

Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Forum

29 March 2012

Mentoring Services

1. Mentoring services across Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole

- 1.1 **EDAS** (Essential Drugs and Alcohol Services) is launching, on 3 May 2012, a 25 week rolling programme of training support for mentors. This Level 2 course will be accredited by the Bournemouth and Poole College of Further Education. The mentors, in turn, will support service users of EDAS who have been through their treatment programmes. Twelve people have already signed up to the training and EDAS will be joining the Dorset Mentoring Partnership.
- 1.2 **Hope Housing** has three mentors who support their service users with their transition from prison to independent living. Have ex offenders as staff and want to look into support for them in post due to transition into working – interested in Stuart's services.
- 1.3 **Red Cross** is recruiting mentors to support refugees. BCHA is assisting with their training.
- 1.4 **BCHA/Ignite** programme currently has 12 mentors and, as noted, they also provide training.
- 1.5 **Footprints** highlighted that the Dorset Mentoring Partnership is working well, and more placements are also required because, for example, not all mentors can work initially with some of the ex-offenders Footprints support.
- 1.6 **Streetlife** is currently providing a befriending service.
- 1.7 **Dorset Advocacy** have a funded volunteer co-ordinator who looks after 55 – 60 volunteers delivering befriending relationships
- 1.8 **Dorset Service Users Forum** are all volunteers – they do get funding from the DAAT (Drug and Alcohol Action Team) and have had some independent funding for laptops to set up an internet cafe'. They provide prison befriending, links with the Verne/Guys Marsh, addictions services, support groups.
- 1.9 **Bus Buddies** is aimed at older people in Christchurch
- 1.10 **Christchurch Age Concern** – befriending for older people
- 1.11 **Chaplin at the Verne** – wants to set up mentoring for clients.
- 1.12 **BCHA – SURF** – offer peer mentoring – after ignite program – 6 week training course etc. Peer mentoring – form filing, sign posting to services etc./drop-in advice etc. issues around mental health/older people/drugs/addictions/
- 1.13 It seems that there is easily accessible and available mentoring/befriending provision for young people/adults up to the age of approximately 21yrs, however adult mentoring and befriending seemed to be available but not necessarily easily accessible for those who were most vulnerable and could benefit from the support that the service would provide. There seems to be a lot of informal rather than formal signposting happening, so there is little structure in how individuals are given information about services. (Is this is across all age groups?)

2. Evaluating the impact of mentoring

- 2.1 Capturing statistics – has anyone done any research into how successful mentoring offenders is that others can share – or local research? How do we know it works if we're not measuring it collectively and championing it collectively? How do we think we're doing if re-offending rates are going up? Are mentoring schemes actually failing at preventing reoffending?
- 2.2 The following challenges with measuring impact were identified:
 - How can you be sure that someone, for example, has stopped offending? Linked to this is that proposed 'payment by results' funding programmes could lead to organisations 'cherry picking' service users to work with.

- It is difficult tracking service users' progress if they move out of the area.
 - The consumer survey sheets used by the DAAT (Drug and Alcohol Action Team) could be improved?
 - Outcomes need to have integrity; for example is a service user going into a detoxification unit an outcome when they may not complete the course
- 2.3 It is difficult to access support for evaluation of outcomes and to decide what the most appropriate outcomes to be measuring are given the need to evidence tangible outcomes for a service which demonstrates more often than not soft outcomes. Should agencies just be focusing on reducing reoffending, relapse prevention and links to accommodation as key outcomes as these are likely to be sighted as key in any future payment by results models.
- 2.4 Footprints have a robust system, for example, identifying outcomes such as the number of ex-offenders who access housing.
- 2.5 Hope Housing measure improvements in self-esteem and attitude.
- 2.6 Healthy Living Wessex undertook a detailed evaluation programme including Social Return on Investment to gather evidence about the positive outcomes of their Health Trainers Programme. Despite this high quality evidence of the very positive outcomes of the work, the work was not funded and health trainers have had to be made redundant.
- 2.7 Dorset Advocacy collect a great deal of evidence about their work
The 'Speak Out Network 'was a good support source in relation to evidencing need and evaluation. For more information on this network please see below links;
<http://www.cqc.org.uk/public/sharing-your-experience/working-local-groups>
http://www.uclan.ac.uk/schools/school_of_social_work/speakout_network.php
- 2.8 Rep from Primary Care Trust stated that health care commissioners are not always confident about the standard of services provided by the VCS which prevents funding being accessed. The Practice Development Team at Dorset HealthCare University NHS Foundation Trust is keen to work with and provide training to Dorset VCS. The process starts from meeting organisations learn from what they do, listen to their training needs and link to appropriate training providers. However VCS already provide and access a huge amount of training. It was felt that Commissioners lack understanding and knowledge of the services the VCS are able to provide. There is a good deal of training being provided and this could be more usefully shared between organisations. Communication between the public sector and the VCS could be improved. It was acknowledged that the sector itself is very diverse, with many groups offering a wide range of services and this makes it hard for commissioners. It was felt that there is an opportunity with the Police and Crime Commissioners and the Clinical Care Groups to enhance understanding, build relationships and ensure proper resourcing of the sector.
- 2.9 Currently there seems to be a real risk of larger VCS organisations or public bodies moving in as they are better equipped to manage the relationship with commissioners, but aren't necessarily equipped to deliver effectively on the ground. The scale of operations of larger organisations and private sector companies enables them to manage payment by results. They in turn are often using smaller local organisations to deliver their outcomes and only passing on 'crumbs' to local organisations.

3. The benefits of increasing the availability of mentors

- 3.1 If more mentors were available the relationship could start in prison. Connections with prisons has improved, even with support for prisoners on short sentences.
- 3.2 We know why people re-offend – because they have a lack of support on leaving prison or the breakdown in family support etc. With more mentors offenders could be supported before release and we could catch people before they fall through the net as they need support not to re-offend.
- 3.3 Good matching of buddies/ mentors needs to occur to make it successful.
- 3.4 Good vetting of Mentors needed also.

- 3.5 Mentoring should be timely and also help in the more fun areas of life, not just getting housing sorted etc. – i.e. also social support. – not just the serious stuff
- 3.6 People should not be written off but should have continued support after a recall/relapse.

4. What would help organisations to retain and recruit more mentors or set up mentoring services?

- 4.1 Existing mentors should be used in the recruitment process.
- 4.2 Existing mentoring organisations need to share good practice with each other and explore collaboration using the Dorset Mentoring Partnership
dorsetmentoringpartnership@hotmail.co.uk
- 4.3 A directory of services available from all involved agencies
- 4.4 Help with recruiting mentors and training
- 4.5 Setting up mentoring from scratch
- 4.6 Linking up organisations for 1-1 advice
- 4.7 Integration of the services already available – and/or raising awareness of what's out there.
- 4.8 Strengthening links with employers in the area – about recruiting offenders
- 4.9 Strengthening links across the sector about available training.
- 4.10 An exchange group/forum – i.e. to share/swap training/training services etc.
- 4.11 Championing success stories – benefits of stats V Case Studies – we know it works!!
- 4.12 Looking at problems with older offenders in particular
- 4.13 More mentors – looking at sharing/swapping/loaning them to other orgs
- 4.14 More info sharing across groups
- 4.15 Resource-swapping
- 4.16 Blog / mechanism for asking for help across the sector/discussing issues and raising problems/ asking for solutions etc.
- 4.17 Many members of the group rely heavily on volunteers to deliver their services. Recruiting volunteers has become harder because the mentoring or befriending role has become more professionalised. This is now often less about having coffee with someone and more about attending court and working with professionals.
- 4.18 Recent changes in the benefits system have made it difficult to keep volunteers – those on Incapacity Benefit who have been moved to Job Seekers Allowance are now not able to commit the time to volunteering.
- 4.19 Volunteers are more transient, often looking for experience for work and therefore not gaining the level of experience required to provide maximum benefit in mentoring roles, or getting lots in training and development input and then moving on to paid work.
- 4.20 Dorset Race Equality Council are looking at developing services for Black and Minority Ethnic ex-offenders and it was noted that it is really useful to understand what other organisations are doing when developing new services.
- 4.21 Footprints have had success in drawing in independent funding, and it was noted that it is very important to recognise the Risk/Reward balance when seeking funds – that it hasn't always proved worth it to spend a great deal of time pursuing contracts for example because the effort does not always result in a positive outcome, that it is important to balance effort and have a diverse range of income streams.
- 4.22 Bournemouth Churches Housing Association offer 'Ignite' programme which is really good
- 4.23 There is a need for support around setting up a service, in essence the development and circulation of a 'Toolkit' to support this activity, specifically focusing on sharing good practice and lessons learnt, structure of service, recruitment and training of mentors, Marketing and promoting their service and tools to effectively supervise those volunteers working with vulnerable individuals with complex needs.