repay them so they can re-invest again) is a useful model. We need to differentiate ourselves. St Giles Trust has 250 different funding streams and SROI couldn't work with all aspects but we can use it for some services as a tool to market them to funders. We looked at SROI alongside our work in 26 prisons through our peer advice model that uses ex-offenders to support other offenders. This scheme was shown that at £50,000 costs it saved £2.5million per peer adviser. SROI if done intelligently can be useful.



# Annual conference report 2009

**Gracia McGrath** talked about how SROI is impact measurement under another name and whether SROI is a help or a hindrance is irrelevant, it's a necessity and we need to be doing it. Organisations need to go back to basics and look at their aims and objectives as these are what you have to prove and to put appropriate measurement tools into place. We used Goodmans Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire to measure starting and ending scores and distance travelled. We also used money received from the Home office to get some work undertaken in this area using [Pro Bono Economics](#). Chance UK can save £4,000 per child per year by keeping a pupil out of a behavioural unit for 3 months with an even bigger impact if that child doesn't go on to offend (has been stated that Chance UK saves £100,000 a year for every child). We also contribute to the "engaged community" through using volunteers who give their time for free to make a difference. We need to give figures so that funders can make the hard decisions. Let's do it creatively, do it well and strengthen the sector.

## **Question 1 - How do we differentiate between interventions so that we know that the mentoring/ befriending are what worked when clients may have many interventions at the same time?**

Rob Owen responded that we should ask the client what is the single biggest factor that makes a difference. If client group isn't able to self-report then train people to work alongside them from same client groups as this will break down communication barrier i.e., St Giles Trust trains ex-offenders to advise offenders. Look at what happens if you take out some of the services or request that the client only has your service. Stay in touch with clients to find out later what the impact has been – some will come back and mentor themselves.

Gracia McGrath responded that Chance UK is solution-focused and if what we do works well we do more of it and if not then we do something else.

## **Question 2 - How does the third sector fit with SROI?**

There were concerns about whether SROI is the way to demonstrate the third sector's impact and that we are going down a private sector model which isn't as appropriate for the third sector. The seminar were concerned about the cost and whether charities can do complicated analysis which would be unaffordable for some.

The panel responded that SROI can provide a positive reflection of what the third sector does and focus on the value we provide and not what we save.



# Annual conference report 2009

## **Question 3 – How can projects demonstrate impact?**

We need to find a way of telling our stories credibly. There needs to be more of a shift across all sectors as to what is stringent evidence. The mentoring and befriending sector needs to look at what measures we need and collect information internally. Charities are giving up evaluation as result of the economic downturn. This is a worrying trend. There is the expectation you have to have evaluation but who will pay for it. We need better research and data outcomes.

## **Question 4 - One project has to play down the befriending part of their service even though it is at the heart of it, as it doesn't fit with local authority priorities. How can we deal with funders?**

It is important to let funders get involved. The ones who have more intensive engagement with your project tend to give more money. The third sector has to play to its unique strengths i.e., some people don't necessarily want to engage with the state but will engage with third sector.



# Annual conference report 2009

## Seminar 3

### Employee volunteering – making the case for one-to-one volunteering

#### Seminar chair:

Gennie Franklin, Business in the Community (BITC)

#### Seminar experts:

Kay Allen, Royal Mail

Declan Swan, Institute for National Education Business Excellence (NEBE)

Bruno Shovelton, PricewaterhouseCoopers

Pam Webb, Zurich Financial Services

Daniel Pearson, Age Concern and Help the Aged

The session started by identifying “burning issues”:

- Insurance
- Employee volunteering during the recession
- Communicating with corporates
- Sustainability
- Short term or long term projects
- Getting through the door

**Kay Allen** stated that the Royal Mail received many letters requesting support. Groups need to get smarter in their approach. Corporates have a budget and a strategy (in this case Social Action Strategy) and therefore a reason to show their support. Royal Mail completed an “audit of passion” consulting 140 colleagues to establish what should be in this strategy and then analysed 60,000 activities. Staff overall decided to concentrate effort in 3 areas: help in crisis; unlocking talent; and community. Therefore organisation or project requests would need to know this with prior research in order to link their request to the strategy. They then approached national charities of which Barnardos was supported and voted for by the staff and there is no end date set on this partnership. Activities are centred around one-to-one coaching of 16-19 year olds from hectic lifestyles and mentoring of those in care. The coaching skills can then be evidenced as also benefiting Royal Mail. Royal Mail supports long-term commitment and mentoring activity is key given the current climate of business recovery and postal strikes. They have also allowed staff members to go out on long term volunteering placements as opposed to redundancies.



# Annual conference report 2009

**Declan Swan** represents EBP organisations traditionally who look at one-to-one activity and mentoring sits comfortably within this. This has now shifted towards a trend in e-mentoring and social networking which can be seen to be much more cost effective. Together with the recession there is a huge opportunity for staff involvement via their employer and opportunities could be seen to be limitless. Employers can use professional knowledge to inspire young people by helping them to make the right choices and effectively therefore assist employers in picking the right staff. There are also huge benefits in partnership working i.e. around issues such as CRB. Also, as stated by Kay Allen, there is a need to be aware of business priorities and plans to match their need/link into their business plan. Align yourself to the needs of the business.

**Bruno Shovelton** looked at the benefits to all parties involved. A mentor can develop own personal skills, a mentee can potentially be a benefit to the working world and business can benefit from a better motivated and skilled workforce so productivity can rise as a result. Some people can be cynical about CSR policies, but how can you force someone to volunteer? If it's driven by passion and fully supported it will work. There is room however for profile raising of such initiatives to "weave a thread in the fabric of society". This will in turn reduce fear, increase hope and create ideas.

**Pam Webb** spoke about how their befriending activity is run with Age Concern through Zurich Community Trust Funding (operational for 35 years) and stressed that their priorities are driven through their community. An overriding benefit of Zurich's volunteering activities/strategy is that it improves the employment positioning for working for Zurich. The scheme is so successful that over the next 5 years 9 other corporates plan to support 1500 more isolated people. Zurich Community Trust employs an account worker to work specifically with the corporates to help train and support and Leeds University have completed their evaluation. The current economic climate time is precious so Zurich now allows staff to volunteer in their lunch hours to satisfy both employer and volunteer placement needs. The methods employed (tele-befriending) mean costs are low with staff using existing equipment and not having to leave the office. It could be argued that the recipient gains more from this type of support model also. The scheme benefits all involved. Some staff can't give money but can give time and they can develop communication skills. Clients receive regular support via a model that is easy and reliable with little implementation. It provides a happy work force and an effective way to meet CSR policy. The scheme is wide reaching and will be replicated and grown owing to success. However in the



# Annual conference report 2009

recession costs are being cut. Projects and organisations should tap into this. Volunteering could be a cost saving alternative to training and development in the current climate.

**Daniel Pearson** discussed his role in growing the scheme and engaging other corporates. 2005-2006 witnessed a re-focus to be more specific around telebefriending. Remaining committed to business plan, they felt short term relationships could be detrimental to the activities. Issues of the relationship/contracts were the clarity of the deal, long term commitment, trust and delivery which performed to target and profitability. This led to development of flagship scheme. It's important to think creatively. One-to-one does not always have to be face to face (as per telebefriending and echoed by Bruno Shovelton's comments around e-mentoring and social networking) however we need to be aware of corporates restraints and scales. We need to engage with the corporate and identify how and why it's appropriate to engage for the business and individual. The effectiveness of the right partnership is a win-win situation.

## **Question 1 – Does HR look for mentoring or befriending experience when employing?**

Kay Allen responded that they do and in particular HR looks at graduates' volunteering experience. We are looking at changing the application process and looking for who can challenge the norm as Royal Mail moving towards a coaching culture rather than a D&G policy so this fits into this strategy well.

## **Question 2 - Developing the skills of the mentee is important, but what about the mentor?**

Bruno Shovelton commented that skills picked up by the mentor can transfer to the customer and benefit the business.

Kay Allen stated that the business reason works. Coaching training costs us £15,000 per employee and mentoring is a workable alternative. You can sell your project as it will allow staff to develop coaching and mentor skills.

## **Question 3 – How long should individual relationships last?**

Bruno Shovelton responded that the relationship should stick to stated commitment. Volunteers may want to continue on an individual basis after this.



# Annual conference report 2009

## **Question 4 – What's the take up for one day challenges rather than long term commitment?**

Gennie Franklin stated that BITC ran one off taster events and found that this resulted in a 30% catchment onto the next volunteering level so there is mileage in this.

Kay Allen commented that it's not one size fits all, therefore you need to include all options where possible in your plan. It's hard to disconnect from a success sometimes. If it works don't put an end date!

Declan Swan added that you should pay attention to the requests of your volunteer base.

## **Question 5 - What happens if a volunteer leaves or is made redundant?**

Bruno Sholveton responded that most will continue driven by their individual passion.

Declan Swan highlighted the alternatives such as e-mentoring/telebefriending which could counteract this issue. You need to be prepared to go back to thinking creatively if it works, as per Kay Allen's point, don't put an end date.



# Annual conference report 2009

## Seminar 4

### Campaigning for Change

#### Seminar chair:

David Robinson, Prime Minister's Council on Social Action

#### Seminar experts:

Alan Given, Nottingham Crime and Drugs Partnership

Graham Allen MP

Gerald Oppenheim, Big Lottery

Emma Dobie, Mentoring and Befriending Foundation

**Emma Dobie** discussed how a common identity is needed across the sector, concentrating on outcomes as the impact of mentoring and befriending is difficult to prove. This needs to be inclusive and representative. It shouldn't be about the process (e.g. one to one, group etc) but should be about values and common themes. The sector needs to unite behind idea of common ethos, values and benefits. We are not inventing a new identity but getting the sector to unite under a 'One World Platform'. This is not an MBF campaign but a sector campaign which needs to be promoted nationally, regionally and locally and needs to involve service users and volunteers.

**Graham Allen MP** drove a local strategic partnership called One Nottingham. The key was early intervention as pre-empting saves millions of pounds. SEAL in primary and Life Skills courses in secondary schools give children a social and emotional bedrock which aims to break the intergenerational cycle. This was pre-emptive, not reactive, as is the concept of one-to-one. He commented that it is harder to "tick box" in Whitehall with regards to one-to-one support due to the evidence base. The Government needs to approve of one-to-one and early intervention. There is great work taking place cross-party in individual pockets. Value for money is key when speaking to decision makers at Whitehall.

**Alan Given** commented that a small number of delegates present knew what commissioners want. It is difficult for both projects and commissioners to get to the 'same destination'. Early intervention is key. It's not just about getting numbers through the projects, it's about better outcomes, hard outcomes and logging successes. Sustainable funding helps to ensure longevity and incorporating into mainstream activity.



# Annual conference report 2009

**Gerald Oppenheim** spoke about how since 1995 £300m of grants from Big Lottery have been spent on mentoring and befriending in its broadest sense. Lottery funding is not meant to be long term funding. Big Lottery is an outcomes funder, it asks what difference will the project make to individuals. It wants evidence supplied based on experience of building stronger communities and active citizenship. Funders expect there to be a focus, not an expectation that the project will solve all problems. The Young People's Fund has recruited young people to help make decisions as to how funding should be spent on projects for young people.

## **Question 1 - What about projects which engage at the crisis-point and where early intervention is not applicable?**

We need to change the mindset around early intervention. We will always need to 'fight fires' but there is proof that brief interventions work in the majority of cases (e.g. with those at risk of offending), reducing the need for long term support.

## **Question 2 - Should Commissioners be more proactive in finding the projects?**

Projects should not rely on government funding, a financial instrument to 'borrow against savings' – i.e. short term early intervention provides savings in longer term

## **Question 3 – How can we clarify how we talk about outcomes?**

Rather than terming outcomes as 'soft' and 'hard', we need to talk about 'harder to measure' and 'easier to measure'. Projects should aim to help commissioners meet their targets –measure the journey to the end outcome (i.e. intermediate outcomes).

## **How do we evidence work being done with older people? –**

We can demonstrate the financial value of reduction of hospital admittance and keeping older people in their own homes as a result of befriending schemes.

## **How do we measure the history of mentoring & befriending?**

Mentoring and befriending is built on the idea of 'poverty of relationship'. It is a case of intervening creatively and inspiring people to be active citizens.

National accreditation may help with getting sector under one umbrella – commissioner would also look favourably on projects offering accreditation to volunteers.



# Annual conference report 2009

## Seminar 5

### **Putting modern day technology to use within one to one support settings: feasibility, benefits and costs**

#### **Seminar chair:**

Richard Piggin, Beatbullying

#### **Seminar experts:**

MT Rainey, Horsemouth

Dr Tessa Stone, Brightside Trust

Harpinder Collacott , Meningitis Research Foundation

**Harpinder Collacott** developed a telebefriending service in 2000 aiming to bring together experiences of those suffering from Meningitis. This is an anonymous service with little personal information shared and matches by experience and outcome which crossed the huge geographical obstacles faced. We have found the scheme successful as witnessed by befriendedees coming back as befrienders. Over 9 years we have reached 950 people so the challenge at the moment is to look at new ways of increasing numbers as phones are a costly method. Especially as technology takes us over people are less confident on the telephone, particularly the young which is one of our target groups to reach, so we are aware we need to engage more modern forms of communication and technology. We have since developed email support with a secure server which keeps anonymity and overcomes crossborder activity. We have also started using blogs and forums of closed groups, as well as an interactive book of experience and facebook usage. We are now consequentially less constrained. The two main challenges we face are cost and evaluation.

**MT Rainey** commented that so much can be done at the right cost if engaging with the right platforms. Social change has dictated the change from old media to new. We now have the power to connect more widely over shared interests, partnerships and experiences and can address all kinds of social barriers for social aspirations and mobility. This phenomenon will not go away – it's happening everywhere. Horsemouth is a "fit for purpose" non-commercial place online keeping it purposeful and safe. It's free informal online mentoring for 16+ with potential to be huge on an online basis. People complete a profile (18000 currently registered as informal mentors) and then potential clients search via criteria & select mentor with 95% success rate. Mentors can then be rated and tagged. This situation is easily workable with



# Annual conference report 2009

mentors being able to manage their own time and suggest time they want to commit to. We operate with partner agencies such as Women's Aid (15 trained advisors). Scale is reached owing to access which makes costs comparatively cheap.

**Tessa Stone** represented Brightside Trust which is an educational charity established in 2003 with a narrower remit of providing access to medical and health professionals for disadvantaged people. We had £113,000 to spend on reaching most the hard to reach youth groups. This lead us to asking what are young people interested in? This resulted in developing a secure (password protected) one-to-one social blogging site with content regularly updated and online resource supplements provided. We found this to "plug the social gaps" i.e. materials/research/papers and easy access to them. We also train and support the mentors. This has grown now to assist those overcoming barriers to employment and as the bulk of our audience is youth (vulnerable groups, offenders, young parents/disabilities) we also work with universities regarding overcoming retention issues. The bulk of cases work best when integrated with partners i.e. Aim Higher but also work well as a stand alone support tool i.e. young people in care. Support from mentors fits in well with working life as it's computer based and also works well with academics as it can be structured to be term based – although we are considering how to fill the non term time gaps! The costs and implementation of new technology are constantly shifting and we need to keep pace. We must ensure evaluation is qualitative as well as quantative. Charitable Trust challenges all of this but overall the process is worthwhile as it's able to reach a wider audience as the benefits match at least the effort involved.

**Richard Piggin** talked about how the internet reaches hard to reach groups. Beatbullying is a children's charity engaging peer mentors to beat bullying. Cyber mentors are trained as peer mentors offline and online and 1600 have been trained over range of schools and colleges and of mixed ages and backgrounds. Training addresses child protection, boundaries and safety alongside other modules. There are lots of practice models with senior cyber mentors acting as support to standard cyber mentors and to relay information back to co-ordinators. Staff members are also trained as counselors. Since its launch in 2009 there have been 2000+ visitors to the site and the site provides links to other sites and resources of interest to the client group, providing a great platform for access and the potential to reach many. We work hard on monitoring and evaluation and understand its importance. We have shown a 40% reduction in bullying via offline activity. Online activity tends to monitor issues of confidence, truancy and skills increase.



# Annual conference report 2009

## **Question 1 – Did you witness a big hit or slow build up to usage?**

Harpinder Collacott said it was a huge hit. People wanted answers there and then so we introduced a team and we fielded the requests as they came in. You may want to slow scale release your activity or complete a regional/mall scale pilot before a wider/national roll out.

Richard Piggin responded that young people are mainly using facebook, bebo and youtube. It's good to have a presence but be comfortable with this.

Tessa Stone added that it's important to be aware of your audience. You can ask users to log on to your service via facebook as a hook as they are already there!

## **Question 2 – What about reaching those without the required technology/what if a home doesn't have a computer?**

Tessa Stone responded that the value needs to be placed on content not method alone. Phones are also key to engage a young person.

A delegate from Radiowaves gave an example of a project which uses mobiles to upload the website and then gets responses from the website to the phone.

## **Question 3 – How do we measure success and demonstrate to funders?**

The website and content alone can sometimes serve as evidence alongside the number of contacts. Statistics are very observable. Personal stories and case studies can be a way of observing the qualitative data also needed.

## **Question 4 – What about safety issues? People are more willing with anonymity to disclose more, how much of a risk is this? Aren't both parties at risk particularly if they meet?**

MT Rainey replied that a number of things can be done to mitigate risk. 5% of our communications are stopped via online safeguarding using key words/discussions/content topics such as £, sex, drugs, death, and address sharing. No faces are shown and photos are banned and no personal names used and only pseudonyms. It could be argued that identities are more authentic as there are no barriers. You can only ever be 99.9% safe as there is always the unknown and unexpected. Behaviours are watched and triggers acted upon but to date there have been no major issues. With pin codes placed on phones used activities can be traced and people are accountable for those actions. We lose 20% of people



# Annual conference report 2009

in this process, but these are precisely the people we don't want. It is a culture that is built on trust and it can be made to work.

Richard Piggin said we utilise the Child Exploitation Support Centre who engage human moderators for checking content and we are CES endorsed. We are as safe as we can make ourselves.

## **Question 5 – How does technology engage older people?**

MT Rainey stated that 25% of our users (mentors & mentees) are over 50.

## **Question 6 – Matching seems quite informal when using technology, is this the case?**

MT Rainey replied that we don't match. The mentees pick from a mentor profile via a search tool. The individual then reviews and selects from profiles found against their set criteria via the search. There is no activity investment cost as the mentee chooses the mentor!

Richard Piggin commented that it's the same with us and we haven't found the kids to be that fussy. It has also been proven not be gender or age specific which shows that barriers have indeed been broken down. This wouldn't necessarily happen offline.

## **Question 7 – How would you suggest moving 1year + (long term/resource draining relationships) to an e-support focus?**

Tessa Stone responded that you should set up an individual coaching plan to be reviewed online, supporting this with access to online tools.

## **Question 8 – Can we buy a package? What are the standards within the industry? –**

MT Rainey commented that as it's a new field there is effectively nothing to measure us against. It's constantly developing.

Tessa Stone stated that MBF's Approved Provider Standard is a useful starting point for anyone and you can develop from here.

Harpinder Collacott replied that the Information standard has a web element to it. GOVC3 technical standards and accessibility standards cut across.



# Annual conference report 2009

## Seminar 6

### Active citizenship

#### Seminar chair:

John Ramsey, Age Concern Help the Aged

#### Seminar experts:

Mike Locke, Volunteering England

Martin Simon, Timebanking UK

John Knights, Office of Third Sector

**Mike Locke** discussed the exchange relationship and what volunteers get out of the experience. It is a motivating and social experience which gives volunteers skills and allows them to use their time well. There are concerns over 'voluntariness' of volunteering at times. Political parties talk loosely about it and it can appear coercive. Volunteering England policy is that volunteering should be by own freewill. There is the issue how much of a difference does it makes to the recipient of volunteering to know it is voluntary. The Commission on Future of Volunteering shows that benefits rules are misunderstood. CRB checking and other forms of vetting and barring may be putting people off volunteering. Some people are predisposed to volunteer but the majority need a 'trigger' to volunteer. Tensions exist between what volunteers require and what voluntary organisations need.

**John Knights** spoke about how volunteers often do activities that paid staff are unable to do. Mentoring and befriending is a choice and people appreciate that someone gives their time voluntarily. Volunteering allows people to use their own experience to mentor or befriend and promotes community cohesion by volunteers supporting people they may not otherwise have contact with. There is a perception that volunteering takes longer than it actually does. Evaluation of mentoring and befriending work is needed to prove to government departments that it works. Costs analysis of mentoring and befriending is also needed, as well as qualitative and quantitative evidence.

**Martin Simon** talked about helping people find balance between being a consumer of services or goods and being an active citizen. Timebanking locates volunteers back into their own community. Social environment is in trouble due to isolated lives being lived and the mobility of people. This makes people unsure who they can trust and who has the skills they need.



# Annual conference report 2009

Timebanking have created their own form of “currency” – 1 hour volunteering = 1 unit of time. We use an online service. The computer replaces ‘collective memory’ of who could help in certain circumstance. People find it difficult to ask others for help. There are 122 Timebanks and 87 setting up. These deal with emergencies. Timebanks can mobilize quickly – e.g. Gloucestershire floods. There is a dropout rate of only 2-3%. Businesses are involved and provide free admission to cinemas, swimming baths, events etc.

## **Question 1 - Are we effective in evaluating and can we use this as evidence to gain funding?**

Evidence is seen as the key. COSA’s Side By Side report recommended that the Third Sector Research Centre led a multi-agency evaluation of mentoring and befriending. We need to share means of evaluating and pool resources.

## **Question 2 – What is being done on government level?**

Government guidance on CRB checks and volunteers was recently circulated. The government aims to reduce regulations for the third sector by 25%. There are unintended knock on effects of regulations and interpretation of regulations is an issue. The costs of employing someone to put regulations into action is high. A government project to support volunteer managers was launched at the end of October 2009.

## **Question 3 – Young people’s interest in being active citizens seems to disappear in their twenties, how do we maintain their interest?**

We need to link popular culture to volunteering and people need incentives to volunteers. People are not as apathetic as they seem as levels of formal and informal volunteering are high according to a DCLG survey. We need to regain trust in our fellow people.



# Annual conference report 2009

## Seminar 7

### Standards for one-to-one work: Quality provision and delivery

#### Seminar chair:

Steve Matthews, Mentoring and Befriending Foundation

#### Seminar experts:

Tina Parker, Skills for Justice

Jan Carruthers, BBC Children in Need

Kathy Leahy, The Matrix Standard

**Kathy Leahy** spoke about how Matrix isn't the only standard. There are hundreds of standards out there including the Approved Provider Standard for voluntary mentoring and befriending activity. It is important that you chose the right one for you. It must be relevant to the context of your work. The benefits to quality standards include bench marking, the opportunity to look at your organisation and where you measure up in relation to others. The journey is the most valuable part of achieving any standard. Using quality standards can give a common language; provide you with a direction of travel to ensure that all are moving in the same direction. Areas of weakness are easily identified, by going through the accreditation process. Assessors or critical friends go on site to assess; these relationships can turn out to be invaluable. Leverage for extra resources, projects/organisations use assessors feedback to go to SMT our assessors say we need x, y, z and we need the funding/time to put these things in place. It can be an important factor in the development of an organisation. Be practical, you must invest in time and resources. You may want to work with external advisors. No standard tells you what you have to do, it just asks the questions. Understand the language of the standard e.g. staff have to be competent – some use qualifications as a factor but staff may have gained those qualifications over 10 years previously and not had any continuous development. There is always a cost in terms of resources and in the assessment even if a small cost to purchasing the process. Ultimately if the investment gives good results in development it is certainly worth paying for.

**Tina Parker** discussed the National Occupational Standards (NOS) which define the competences which apply to job roles or occupations in the form of statements of performance, knowledge and the evidence required to confirm competence. They cover the key activities undertaken within the occupation in question under all the circumstances the



# Annual conference report 2009

job holder is likely to encounter. They standardise the performance staff are expected to achieve in their work. They have been developed in consultation with practitioners and employers and stakeholders were asked to contribute. Occupational standards cover client based activities such as communication skills and team working, standard competencies that employers look for in employees. There are 103 occupational standards and they are recognised as benchmarks of good practice and used for individuals or organisational aims. They are not mandatory and doesn't show how, they are purely a framework to work towards. NOS can provide staff with career opportunities but they are not qualifications, although they can be used to enhance careers. They can increase confidence to help practice in a competent way and benchmark what is best practice. With multi agency working, you can agree to work to a common standard therefore ensuring quality control across services. They can improve HR management systems and create a common language within the organisation. NOS help develop frameworks and are building blocks to vocational qualifications. Draft qualifications and NOS are out for consultation at the moment.

**Jan Carruthers** talked about Fund Child focused projects that make a positive difference to the lives of disadvantaged children and young people in the UK. There are over 100 'live' mentoring or befriending projects at the moment. These projects offer a vast range of mentoring or befriending opportunities - for example peer mentoring to support young people with learning disabilities to take part in social opportunities or long-term adult volunteer befrienders for children are affected by issues such as their family recovering from the effects of domestic violence. It is an online application. A first check for eligibility and compliance (applications which do not proceed from this stage are given feedback to help them make another application) is made. The next step would be a telephone conversation with an assessor to explore the application in more depth, then committee and Trustee meetings. It is not as easy as you might think for funders to 'give away' money. This is not because there isn't an enormous amount of good work going on – it's because a poorly completed application can make it hard to see the good work behind it. Making grants can be compared to making an investment or buying a product (but in this case what we are buying is support for children and young people, from the organisations who are best placed to provide it). Any investor has a set of criteria in the back of their mind, whether consciously or unconsciously, and this is a useful way to think about making grants – if you were spending your own money what would make you confident about investing in a project. At its most simple Children in Need would want to know that: you have identified a need for your project, you have a good idea of how to meet this need and you have the



# Annual conference report 2009

capacity, quality systems and sound practices in place to make it work effectively and safely. Applications for this type of work have increased over recent years. There is good reason for this as mentoring and befriending have been shown to be very effective ways of working with children and young people. But due to the one-to-one nature of the work, this approach also carries extra risks. Where there is a 'one-to-one' component to a project, we have certain criteria that we are looking for organisations to be able to demonstrate they meet. This criteria was put together with the support of MBF (and Steve in particular) and are drawn from, but do not exactly match the MBF's own quality standard, There isn't time to go through this in full, but I've picked out some of the key criteria to go through in a little detail.

## **Question 1 - How do you find the relevant standard?**

Research, look at similar organisations to yourselves. There will appropriate standards for your sector. Be clear about what you are aiming for.

## **Question 2 - Can working towards a quality standard stifle creativity?**

Standards provide the what's not the how's so therefore it does not; you can be as creative as you wish. They allow for innovation, always looking at new ways of good practice and promote this. We don't state how you should reach your end goals. However, there can be seen to be a fine balance between some prescription in providing a standard of quality that should be included and not stifling creativity.

## **Question 3 - Costs do prevent organisations accessing the standards, do you agree?**

This is not necessarily true. For example, MBF do have a bursary for very small schemes wanting to apply for the Approved Provider Standard. Some have relatively low cost and senior management often find such process as extremely valuable to an organisation and so will source the funding. This is also where it is important to consider the application of accreditation from applying for funding in the first instance. National Occupational Standards are free.

## **Question 4 - From a small organisation's point of view the promotion of quality standards, particularly in relation to gaining continuation funding can be seen as a money making scheme by larger organisations, what are your views on this?**

Funders would not endorse quality standards in this way. What we do look for is good practice and working to a certain benchmark, which can be demonstrated through having an accreditation but funders would never class having a quality standard as mandatory.



# Annual conference report 2009

To gain continuation funding should never be the sole reason to apply for accreditation, it should be about engaging with the journey and development.

**Question 5 - Unique relationships are made with volunteers as the service user may not have family or friends and so have a very different relationship with volunteers. If we professionalise volunteers would it ultimately affect their one-to-one relationships?**

Motivational factors do differ from volunteer to volunteer, some may volunteer initially to gain an occupational standard or qualification, and use this as a stepping stone into employment. As all volunteers are trained as they embark on the process they have an awareness of their behaviour in the relationship from the beginning being formalised from the start. Ultimately the one-to-one relationship is not a friendship. Again this is where you pick what would suit your organisation.

**Question 6 - With the increased focus on multi agency and partnership working, it may be difficult to use a common language to enable you to access a standard. Could MBF draw funds to give to organisations for applying for standards?**

There is no reason why not and something we would hope to be able to carry out, development of this would take time.



# Annual conference report 2009

## Seminar 8

### Early Intervention Strategies – The Importance of One to One

#### Seminar chair

James Cathcart, British Youth Council

#### Seminar experts:

Antony Hughes, Department for Children, Schools and Families

Chester Morrison, Liverpool County Council

Martin Gocke, Bracknell Forest Borough Council

Thanos Morphitis, London Borough of Islington Council

Jerry Glover, Bolton Lads and Girls Club

**James Cathcart** stated that one-to-one support is one element. He asked what do we mean by early intervention? Is it earlier part in the process, supporting them at a young age i.e. influencing them at pre-school or supporting them at an older age but early intervention meaning earlier in the process?

**Antony Hughes** discussed how one to one approaches play a part in addressing certain policy areas. Everyone must ensure that the Every Child Matters agenda is implemented, a different approach to achieving young people outcomes. It is important for young people to have a place to go after school, somewhere safe where they can get help and advice. In the IAG strategy, there is a common theme of one-to-one support. Challenges that Local Authorities and Government face challenges of designing a system that is universal, how can they ensure that there is a strong partnership between different services and how can they address the challenges on the public spending plan that puts pressure on local authorities.

**Chester Morrison** spoke about the several hurdles and barriers present when implementing one-to-one schemes within the borough. Irrespective of background all young people are entitled to support. It is important to create a society that provides better citizenship. The barriers faced are lack of resources and time to implement one-to-one support. They need to plan more strategically. One-to-one support is a multi faced approach. If young people don't see the benefits they are less likely to volunteer. The benefits need to be promoted and testimonials need to be collated.



# Annual conference report 2009

**Martin Gocke** discussed the well being agenda. The healthy schools initiative and the SEAL agenda are central to supporting young people. The Safe to Learn peer mentoring strand is extremely important. Young people perform well if they feel safe. Year 7s are mentored, they have lunchtime drop in centres and one-to-one support is a key part. What makes the programme work is the buy in from senior staff. In the relationship, the mentors benefit from the role that they play i.e. a sense of responsibility, developing a range of skills that will enhance their CV etc. Evidence also shows that mentees go on to become mentors themselves.

**Thanos Morphitis** discussed Islington Borough Council's ambition to become outstanding with good partnerships with parents, support services, the NHS and the third sector. The mentoring approach is central to the development of young people. Impact occurs on both sets of the relationship. It is important that family/parents are involved and that no work is done in isolation. Authorities need to think of a family approach. There needs to be more control to the local area.

**Jerry Glover** talked about how different models of mentoring can support young people. Partnership working is essential. Testimonials from young people show the impact that mentoring support has had on their lives. Supporting families as well as the young people is a key part, involving them and keeping them informed along the way.

## **Question 1 – Agencies have not found a way of working with vulnerable families. What is the government doing to improve this?**

There is quite a lot of investment going in to family support in particular early years i.e. children centres.

## **Question 2 – Is mentoring expected to solve too many problems?**

Don't provide support in isolation. Bring in other services.

## **Question 3 – There is a concern about the positive value of peer mentoring but this is not shown by the funding. Why are local authorities are not allocating the money themselves at the start of the year to provide this support?**

Local Authorities need to balance putting money into tackling crisis and working with young children to prevent crisis from happening.

