

The Role of Third Sector Innovation: Personalisation of Health and Social Care and Services to Reduce Crime and Re-offending

Call for Evidence

Cabinet Office Advisor on Third Sector Innovation, Rt. Hon. Anne McGuire MP

The **Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF)** welcomes this Call for Evidence and the opportunity to give our ideas, experience and evidence of the impact that third sector mentoring and befriending activity offers to the personalisation of health and social care and services to reduce crime and re-offending.

General statement

One-to-one mentoring and befriending interventions are unique examples of highly personalised forms of individual support. Both involve the development of a relationship in which one individual, who is not family or a close friend, voluntarily gives time to support and encourage another. Because of their focus on one-to-one support, mentoring and befriending projects are well placed to meet the needs of individuals in their local communities and are therefore able to support the main goals of the personalisation agenda.

They offer flexible, tailored packages of support to individuals and aim to empower individuals to make informed choices, increase their confidence and well-being, raise aspirations, build resilience, enhance social inclusion and as early intervention models they are well placed to provide cost benefits and reduce reliance on statutory services further down the line. The proposed joining up of existing services to provide integrated packages of care around the needs of individuals through the personalisation agenda is something that mentoring and befriending projects lend themselves particularly well to. They are often commissioned as part of a holistic package of support for individuals in a range of settings e.g., many youth offending teams use third sector projects to provide mentors for young people in the youth justice system as part of their early-age prevention strategy.

We welcome the principles upon which the personalisation agenda is based such as increased choice, citizen empowerment and control for the individual through the tailoring of support to personal levels of need alongside greater involvement in the design and

delivery of services. However, we are also aware from the projects that we support that there are challenges and concerns that need to be addressed and solutions found in order for third sector organisations to fully engage in the personalisation agenda. We do however believe that mentoring and befriending interventions will make a vital contribution to the personalisation of services provided with the right information, structures and support in place.

Priority 1: How can the third sector offer real choice to citizens?

What could central government, local commissioners and the third sector do to support a diversity of provision for citizens?

The joining up of statutory and third sector services as part of comprehensive packages of support is part of the way forward for allowing a full range and choice to citizens. More commissioning of services that support this diversity is essential if the choices are to be meaningful to all. Improved dialogue and partnerships between the statutory and third sectors would help this choice be realised and this should be encouraged so that all sectors feel they have an equal stake in the new personalisation agenda.

Many mentoring and befriending projects have local knowledge and use local volunteers to work with diverse groups of people including those traditionally 'harder to reach'. In order for there to be real choice, provision needs to reflect different cultural needs and third sector projects with their links into local communities are an effective way of doing this. To enable more choice, local commissioning should be needs-based and more effective processes could be introduced and encouraged to allow people to comment and influence on the design of their services.

Mentoring and befriending provision can offer real choice to citizens through the tailored interventions that encompass a wide range of models that can be developed in response to personal needs. For instance there are projects that use face-to-face, e-mentoring, telephone befriending, group mentoring and befriending to facilitate access. Access to a wide range of services offering different models of working and looking to achieve a wide range of outcomes is key to this and mentoring and befriending are good examples of this.

Funding and delivery

Crucial to this development is adequate levels of and sustainable funding for a wide range of third sector projects of differing sizes. A survey we undertook with mentoring and befriending projects in 2008 revealed a lack of funding opportunities available for mentoring and befriending activity and not enough long-term or continuation funding. This was viewed by projects as a barrier to innovation which is a key part of providing choice to citizens. Commissioners need to provide longer-term, more sustainable funding for projects and to be less risk-averse in order that creativity is not stifled and more innovative solutions

can be found.

Sharing of good practice between third sector, central and local government would be beneficial and in particular, models of personalisation delivery that are already working and could be replicated elsewhere. This would help lead to better understanding of the contribution of the third sector as to how the new reforms will work in practice.

More specific support and funding for smaller specialist providers to enable them to adapt their delivery to fit with forthcoming changes would be welcomed. A suggestion for doing this could be through provision of bridging funds over two to three years to allow for the implementation of new ways of delivery without losing staff or resources and to seed fund small providers whilst the market adjusts to the changes in its service provision. Without this specific support there is a danger that the smaller providers will be unable to keep up with the changes effectively and the range of choice for individuals will be restricted as the bigger, more generically based projects survive.

Improved communication and information

More detailed explanation of the welfare reform plans is needed with more public and transparent debate. Concerns need to be discussed and addressed and smaller providers should be sought out and spoken with directly by local commissioners rather than changes imposed from above. A current concern within the sector and with users is the fear that the voluntary sector will bear the brunt of cost-cutting and that the true personalisation principles of user choice and control may be lost to fit with shrinking local council budgets. This concern we feel could be tackled by clearer information dissemination, further debate and an open discussion of the issues at all levels (local and national).

Greater choice and flexibility

Smaller providers often have a comprehensive local knowledge of community needs achieved through a long history of building relationships with hard to reach groups, many building up specialist knowledge of a particular client group e.g., people with learning disabilities or isolated older people as a result. These projects are rooted in the local community and able to monitor and adapt to changing local requirements.

Many smaller providers also have good experience of inter-agency working with both local third sector groups as well as statutory organisations over time. An example of this is Brent POPP (Partnership for Older People) which included a befriending element and was heavily evaluated and found that genuine interagency work with statutory and voluntary sector working together and making strategic decisions together, reduced falls and unplanned hospital admissions by 90% over two years. The third sector involvement enabled people using the grassroots services to hear about and access the health and social services delivery elements of the provision and vice versa enabling greater choice for service users. This is a good model of how third sector projects can act as intermediaries in providing information about other services and support available.

Role of infrastructure bodies in communicating information

Key to this is the role of the third sector as a major communication channel with ready-made networks linking with local people which can offer clear communication and explain the changes in a way that projects and people can understand. The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation is ideally placed to be one of the vehicles for this as the national body for mentoring and befriending, and a means of imparting information and guidance on how mentoring and befriending services can successfully implement personalised services. Third sector fora and strategic and decision making groups are also a key way of passing information on if they are engaged with. Another way is by involving the third sector in writing and designing any literature to ensure it is appropriate for different users to access.

The benefits of third sector involvement in disseminating information about choices available is that the sector is perceived as being less bureaucratic and with less red tape for people to negotiate e.g., easier access for people in communities.

However it needs to be recognised that this whole new reform agenda is a step change in third sector working and support is needed at all levels for staff and advisers to be fully informed and enabled to pass on impartial information to potential service users. Currently, there is some evidence from projects on the ground that people are anxious about the implications and the positive benefits around personalisation have yet to be fully heard or accepted.

Priority 2: How can the third sector deliver personalised early intervention?

What are the most significant opportunities for the third sector to deliver more personalised early interventions and what are the best examples of personalised early interventions in the third sector?

Mentoring and befriending projects are ideally placed to expand the delivery of services that provide personalised early interventions.

Preventative and early intervention mentoring and befriending programmes are showing through their outcomes that they are improving the quality of life for vulnerable groups. With all these services more choice, voice and control for individuals are central to the development of services. The most relevant and significant opportunities for mentoring and befriending early interventions are with the following client groups:

Older people

With the numbers of older people forecast to grow, the importance of befriending as an early intervention to help improve their health and well-being and prevent greater reliance on services is evident. A study 'Out of sight, out of mind' published by Age Concern in 2008, recommends that for older people living alone, more investment into befriending schemes and peer telephone clubs should be given to help support many isolated older people which

can lead to mental health problems, social exclusion and over-use of local health services in an attempt to have contact with people. Befriending schemes for people with dementia are also recommended as they can help alleviate some of the early symptoms of the dementia sufferer and also support their carers.

Reducing offending

Mentoring support can make a real difference as a means of reducing crime and re-offending and improving access to opportunities in education, training and employment. Mentors can provide young offenders, and those at-risk of offending, with positive role models that they can learn to trust and respect. Research shows that mentoring is a valuable component of intervention programmes with people at an early stage of their criminal careers. Where behaviour modification, supplementary education and employment programmes are involved alongside the mentoring, then significant reductions in re-offending occur ('A Rapid Evidence Assessment of the Impact of Mentoring on Re-offending', Home Office Online Report 11/07).

Better health and well-being

Mentoring and befriending activity also has a significant impact in early intervention packages of support within the health and social care arena. Typical outcomes for befriending activity include improved mental health, less loneliness and isolation, improved links with community and social networks. Much of this activity takes place with more vulnerable client groups including mental health users, older people, people with learning disabilities etc. Specific health promotion mentoring schemes such as the POPPs pilots have shown how beneficial it can be to improving older people's attitudes towards healthier lifestyles.

It is worth noting that it can be difficult for projects to attract funding for lower level need interventions which often link with early interventions so it is important that government recognises this mis-match if it wants more third sector provision developed in this area.

Value for money

As well as improving the health and well-being and quality of life for vulnerable groups and raising aspirations for disaffected young people, many mentoring and befriending projects deliver long-term social and economic benefits. Examples can be given of where early intervention through mentoring and befriending reduces dependence on state provision e.g., mentoring people into paid employment which builds self-esteem and user becomes freestanding and autonomous and less of a drain on public resources. Keeping people as independent as possible through befriending schemes also illustrates this. The crucial involvement of volunteers is also an excellent way of adding value for money with all the additional benefits they bring through dedication, commitment and experience.

For example; **Portsmouth Salvation Army's Good Neighbours Befriending Scheme** supports 200 housebound older people using 90 volunteers and two members of staff. Their service,

funded by Portsmouth City Council, has a large impact on health outcomes by contributing to reduced bed blocking, winter deaths, falls in the home and combating loneliness and isolation to improve mental health. The scheme costs £80,000 per year which set against a domiciliary care cost of over £310,000 demonstrates good value for money.

The **North Staffordshire Community Chaplaincy mentoring project** which aims to reduce re-offending can illustrate a re-conviction rate for their clients of less than 20% with 30 fewer reconvictions than might have been anticipated given the national average of 58%. This represents a 'potential' saving of £1.9m in terms of preventing 30 clients getting to the point re-imprisonment and a further saving of £1m per year in terms of the costs of keeping the same number of clients within prison.

Feedback from projects also pointed to the benefits of collaboration in terms of better value for money. The sector has a long history of working within tight budgets and has developed ways of working together to share training, premises and resources which are cost-effective.

Priority 3: How can the third sector overcome organisational barriers to personalisation?

What are the organisational barriers faced by third sector orgs when trying to deliver more personalised services and what is needed to help overcome barriers?

There are a number of key organisational barriers that we have identified through our experiences with projects in the third sector to date.

Culture change challenge

The first of these is the culture change that the new agenda will require of third sector organisations e.g., the change from managing voluntary contracts to financial contracts. This is particularly pertinent to the work of mentoring and befriending as several research studies have shown that one of the benefits to users is the voluntary nature of the relationship that mentoring or befriending offers as opposed to help from a paid worker. One Joseph Rowntree Foundation study 'Someone for me' described the friendly nature of the relationship and the 'ability to have a laugh' which distinguished it from other kinds of relationships. Crucially, relationships with professionals were associated by users with a lack of control, frequent changes and no say which highlights the benefits of a voluntary mentoring and befriending relationships within the personalisation agenda which aims to transfer control and decision-making to the user. Realistic timeframes and expectations from local government around the implementation of these changes for the third sector is recommended.

Changing nature of relationships

A concern in our support of projects is that as the relationship is central to the intervention, the impact of changing the nature of payment may be detrimental to the service in a

number of ways. The user who pays directly for the service may hold different expectations and the volunteers may not be so comfortable with the financial arrangement. We feel it is important that the choice of a voluntary relationship needs to be kept available to users in the new system. One way of achieving this would be through intermediary support where the responsibility for handling contracts and budgets would be taken care of on behalf of the user.

Funding barriers

Another organisational barrier is funding and whether there is money available to support the change-over of delivery style. Many third sector staff will need to develop new skills around contract management, managing budgets, user contracts, marketing their service etc., which many current employees will not be skilled for. In addition, many projects have highlighted that there is a cost impact of extra training, resources for changing their delivery style and current funding does not cover this, therefore a need for money to enable projects to trial new ways of working would be beneficial.

Safeguarding issues

There are many safeguarding issues around mentoring and befriending activity with vulnerable adults, many of whom will be key users within health and social care field and within offending environments. Part of MBF's role is to support the setting up of safe and effective schemes that have good management structures and policies and procedures in place to ensure that staff, volunteers and clients are safeguarded. Some projects have expressed concerns over how this element would be managed effectively if users are potentially vetting their own carers and supporters. There needs to be a balance between freedom and control and helping people to be safe.

Risk

There is another barrier around being risk-averse to these proposed changes and this has been identified in a number of different areas. For example, there are cases within the third sector, where workers are not clear about the benefits to users and therefore are passing on their anxieties about personalisation to them, not necessarily with having full facts in front of them. However, another example is of a project working with people with learning disabilities who are finding that the family members of the users are risk-averse and reluctant to pass more control and choice to the person with learning disability themselves.

So, it isn't the case that the third sector is as a whole risk averse to the process but needs better information to understand the implications, wants reassurance that the principles of individual choice and control are meaningful and that it is not just a cost-cutting exercise in which they will be the likely losers. There has also been concern raised that it will encourage a 2 tier system where there are users who pay and those who don't – many mentoring and befriending services would want their services to remain open to those most in need rather than who could afford it.

Priority 4: How can the third sector improve outcomes through service user participation?

How can third sector orgs facilitate, encourage and promote participation?

There are many good practice examples of how third sector organisations encourage and promote the participation of users. Some of the key ones within the mentoring and befriending field include: use of user focus groups and evaluation of the groups, annual surveys, user feedback requested on every service which is evaluated and fed into future improvements and design of service, steering groups made up of client group service deals with, majority of board trustees people who have used or do use the service, outcome-based commissioning and support planning e.g., local commissioners should contract with user-led organisations to encourage this, education and training, Expert by Experience, co-production of local authority activities, reviews and assessment processes.

A key strength of mentoring and befriending is that the user is closely matched on a one-to-one basis with their mentor/befriender based on their needs and the experience and attributes of the volunteer. The personalisation challenge is how this can be further reinforced so that users are more involved in the selection of their mentor/befriender.

About the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation

The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF) provides support to organisations involved in mentoring and befriending. As a national body and strategic partner of the Office of the Third Sector, MBF also works to influence policy and practice in the sector and across government.

MBF's vision is of a society where mentoring and befriending can empower all people to reach their full potential.

MBF has developed a national and regional infrastructure with responsibility for engaging with and supporting practitioners, commissioners and funders.

The organisation is committed to promoting voluntary regulation of mentoring and befriending projects through the Approved Provider Standard, the national benchmark for safe and effective practice. MBF's mission is to support the expansion of quality mentoring and befriending provision across all sectors.

Based on our ongoing mapping of mentoring and befriending activity we currently reach over 3,600 projects in the voluntary, education and statutory sector.

For further information please see www.mandbf.org.uk

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