

Profile raising campaign

Feedback from focus groups

January 2010

Introduction

In October and November 2009, MBF ran two focus groups to aid the development of a two year campaign to raise the profile of mentoring and befriending. The campaign was also an agenda item at the annual MBF conference 2009. These discussions explored:

- Common themes and differentiators of mentoring and befriending
- Shared definitions, language and messages
- How to involve practitioners within the profile raising campaign

The results and feedback from these events are shown below. A balance of mentoring, peer mentoring and befriending projects attended these events from a variety of sectors.

1.0 Focus group and national conference attendance

Location	Number attended
London Focus Group- 29/10/09	20
Manchester Focus Group- 30/10/09	20
London National Conference – 4/11/09	275
TOTAL	315

2.0 Attendees were asked individually to describe mentoring and befriending in one word

One word	Number of responses (in rank order- highest first)
Support	15
Guidance	5
Empowerment	5
Trust	4
Empathy	4
Potential	3
Inspire	3
Enable	3
Friendship	3
Confidence	3
Change	3
Individual	3
Connection	3
No fear	3
Future	3
Understanding	2
Helping	2
Life-line	2
Hope	2
Choices	2
Someone to laugh/share with	2
Consistent	2

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"Out of hours" lifeline	2
Safe	2
Learning	2
Community	2
Listen	2
Living	2
Communication	1
Open	1
Open	1
Together	1
Inclusion	1
Voluntary	1
Contact	1
Achievement	1
Can do	1
Commitment	1
Relationship	1
Progress	1
Smile	1
Key-in-lock	1
Focus	1
Impact	1
Caring	1
Reducing isolation	1
Real difference	1
Welcome	1
Time	1
Quality of life	1
Love	1
Generosity	1
Transforming lives	1
Mattering to someone	1
Warmth	1
Time to care	1
Aspirations	1
Concern	1
Happiness	1
Faith	1
Motivation	1
Advocacy	1
Pro-social modelling	1
Passionate	1
Relief	1
Consideration	1
Self belief	1
Sharing	1

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3.0 Attendees were asked individually to describe mentoring and befriending by using one symbol

One symbol	Number of responses (in rank order- highest first)
Hands (on shoulder / touching / not touching / giving directions / tomb stone / linking / thumbs up / shaking)	10
People (side by side / group)	3
Stars (reaching for them / pointing at / lifting)	3
Cup of tea	2
Bridge	2
Face (smiling / facing each other)	2
Roads (two running parallel)	2
Stairs (climbing up)	2
Door (open / two people)	2
Stick of rock	1
Circle of support	1
Boat journey	1
Indian moccasins	1
Cascading fountain	1
Ear	1
Arrows (pointing up)	1
Ying yang	1
Lighthouse	1
Candle	1
Tandem bike	1
Hill	1

4.0 Attendees were asked in pairs to describe mentoring and befriending in 50 words

- Usually a one-to-one relationship to increase self esteem and self worth of clients whilst addressing specific unmet needs facilitating independence and coping methods
- Developing trusting, positive relationships that focus on individual needs which support their personal growth and development
- Using a diverse approach validating the individual to meet unmet needs and/or achieving one's potential
- A one-to-one voluntary relationship that is supportive and open based on sharing knowledge to build an individual's confidence whilst set within boundaries
- A unique chance to support another person, making a positive contribution to their life whilst helping to facilitate change for both the individual and their community
- A mentoring or befriending relationship is one which focuses on an individual's needs to develop enhanced resilience or a clear identity where it can have a positive impact on someone's life. Care conditions required are support, trust, genuineness, understanding, good listening skills and boundaries. The process is flexible to changing situations / circumstances
- Mentoring and befriending is a relationship that empowers the mentee or befriender and gives someone confidence in their own ability to develop skills and deal with issues. It increases self esteem and self worth of client while addressing unmet needs

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- To develop a trusting, positive relationship focussed on the individual's needs supporting their personal growth and development
- Mentoring and befriending aims to build a trusting relationship which promotes confidence and opportunities for personal development or growth. It is usually one to one which may be task focused. The main objective is always to make a positive difference in the life of the person being mentored or befriended
- One-to-one relationship which increases self confidence and self worth of the client, while addressing unmet needs. It also facilitates independence and strengthens coping mechanisms for the client, particularly during difficult times
- Mentoring or befriending involves supporting younger or older people through listening, friendship or guidance to improve their quality of life by reducing isolation and enhancing contact with the outside world
- Assisting people to be independent by providing a diverse range of activities and support to enable people to reach their potential or improve their quality of life
- Trained volunteers provide supportive opportunities to other people who choose to be supported. Volunteers offer open ended or time limited support towards positive change
- Committing time to building a valued relationship in order to motivate and inspire individuals to reach their full potential
- Individual support usually on a one-to-one basis where people explore / offered / given opportunities and choices to make their own decisions about moving from where they are now to somewhere better in the future
- Where a relationship is built that provides opportunities for people to change their life in a positive way. Outcomes of the change are the choice of the individual
- Supportive mutually beneficial relationships enabling individuals to develop potential
- People are not left to deal with crisis situations or negative experiences alone. They have someone there to listen, give advice and guide them in a positive way
- Mutually rewarding relationships on a hopeful journey
- Individual support on a one-to one basis are given options and choices to make their own decisions often working with vulnerable groups of people for whom the system has 'rejected'
- Mentoring and befriending is a relationship that works towards common purpose, where experiences are shared in a non-judgemental way this promotes the taking of opportunities for change that arise and all parties develop personally
- Mentoring and befriending is an opportunity for personal development within a mutually beneficial relationship of contact and support
- We enable people by building positive relationships encouraging regular contact by offering advice, information and support

5.0 National conference attendees were asked on video to describe mentoring and befriending in 2 sentences, these are shown below:

- It is making a difference, supporting, guiding and advising and building a positive relationship. It is about them and about you being there as a helper or advisor to develop them into the best person they can be
- Mentoring and befriending raises self esteem and confidence and offers help, guidance and support to those that really need it
- Giving someone one to one support, that someone knows that you are supportive of them and that they have your best interests and want to develop you as an individual. Human beings want to help others develop human beings, that is why we are here
- Mentoring or befriending gives them a relationship with a caring stable adult which can change lives

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- Mentoring or befriending is twofold for volunteers it means meeting people that you wouldn't normally meet and for beneficiaries it is a life changing opportunity to have regular contact
- Mentoring or befriending is providing support to people, helping people through difficult circumstances cope with the challenges in their lives. It offers real benefits to develop confidence and self esteem and helps people to cope with life in general
- Allowing people to have the confidence and ability to provide support to others (peer mentoring)
- Opportunity to learn more and succeed in life and help people
- It is an essential service and life support, it is part of a partnership. It is an individual listening and supporting others to move in the direction they want to move in
- Offers support to people, it is not a counsellor it is not a friend but somewhere in the middle
- It helps people to put a key in the door and open it and engage again in society
- It helps to achieve potential
- It supports and helps someone making a change from one place to another
- It is inclusive and open to everyone
- It raises self esteem and confidence and builds relationships

6.0 Attendees were asked in groups to discuss common unique threads of mentoring and befriending

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Supportive through transition | • Inspirational |
| • Trust and honest | • Choice |
| • Identity | • Mutual benefit |
| • Listening leading to understanding | • Relationship |
| • Making a positive difference | • Change |
| • Flexible | • Communication |
| • Responsive | • Reducing isolation |
| • Positive relationship with a point | • Catalyst / vehicle |
| • Developing emotional resilience | • Outcomes |
| • Boundaries | • Reflection |
| • Genuine | • Help people to help themselves |
| • Confidence | • Improving situations |
| • Authentic - need and want for the relationship | • Providing emotional support |
| • Confidential | • Commitment by 2 parties |
| • Empathy | • Security |
| • Support | • Constant |
| • Growth | • Positive interests |
| • Positive experience (intervention - don't like word) | • Reflective space |
| • Valued | • Plugging or bridging the gap |

7.0 Attendees were asked in groups to discuss challenges of common unique threads of mentoring and befriending

- Guidance - does mentoring and befriending give guidance?
- One-to-one versus group
- Voluntary - both parties participation? Recommended by teacher / advert of direct payments

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- Getting across what is different about mentoring and befriending as opposed to general volunteering / support
- Methods of mentoring and befriending
- Goal setting / targets / personal development - not relevant to all mentoring and befriending
- Nurturing
- Transparent
- Preventative - not the right word
- Similarities however mentoring and befriending do not sit under the same umbrella
- Unmet needs - puts pressure on the mentor
- Validating - gives the balance of power to the mentor/befriender - 2 way process
- Achieving potential - what about bullying projects
- Cross application
- Personal development - not for all

8.0 Attendees were asked to rate how much they agreed with statements in relation to mentoring and befriending

Mentoring and befriending is:	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Beneficial to both volunteer and client	60%	38%	3%	0%	0%
A voluntary process for all parties based on trust and respect	55%	38%	5%	3%	0%
A process that brings together two parties to draw on and share their experiences	54%	36%	3%	8%	0%
Value for money	41%	23%	18%	10%	8%
Recognised as a support service	33%	46%	13%	8%	0%
Managed by a third party (the project)	33%	43%	20%	5%	0%
Lacking in one identity	23%	54%	18%	3%	3%
Easily understood by commissioners and funders	13%	13%	15%	53%	8%
Easily understood by the general public	13%	8%	15%	58%	8%
Always involves a one to one relationship	10%	23%	13%	50%	5%
Measurable, in terms of soft and hard outcomes	8%	45%	30%	18%	0%
Always time specific	5%	13%	8%	56%	18%

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9.0 Attendees were asked if they support the development of a common identity for mentoring and befriending

Focus group answer	Response
Yes	100.0%
No	0.0%
National conference answer	Response
Yes	93%
No	7%

Comments

- There has been a strong need for years for mentoring and befriending to be recognised officially and if marketed correctly will become a very strong tool for the industry to recognise quality
- BUT.....It is such a diverse area I am not sure that consensus will ever be reached either within or without the sector, this was evident in the focus group discussion
- Care should be taken that by having a few common themes we do not reduce peer support to too narrow a concept
- A challenging, but necessary step, given the diversity of the sector and the importance of promoting it. Four years ago I visited the USA on a research fellowship to learn about mentoring in schools - I was struck both by the extensive nature of mentoring schemes and by their high public profile
- Strategies such as advertising billboards and workplace publicity about volunteering created widespread awareness and a buzz about mentoring. It would be wonderful for mentoring in the UK to have a similar profile through the promotion of the sector's common themes
- I DO support the idea of a common brand identity and after last Thursday's session I think there is quite a lot of common ground BUT in order to recognise the diversity the idea of sub themes I think was very important. People were passionate about certain themes of their projects which were not common to all and it would be difficult for them to buy into ONE definition that didn't include these themes
- The focus on common themes is important if we are to have a united identity to make views known and believe that we can influence policy
- I think we can develop some core principles that are common to befriending and mentoring across age and client groups, whilst recognising that there is also a wide range of different approaches between projects and that this diversity should be valued
- I see there is value of raising the profile of the benefits of mentoring and befriending projects in bridging the gaps in all kinds of provision - having a set of common themes which are 'themes' and not rules can only be a good thing if it helps people understand just how much good is being done out there and most of it on a voluntary basis but make it common themes there needs to be almost a definition within the definition and it need to be acknowledged that there will be variables with in schemes
- As long as the room for individuality is big
- It is the only way forward, we should champion a clear, focused campaign that fully explains the work we do and the value of it
- I think we made a good start at the meeting a few weeks ago
- Schemes do not have to be highly structured

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- Despite our differences there are shared values and aims in our programmes
- There is strength in numbers
- Broad statement that is not restrictive with sub headings
- Needs to be aspirational and representative
- Run mentoring and befriending specific focus groups
- Not sure - as mentoring and befriending have key differences

10.0 Attendees were asked how the campaign can be moved forward

- Bring together a group of committed activists
- Mentoring and befriending ambassadors (Alan Sugar)
- More time to develop the issues
- Talk to other stakeholders, i.e. peer mentors / peer mentees
- Look at the eight commissioning principles and how M&B schemes could maximise funding opportunities
- Building a robust evidence base of a range of outcomes - must include cost savings
- Further focus groups for specific sectors and mentoring and befriending
- I think the basic idea is very good but the difficulty is trying to pull mentoring work and befriending work together. It might be useful to separate the two in the first instance and bring the groups together at a later stage
- The more people involved the better
- Although I would not want to be travelling to Manchester again - perhaps online consultation?

11.0 Attendees were asked how they could support the campaign

- I would be happy to help in any capacity. In a previous life, I was a Sales Manager in advertising for 10 years
- I would be happy to get involved in the future
- Not sure how much time would be required to participate but will consult with management to look at degree of involvement
- Whatever ya like...
- Happy to attend further focus groups and hopefully see a feeding in to practice
- I already feel very involved in profile raising having written a book "Peer Support Works" Network Continuum Press. I am very motivated as I was probably the first person to introduce peer support in a UK school in the mid 1980s and was subsequently involved with the Peer Support Network and the NCB in promoting it in the 90s and early part of the 2000s. I see this work as the next step and want to stay actively involved
- Take part in other groups
- Offer feedback and involvement in future discussion / groups
- Be part of the big picture in the local setting (help us to help you)
- Be part of the steering group (having been active strategically and hands on) in the peer support movement since 1980s
- Circle of support - reflection – movement - aspiration – change
- To inform others who may impact and influence the campaign and offer support
- By ensuring that they present the national perspective as well as their, more local one
- Use the mentoring and befriending logo in their own promotional materials – benchmark
- Refer to the Foundation in funding bids, in evaluations, feedback, reports

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- Sending literature out to practitioners so that we can hand them directly to Commissioners, decision makers. Also possible links from partners to websites may help
- By feeding into it- the benefits of their services to the clients
- Feedback success stories
- By participating in more discussion groups, attending events both within and out of their sector to network with others, raise the profile of their programmes within their organisations, local and on regional scale
- Increased awareness, feed information into a central place, raising the profile of mentoring and befriending - not changing names to seek funding but to maintain core terminology which would raise the profile
- Ensure outcomes of mentoring / befriending schemes are fed into the foundation to learn from experience
- By being kept informed of developments by MBF and by having opportunities to input ideas both online and in person at future focus groups
- Help promote the MBF vision. Work with other projects locally, regionally to promote. Develop a series of powerful case studies
- By attending focus groups, conferences and events which promote it. Also if we can, by promoting it to key stakeholders within our own organisations
- By supporting through online feedback
- As it is being conducted through the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation it would be useful for examples, issues, concerns form practitioners' experience to be channelled on a blog where there can be relevant and immediate exchanges which can be monitored and used for wider discussion
- Talking with their own funders
- By engaging in the focus groups, by putting forward their volunteers and service-users to attend profile-raising events etc. so there is wide representation of befriending and mentoring projects across the country; also by referring to the core messages of the campaign when talking to funders and other practitioners
- By using the campaign as an opportunity to raise the profile of mentoring/befriending in their local area and work with the MBF to come up with a useful and engaging campaign in the first place
- Maybe we could have a booklet produced of all the variety of schemes that are within the frame work of mentoring and befriending so each scheme would give a few sentences about what they do and we could have a leaflet that reflects how diverse our work is
- Spreading agreed key messages that help them as well as the campaign generally by showing support on websites, attending focus groups
- Awareness raising and cascading the discussions
- By writing up our work for publication in a wide range of journals and providing press releases for local and national press. By offering to lead workshops and give keynote speeches in conferences

12.0 General feedback from attendee evaluation form

- I did feel we reached a point where terminology could not reflect the diversity of such a broad subject and to try and collate mentoring and befriending in one definition could lose out on some of the diversity
- There needs to be a setting out of the value of both approaches
- I felt it raised a lot of issues and also how mentoring and befriending mean different things depending on the groups and the services offered
- I think there was some lively discussion and a realisation that explaining mentoring and befriending in a clear concise way will prove difficult. I feel there was a difficulty in getting

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people to engage with the similarities of mentoring and befriending and instead there was a focus on the differences

- A very exciting new challenge which everyone can be involved in
- Good to ask for input from people who are at the frontline
- The idea of the focus group was very positive
- I felt the endorsement by Government was undervalued as I think this is a strong message to send out to commissioners
- Need to focus on what the benefits could be to individual charities
- It is important to have a group that can be the voice of mentoring and befriending and raise and monitor issues and concerns to the appropriate forum
- The group were like-minded individuals who seemed passionate about their own individual projects but were also able to see the bigger picture
- Although mentoring and befriending are slightly different I liked the idea of having one single statement that represents both processes but having further statements to represent more specialised projects
- Ideas need to be road tested with commissioners
- Need to ensure that there is equal coverage of projects working with client groups other than young people - currently there is a big emphasis on mentoring and young people, and it feels that older people and other client groups, + befriending aren't equally represented or discussed
- I'm very supportive, but think MBF need to win more hearts and minds before going much further with it! There was clear scepticism among some groups
- I think it will be a challenge to bring all groups together under one umbrella
- I think the need for plain English was clear and an open, transparent way of working is key. People are starting to question the use of certain words that disengage the wider audience (advocacy) if you don't understand the words you will not use the service. Mentoring and befriending can bring multiple benefits and that needs to be recognised