# SupportActionNet Awards 2009

## Shortlisted entries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Page no.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adullam Homes Housing Association - The Bethany Project</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Big Issue Foundation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham City Mission</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden Calling</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaucer Homecare</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Network</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depaul UK</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Living Floating Support Service</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis Community</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampshire County Council - Ethnic Minority Learning Disability Project</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMP Forest Bank</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMP Wolds</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leicester City Council - Family Support Service</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mencap</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind In Exeter and East Devon / The Devon Partnership Trust</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS Housing Supported Housing – Floating Support Services</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Yer Bike (Impact Housing Association)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southend Borough Council</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springhill High School</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Tenants and Residents (STAR) Service User Group</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNLOCK: The National Association of Reformed Offenders</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Project description

Please describe this project in one sentence:

A small project which makes a big impact on the lives of the vulnerable women and children we work with.

What was the name of the project?

A Rainbow after Rain.

What were the project’s objectives?

To provide specific support and training for residents who have been traditionally less likely to access involvement opportunities. To promote equality of experience rather than just equality of opportunity thus promoting independent living. Residents have a voice, have a say, are listened to, and heard thus creating informed decisions.

What were the project activities?

Project activities were designed to benefit residents to live an independent life, develop individual skills and confidence, play an active part in their local community, give voice to all residents especially the silent majority, empowerment, improving communications between organisations and service users, a way of bringing people together to achieve mutually desirable outcomes and ensure that services reflect the needs and wishes of the residents who use them and creates a sense of ownership if involvement initiatives are sustained by action.

Residents developed in the following activities: facilitating events/workshops, delivering and being part of training/inductions, reviews of literature, participative research, writing articles, filming and interviews for documentaries around youth homelessness, supporting local groups, national and regional and participating in preparing tenders and bids.

In July 2009 Bethany residents used their participation in the above activities to submit their runner up entry into the National Housing Federation What We Are Proud Of Awards, titled A Rainbow After Rain. Drawing on their recent success of their Live Well Be Healthy project, where they designed a booklet containing information on Healthy Eating, Lifestyle Changes, Weight Management Plan, Food Diary, Questionnaires and Exercise and their own designed Cook and Eat classes (which were piloted at their local SureStart Children’s centre) they not only received the recognition they deserved but went on to submit a successful bid to a local charity which enabled them to purchase cooking utensils and exercise equipment to hold regular sessions within Bethany project.

Residents produced a slide show against a piece of music which captured the positive achievements and remarkable changes to their lives as their final submission. This piece of work has now led to an avid interest to begin a new project specifically around art, music, poetry and creative writing.

Project organisations

Which organisations were involved in the project and what role did they play?

Bethany recognise the importance placed on working in partnership with other organisations and form positive partnerships ensuring our residents receive the best support possible. During the summer of 2008 Bethany residents took part in Leicester YMCA and
Leicester City Council’s partnership working on homelessness by sharing their experiences on DVD interviews. The DVD is now part of Leicester De Montfort Universities undergraduate degree in Housing. Residents continue to attend resident involvement events and graduated as Peer Reviewers by contributing to the local community and other providers by interviewing service users, giving them a voice and ensuring their voices are heard.

Which organisation took the lead in running the project?
Bethany Project.

Evaluation and reflection
How successful has the project been? (please include any feedback or evaluation)
A Rainbow After Rain came about following evaluation and reflection against resident involvement while preparing evidence in support of the positive and successful outcomes.
Our project was our entry into the National Housing Federation What We Are Proud Of Awards 2009, where residents collated their achievements by preparing a PowerPoint slide show against a chosen piece of music, for their submission to the finals. The award for second place has proven the project to be successful but the residents comments speak for themselves, as attached, in just some of their articles written for Adullam Housing Association Ltd One Voice magazine.

What were the major challenges for the project and how were these overcome?
Engaging with hard to reach residents who are homeless or at risk, have drug, alcohol and substance misuse issues, are vulnerable women fleeing domestic violence, teenage parents, asylum seekers, or young women leaving care has the potential to create major challenges. We overcome this by focusing on issues women want to discuss, ensure residents receive information on what is available in the housing sector, provide tailored activities directly linked to promoting independence and well-being, develop skills to increase self confidence and esteem, life skills and budgeting, relationships, education, training and employment and create a safe and respectful atmosphere.

What are the plans for the project in the future?
A Rainbow After Rain produced many successful outcomes for Bethany residents. They were able to express themselves freely by writing about their experiences or convey their feelings through art and music. Currently some residents are volunteering to regenerate a disused building in Leicester for The Arts Organisation. Opening this autumn, TAO will provide a sustainable community regeneration art project to Leicester of which residents next chosen project is to make use of the studio space to design an art therapy group. At present we are seeking opportunities for funding to support our next project, which is a project within itself.

Is there any other information you would like to include?
I have shared this award entry with Bethany residents who expressed a desire to get involved. By way of participation residents wish to include their comments based on the following life categories:
Love – “Bethany staff are practioners of The Freedom Programme for victims of domestic violence. I have regular one-to-one sessions which are helping me to become a survivor. I can believe that one day I will find a loving and lasting relationship because I am learning to spot the warning signs of unhealthy relationships”.
Money – “My keyworker understands my attitude and behaviour to money. She has helped me to identify my needs and make positive choices by planning and thinking ahead”.
Family and Friends – “My keyworker has worked tirelessly to reunite me with my husband and children after I had to flee my country leaving them behind. Staff work above and
beyond to find ways to learn about and celebrate resident’s different cultures.

**Work** – “We meet people from other agencies and organisations at our resident meetings. Staff have formed partnerships and created opportunities for voluntary placements and work experience, some can lead to employment. I am volunteering at TAO and I love it. I have a purpose and a reason to get up in the morning and I am making new friends.”

**Well-being** – “I really enjoyed the cook and eat sessions. With me it isn’t a case of can’t cook rather won’t cook!”

“I am proud to have been part of the resident group who designed our Live Well Be Healthy sessions. We have the latest workout DVDs and are looking forward to the Wii Console Launch evening”.

“I have learnt to express myself by writing poetry. It’s easy and now I can’t stop. My worker brought me a special note pad and I keep them all in there”.

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**Personal input**

**How did you initially become involved with the project?**

It is my designated role as User Involvement Worker to enable our residents to make informed choices about the options and support available. I have a commitment to empower residents and support their independence. Residents are well informed so that they can communicate their needs and views and make informed choices. Residents are consulted about services provided and are offered opportunities to be involved in their running. Residents are empowered in their engagement in the wider community and the development of social networks. It is my responsibility to offer an opportunity to each individual to get involved.

**What has been your personal role in running the project?**

My personal role in running the project is to provide a process of involvement to ensure residents are offered involvement opportunities which includes:

- Providing information to residents (letters, leaflets, posters, handbooks, information packs and newsletters)
- Seeking information from residents
- Listening to unsolicited views of residents
- Consulting residents
- Encourage residents to make choices from a set of options

I support residents who have learning difficulties by using methods of communication including pictures and music and offer an interpretation service to residents whose first language is not English.

**What would you do differently if you were involved in a similar project again?**

Involvement and empowerment means different things to different people. Some residents wish not to get involved at all and some wish to play a very active role. The dynamics within the Bethany project change regularly as residents move on into independent living and new residents move in.

For our next project I would like existing residents to facilitate and lead and take complete ownership. Aims and objectives will be as before and will include methods that identify hidden dreams, aspirations and talents. Residents will be enthused to motivate and encourage new residents by sharing their successes of resident involvement.
Project description
Please describe this project in one sentence:
Financial Inclusion is a programme of support for Big Issue Vendors to improve their financial skills, knowledge and confidence; enabling them to take steps to maximise their income and move towards a life away from the streets.

What was the name of the project?
Making Money Work – Financial Inclusion

What were the project’s objectives?
- Improve Vendors’ financial skills, knowledge and confidence
- Incentivise saving, and earning via Big Issue
- Increase no. of agencies we work in partnership with
- Invest in professional development of staff
- Develop systems for monitoring and evaluation
- Disseminate what we learn.

What were the project activities?
This project impacts the lives of 1200 Big Issue sellers, known as vendors, across England. We support our Vendors by facilitating access to specialist finance advice services and offering in-house support such as:
- Basic financial skills and increasing financial literacy
- Debt management advice
- Holding drop-in sessions with our partners on budgeting skills
- Our Vendor Support Fund (VSF) which is a grant giving scheme offering financial awards to support Vendor’s needs
- Working in partnership with the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) offering regular drop-in sessions
- Benefits advice provided by our partners
- Promoting a Savings Incentive Scheme
- Access to credit union and bank accounts
- Helping Vendors gain necessary identification through the VSF
- Focused Sales and Money Week held annually in February

Project organisations
Which organisations were involved in the project and what role did they play?
The Big Issue Foundation works with a huge number of organisation’s nationally however a few to note are:
- Services Against Financial Exclusion (SAFE), who will specialise in helping Vendors acquire ID and open basic bank accounts.
- Credit Action, who will specialise in helping Vendors draw up budgeting and savings plans, and set personal goals including savings targets.
- Broadway London, who will specialise in providing debt advice and support to Vendors.
- GLE oneLondon, who provide workshops on the basics of setting up a business, and accept referrals from the Big Issue for vendors who would like one-one support from
Which organisation took the lead in running the project?
The Big Issue Foundation

Evaluation and reflection
How successful has the project been? (please include any feedback or evaluation)
The success of this project is demonstrated by the following vendor achievements in London:

- 87 attended ‘money fairs’
- 35 attended money workshops
- 255 were given financial guidance and referred to partner agencies for specific support
- 33 are saving regularly using our savings incentive scheme
- 45% of said the workshops were ‘useful’ and 55% said they were ‘very useful’

Additionally 20 vendors have opened a bank or credit union account in the past year, and 167 have achieved their personal sales targets. 153 grants have been made from the Vendor Support Fund in London plus 25 vendors have received Big Awards towards training and business setup.

What were the major challenges for the project and how were these overcome?
The following table summarises the main problems and difficulties encountered and how we have been using this knowledge:

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<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of money advice</td>
<td>The Project has demonstrated just how difficult it is to find the right advice workers, as it is vital that they are confident in engaging with a hard-to-reach client group, understand the issues facing Vendors and are able to think laterally and holistically about how a Vendor’s income can be maximised rather than just seeing their job as answering the questions Vendors come to them with; and also about how other factors such as accommodation, health, immigration status etc. impact on a person’s financial well-being.</td>
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What are the plans for the project in the future?
This project has been run as a two year pilot programme in London. Recently it has been extended to all of The Big Issue Foundation regional offices. The plan is to embed this tried and tested programme into the everyday work of The Big Issue Foundation.

Is there any other information you would like to include?
The Need for Financial Literacy

1) Having access to somewhere to keep savings is crucial for the homeless community. One in three of our Vendors have been mugged for their takings.
2) In fact “67% of the homeless have suffered a theft, whilst (only) 1.4% of all adults in
England and Wales had done so”

3) Savings also play a crucial role in taking the temptation away from individuals, as one of our Vendors said; “I opened a Vendor Savings Account because the money always just burned a hole in my pocket”.

We believe that now is the right time to act to make a difference to the lives of Big Issue Vendors. Our Financial Inclusion project has been piloted in London and this, in line with our Outreach pilot has more than doubled our contact with Vendors and we want to replicate this nationwide.

The benefits of the project are reliant upon Vendors making a personal commitment to achieve their life goals. The Big Issue ethos believes in a 'hand up not a hand out'; we seek to empower our Vendors to make positive life choices.

Over the next three years we want to take our service brokerage model to 2000 Vendors across England allowing us to reach 60% more Vendors thus enabling them:

- to access bank accounts
- to develop a savings culture
- to take control of their financial futures

The change we can achieve is palpable; as one of our Vendors said “I think the service [bank accounts] is a good idea. It’s a safety issue. People do look at Vendors as ‘easy targets”

Personal input
How did you initially become involved with the project?
I became involved with the project when I took over responsibility of writing reports and funding bid’s from the project manager of the pilot project.

What has been your personal role in running the project?
I have not personally been involved in running the project. We had two year funding for a project manager to oversee the pilot project and roll out the service nationally. This has now come to an end and our two regional development managers run the project as part of our service brokerage project.

Organisation: Birmingham City Mission
Submitted by: James Herbert and John Hopkins

Project description
Please describe this project in one sentence:
Our project is to create healing space for hurting and vulnerable people to find their inner strength and self worth.

What was the name of the project?
‘The Workshop’

What were the project’s objectives?
- To provide the space, materials and tools to create a wood work workshop.
- To provide a skilled individual with ability and knowledge to teach basic wood working skills.
- To provide a skilled listener who has the ability to make people feel listened to and valued.
What were the project activities?

The current working environment for supporting homeless people is target driven, with planned interventions designed to meet outputs and outcomes, which does not always meet the underlying psychological needs of the individual. For us the overarching activity needed to convey the unequivocal message that this is ‘your space and your agenda’. There are no care plan notes; no formal or informal reporting back and for an outcome the evidence is your creative output. This approach ensures we give space for meaningful social interventions that are solely initiated, shaped and implemented by the individual. We are seeking to help the individual not to focus on their vulnerability, which drains their ability to function, but to focus their strength, and on sensing their self worth. The woodcraft activity is the conduit for the active listener to engage with the individual and to facilitate the process of active listening and non-directive support. It is true to say for various reasons, even in the most positive support sessions the vulnerable person is never totally at ease, which means the agenda always lacks a key element. This is a self-help process that feeds on the friendly, non-threatening environment, which is created and therefore helps the individual to bring to the table, on their terms the key-lacking element. This builds confidence and helps the individual to get a clearer picture of the options available to them. Through the woodcraft we have seen individuals make and restore many beautiful items, which have allowed some of that beauty back into their lives. This process has seen many individuals taking the first step to turn their lives around and embracing the formal support on offer. We have seen relationships and families healed and individuals looking with renewed hope of being part of their community.

Project organisations

Which organisations were involved in the project and what role did they play?

The workshop is based at Washington Court. This is a partnership project between the Birmingham City Mission and Trident Housing Association. Trident provided the building and promotes the project amongst its tenants living at the court. Birmingham City Mission has provided the staff and resources to ensure the project happens and functions as designed. We also received a generous donation of hardwood from Red Rob catering suppliers and a donation of funds from Ratcliffe Trust to upgrade machinery and improve dust extraction.

Which organisation took the lead in running the project?

Birmingham City Mission provides the strategic direction and day-to-day management of the project.

Evaluation and reflection

How successful has the project been? (please include any feedback or evaluation)

The project has been very successful in achieving the declared objectives. The listening ear concept and creativity through woodwork has fostered the positive distractionary self-help approach we envisaged. The subsequent non-judgemental, non-threatening, friendly environment demonstrates the caring approachable attitude necessary for effective active listening. Residents have fed back that because of the workshop, a stressful and chaotic chapter in their lives has been made more tolerable. In many cases their creative production has provided the opportunity to approach the situation that led to their vulnerability from another angle, and many relationship-healing doors has been opened by The Workshop.

What were the major challenges for the project and how were these overcome?

This was to make The Workshop an attractive proposition to the residents. We faced the danger of the Workshop being tokenistic and not really the ‘your space, your agenda’ that we envisaged, because in this approach there is a sense of vulnerability for the organisation. We overcame this by showing a genuine commitment to active listening and non-directive
support in an informal environment that respected and accommodated the spontaneity that occurs. There were times when we had to affirm this approach by showing trust by giving aspects of responsibility to residents which if betrayed would have jeopardised the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the plans for the project in the future?</th>
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<td>To ensure the Workshop remains a strategic informal option to residents and to be more pro-active in promoting the opportunities available. We will identify and encourage the more vulnerable “strugglers” to realise the healing opportunity of doing something creative. It is hoped to create an introduction to the Workshop giving the opportunity to make something simple that is easily achievable that would foster the confidence to do more. The other developmental aspect will be to look at how we can support ex-resident who want to make use of the workshop.</td>
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<th>Is there any other information you would like to include?</th>
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<td>We are pro active in getting high quality materials and tools in order to reinforce the message of quality, respect and dignity. Homelessness makes an individual most vulnerable and this is when their expectations is at it’s lowest and many are made to feel mediocrity is better than nothing. This is a crushing blow to the spirit. To be given something of quality to work with is a tremendous boost and is a very simple non-verbal message of ‘we value you’ which is what the workshop is all about. For example one of our residents chose to construct an acoustic guitar using black American walnut, Canadian rock maple, European walnut, Brazilian mahogany and rogewood Columbian pine, all in the same guitar. The quality of finish is impressive and the sense of achievement and self worth is equally impressive. The message from The Workshop is ‘to work with quality materials, to achieve a quality finish means there is quality in you’.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal input</th>
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<td>How did you initially become involved with the project?</td>
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<td>I initially started to use the workshop facilities and took up employment with BCM. From a professional and artistic point of view I realised how therapeutic it was to do something creative when I had problems. After working with the homeless for many years I saw how the concept of creative art could help and BCM gave me the opportunity to co-ordinate the project.</td>
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<tr>
<th>What has been your personal role in running the project?</th>
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<tr>
<td>I am responsible for all aspects of managing the workshop and offer freely my expertise in woodwork and craft activities. My active listening role and non-directive support is the silent helper aspect of The Workshop.</td>
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<th>What would you do differently if you were involved in a similar project again?</th>
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<td>The workshop works so well in achieving the objectives that I would not do anything differently. However to develop the aspect of community I would look at creating better links with the local community.</td>
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Project description

Please describe this project in one sentence:

Helping homeless, ex-homeless & vulnerable people to access the mainstream arts and music scene.

What was the name of the project?

Camden Calling

What were the project’s objectives?

To improve the access homeless and vulnerable groups of people have to mainstream music / arts and popular culture; To create opportunities for our members to develop friendships, confidence, working relationships & transferable skills, engendering a sense of belonging.

Camden Calling is a democratic organisation and member volunteers will shape the direction in which we grow. Having a say into the ways in which our profits are invested in them.

Camden Calling is a project founded on the principles of empowerment and aspiration for change”

[Mission Agreed By Members 28 November 2008]

What were the project activities?

Camden Calling hosts real gigs in real live music venues, giving homeless and vulnerable members the opportunity to express their talents alongside mainstream performers. All gigs are planned, promoted and include performances from our member group. Members develop and share skills through a wide variety of disciplines including; art, design, photography, music production, sound, IT, administration, stage management, event promotion, DJ’ing and performance, members are also linked to partner agencies and education providers at their own pace and without pressure. Through the project they also develop ‘soft skills’ including; working with others, skill sharing, presentation, communication, and timekeeping.

Through the activities of Camden Calling our members develop new friendships both amongst the group and with other mainstream performers through their interaction at events which builds confidence and gives them a real sense of belonging to the wider community. Members complete evaluation forms so that skill sharing and monitoring can be measured and feedback given and sought. Camden Calling is not a support service and is therefore able concentrate on an often overlooked outcome of linking excluded people back into everyday pleasures, in truth very few of us live for our 9-5, and the joy in our life is in the anticipation of when we are next going to do the things that we take pleasure in.

Camden Calling is a break from constant rounds of bureaucracy, professional intervention and judgement of worth that vulnerable people experience day to day. A chance to be yourself and be appreciated as such.

Project organisations

Which organisations were involved in the project and what role did they play?

Grants & Funding – Unltd / Camden Arts / Strummerville

Referrals – Thamesreach / Camden Pathway Hostels / One Support / St Mungos / Probation Service.

Joint Work & Support in kind – St Mungos / Single Homeless Project / London Borough of Camden Supporting People  Pathway Providers Worklessness Group / Off The Streets & Into...
Which organisation took the lead in running the project?
Camden Calling – 100% independent and member led.

Evaluation and reflection
How successful has the project been? (please include any feedback or evaluation)
Launched member album in March, Funded at a basic level, 2 members now linked to work experience based courses, members collaborating creatively with one another and professional artists, members being offered independent gigs. “trust has been put in me to do important pieces of work” Chris “improved sense of self worth, positive circle of friends, a direction for self improvement, and an encouraging sense of optimism” Pete “I have got out of the house, which is hard as I have a social phobia, talking to people, and encouraging other people, getting a friend involved with the group” Paul

What were the major challenges for the project and how were these overcome?
A major issue has been getting people to events, this is being slowly overcome as we are improving the quality of our advertising our website and online social media. Members have now come on board specifically with skills in these areas or members have started courses in these areas.

What are the plans for the project in the future?
We are launching a compilation Album in November and we would like to go on tour next year. I would like to be able to employ members in the long term and run our own venue, linking in with a range of enterprises and services. The members have decided that they would like to be taken to Glastonbury next year.

Is there any other information you would like to include?
I would like to suggest that you do visit the myspace and you tube sites for a real sense of how this project works.

Personal input
How did you initially become involved with the project?
I have been working with single homeless people for around 8 years; the project was initially a small service user involvement project that I decided to set up as an independent organisation. I wanted the project to have freedom and for the members of Camden Calling to be able to set their own agenda. I had found myself somewhat disillusioned with working in the hostel sector and wanted to try something new.

What has been your personal role in running the project?
I run Camden Calling day to day and I am involved in every aspect of the project, I am learning everyday and did not know anything about running a business or music promotion before starting this. I wanted the project to be owned by the members and for us to share skills across the board, building the organisation from the foundations. It has been an amazing and successful year, the members have guided me and we have worked together to plug gaps in our collective knowledge and abilities.

What would you do differently if you were involved in a similar project again?
I would not count on initial support from the homeless sector, my assumption was that colleagues and partner service workers would come along to gigs, but I think there have
been issues around motivation and boundaries for them.

### Organisation: Chaucer Homecare

**Submitted by:** Udi Perry

### Project description

**Please describe this project in one sentence:**

An all inclusive community choir started up and led by a service user providing performances, taster sessions and workshops.

### What was the name of the project?

The Mustard Seed Singers

### What were the project’s objectives?

Initially to provide an all inclusive service user led group for pleasure and performances, then to promote the health and well being benefits of singing for The Sydney de Haan Centre for Research through taster sessions and workshops throughout East Kent to enable them to set up similar groups.

### What were the project activities?

The choir began life before Christmas 2007 and naturally began singing Christmas Carols. Our first performances were at Connors House and St Stephen’s Community Church. During 2008 they began developing a wider repertoire of show tunes, spirituals, hymns as well as contemporary songs. The Sydney de Haan Centre for Research had just launched a season of seminars outlining current developments in research and practice in music, singing and health some of which were attended by members of the choir. In June, discussions with the Sydney de Haan Centre took place about the choir’s practical involvement in the design and development of the research into the health and wellbeing benefits of singing in a group for mental health service users. Meanwhile the choir prepared for performances in October at the Mind the Gap Festival (part of an anti stigma campaign) in the town centre and World Mental Health Day at St Andrews Church. The first taster sessions for the Sydney de Haan ‘s research project were planned for Thanet and Sittingbourne in December.

This year the choir were invited back to St Stephens Community Church to perform and participate in their shoe box campaign, sending shoeboxes of basic items and toys to orphanages in eastern Europe and Africa. Then began a busy series of taster sessions and workshops promoting the Sydney de Haan Centre’s bid to set up similar choirs all over East Kent. From May this year we have provided taster sessions and workshops in Ashford, Faversham, Deal, Sheerness, Margate and Folkestone. We also performed as part of the series of seminars in Music, Arts and Health at The University Centre Folkestone on 16th June with Sandra Pearson who organises the Mind the Gap festival.

Following a recent taster session in Margate we have been invited to give a performance in June 2010 at Folkestone and District MIND Centre’s AGM and the Hereson Time Bank’s First Anniversary at St Luke Church Hall, Ramsgate on the 19th September. We also hope to be performing with some of the newly set up choirs at this year’s Mind The Gap Festival and on World Mental Health Day.

### Project organisations

**Which organisations were involved in the project and what role did they play?**

Chaucer Homecare Ltd – An independent specialist mental health organisation which has
been the lead for the project with main participants coming from our services.
Community Mental Health Teams – These are the main referrers to the project but staff have also become active participants.
Sydney de Haan Centre – They participate in the Choir but have also provided useful training seminars and lead on research into health benefits of community choirs.
Health Promotions – Main liaison for setting up taster sessions and workshops for new choirs.

Which organisation took the lead in running the project?
Chaucer Homecare Ltd

Evaluation and reflection
How successful has the project been? (please include any feedback or evaluation)
Attendance started at around 4-5 people but quickly doubled becoming one of the most well attended and committed groups that we have had running here. Numbers now average around 16 to 18 people forcing us now to look for a new rehearsal space. Participants come from a wide range of backgrounds from service users to their family members, staff and professionals.
“When you sing you cannot be sad for long. It really lifts your spirits. Being in a choir means you are in a team – you all help each other which gives tremendous satisfaction.” - Participant quote 2008

What were the major challenges for the project and how were these overcome?
Breaking down barriers between professionals and services and creating a forum where everyone can safely relinquish their roles and work together on the task in hand. Developing truly meaningful social inclusion. Breaking down stigma by performing in a variety of settings, including busking in the high street.

What are the plans for the project in the future?
The project receives no core funding but it did produce our first service user focus group which looks into writing bids for funding. This is becoming increasingly important so that we can pay for rental on a new rehearsal space, transport costs to enable us to plan, provide and attend workshops, taster sessions and give performances in a wider range of settings. We also need to buy new music and materials.
We would also like to plan and develop more workshops and taster sessions for different projects to the point where we can actually generate funds to keep the choir going. To work with the new choirs being set up to really expand a shared repertoire.

Is there any other information you would like to include?
Feedback from participants has included:
“Keeps me happy, is an excellent hobby. Sociable activity. Need no special equipment – easy to carry voice around. I have clinical depression, so it really helps me.”
“There is something about this group activity that makes it different from all others and makes it a truly communal experience. Other activities enable you to disappear off into your own world, troubled or otherwise, but for this everybody has to be focused on the here and now and on each other. You have to listen to everyone around you and attune yourself to them as you join in; you have to watch the person conducting and blend yourself in with the harmonies around you. When it all comes together the hair on the back of your neck stands on end.”
“The effect of singing with a group helps to make friends, so this has widened my horizons quite a bit and gets me out and about more. The support you receive from other people helps in general well being.”
I am never happier then when I am singing.

**Personal input**

**How did you initially become involved with the project?**

I am a mental health service user and have always loved to sing in choirs. I wanted to share this passion with others in order that they too may enjoy the health and well being benefits of making music as a group.

**What has been your personal role in running the project?**

I developed the project in 2007 and have been conducting and leading the choir since then. I play a role in organising performances and rehearsals. I also always strive to empower the members of the group to have an input into choice of repertoire and overall style of the project.

**What would you do differently if you were involved in a similar project again?**

I would have very much have liked to have had the opportunity to create some publicity materials to distribute to GP surgeries and the like to generate more referrals for people in mental distress who may benefit from joining such a group.

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**Organisation: Community Network**

**Submitted by: Pat Fitzsimon**

**Project description**

**Please describe this project in one sentence:**

Setting up telephone discussion and support groups to combat the growing problem of loneliness and isolation among retired seafarers.

**What was the name of the project?**

Seafarers Link

**What were the project’s objectives?**

To alleviate the isolation felt by many retired seafarers (fishermen, Royal Navy, Merchant Navy, shipping lines) by linking them together into telephone support and friendship groups. This provides retired seafarers with an opportunity to make new friends, engage in new activities, discover shared histories, and feel less isolated.

**What were the project activities?**

Community Network identified areas where large numbers of seafarers lived from research conducted on behalf of the Maritime Charities Funding Group. We worked with the seafaring support services in those areas to publicise the project through newspaper articles, radio interviews and leaflets. Our Social Inclusion Officer, Sue Robinson, visited the areas to recruit group organisers from the seafaring community who were then trained in how to conduct a telephone friendship and support group.

During the initial stages Sue Robinson supported these facilitators to ensure the groups were well run, and that participants had a range of varied and interesting topics to discuss. She found that the facilitators not only developed new skills but also grew in confidence from their involvement in the project. The seafarers linked up every two weeks for an hour over a six-month period, exchanging stories and experiences which resulted in new friendships forming.
Dave O’Connor has spent 50 years at sea as a deep-sea arctic fisherman and captain in the merchant service. Now retired he runs the Hull group and is in no doubt of the benefits it brings. “Seafarers Link has revitalised the former seamen in the group. We swap stories about the ships on which we served and the adventures we had,” he said. “We’re even planning to meet up.”

Project organisations
Which organisations were involved in the project and what role did they play?
Maritime Charities Funding Group – provided the funding and great project support from the Development Officer.
Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme - helped with publicising the project and identifying likely group organisers and participants in the calls.
Community Network – the lead partner accessing the funding, managing the project, training and supporting the facilitators, evaluating the project.

Which organisation took the lead in running the project?
Community Network

Evaluation and reflection
How successful has the project been? (please include any feedback or evaluation)
1) The success of the Hull group has led to groups being set up on Merseyside and in Wales.
2) To measure the effectiveness of the telephone groups, seafarers were asked to fill in a questionnaire at the beginning of the project and at its end. Their answers provided conclusive evidence of how the telephone groups successfully alleviated feelings of isolation.
3) A women’s group has now been established in Hull, which was not anticipated at the beginning of the project.
4) The Army and Airforce are interested in starting similar projects for former members of the armed forces.

What were the major challenges for the project and how were these overcome?
The biggest challenge was recruiting seafarers to participate in the project. We overcame this by getting leaders of local seafaring organisations to endorse the project and by promoting it through the local media. We also visited a range of seafarers associations and delivered presentations; this face-to-face approach has been instrumental in building trust and understanding between seafarers, their organisations and the non-seafarer project development team. As the project has developed, the experience we gained in the early stages has proved invaluable in persuading seafarers in other parts of the UK to take part.

What are the plans for the project in the future?
We are now talking to the Army and Airforce about using this method for dealing with a wide range of social issues that affect former members of the armed forces. These can range from difficulty in adjusting to civilian life to the effects of post traumatic stress disorder. Community Network is redoubling its efforts to acquire additional funding to finance the expansion of the Seafarers Link project and to introduce similar schemes for other retired servicemen and women.

Is there any other information you would like to include?
The working life of a seafarer is largely unseen and not understood by the majority of the population. It is a dangerous and demanding occupation that involves being away from home for long periods and in many cases has prevented them from sustaining relationships.
and family ties. For many, the vessel on which they serve becomes their ‘home’ and their
shipmates their ‘family’. Retirement deprives seafarers of the onboard companionship that
has sustained them throughout their working lives, which in turn can lead to feelings of
loneliness and isolation.
Despite being a relatively new project, Seafarers Link has already demonstrated its
effectiveness in combating this problem.
Valerie Coleman, the Maritime Charities Funding Group Programme Manager, said: “The
Seafarers Link project has been a lifeline for former seafarers. It’s so simple, you pick up
your phone and you are immediately connected to a group of people who have gone
through similar life experiences. That means a lot to seafarers who might be isolated due to
ill health or increasing age.”

Personal input
How did you initially become involved with the project?
We became aware of research that had been done on behalf of the Maritime Charities
Funding Group that identified isolation and the harmful effects of isolation on the seafaring
community as a key issue that seafaring charities should be looking at. We contacted the
Development Officer of the Maritime Charities Funding Group and began discussions on how
we could address this issue and demonstrate to the local charities the value of the work.

What has been your personal role in running the project?
As the Chief Executive of Community Network, I wrote the bid, formed and managed the
partnership, and recruited the Social Inclusion Officer to run the project. The Social Inclusion
Officer reports back to me on how the project is developing.

What would you do differently if you were involved in a similar project again?
We would allow for much greater development time; we would ensure our partnership
arrangements were clearly set out and that the departure of key personnel was identified as
a risk factor in delivering the project.

Organisation: Depaul UK
Submitted by: Andrew McKnight

Project description
Please describe this project in one sentence:
Reconnect provides family mediation and relationship support to homeless and
disadvantaged young people across the UK.

What was the name of the project?
Reconnect

What were the project’s objectives?
To establish a much needed service to prevent youth homelessness and reduce the
emotional impact that homelessness causes, by helping young people develop more positive
relationships. The project encourages young people to remain at home where appropriate,
reduces isolation and helps re-build relationships so they have a strong support network.
What were the project activities?

Our Reconnect project is based in London, Kent, HMYOI Rochester, Manchester and Oldham. We work with young people aged 14-25 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to help them resolve problems with their families and develop and manage meaningful relationships. Our trained mediators hold one to one sessions with the young person initially to identify the problems and plan how to resolve them. Mediators also meet with family members independently to discuss any problems from their perspective. When both parties are happy and ready to meet, the mediator will hold sessions to help resolve conflicts calmly in a neutral location. Each case is treated individually with support determined by need. If the mediation can’t resolve the family problems so that it is safe for the young person to return home, our mediation workers help the young person secure safe and secure accommodation somewhere else and any other services that the young person may need. Cases are rarely ever closed and our staff continue their support for as long as it is needed, even if its just occasionally.

Our programme also recognises the difficulties of raising a teenager and so we run parenting classes to help parents deal with stress, learn good practice and gain support from other parents.

In January 2009 we began work in HMYOI Rochester, offering family mediation to young offenders. We are one of the few organisations providing this service inside prison, despite re-offending rates decreasing when offenders have secure accommodation on release, as well as meaningful relationships with family or friends. Inside prison our staff work to put people back in touch with loved ones that they have lost contact with and provide mediation and support to families, so that they may be able to support the young person on their release.

Project organisations

Which organisations were involved in the project and what role did they play?

Our project receives funding from a number of sources across the UK including; Big Lottery Fund, Parenting Fund, London Borough of Brent, London Probation and charitable trusts.

Which organisation took the lead in running the project?

Depaul UK is the lead delivery organisation on the project.

Evaluation and reflection

How successful has the project been? (please include any feedback or evaluation)

We started our first Reconnect project in 2002 and since that time we have worked with over 1,500 young people, developing their emotional and social relationships and increasing their potential. This in turn has had an effect on a further 1,500 families at least, helping to improve relationships with the whole family, not just the young person concerned. This will have had an impact on younger siblings and other members of the family.

In 2008 alone, Depaul worked with over 400 young people and their families, with 69% of young people reporting a positive outcome.

What were the major challenges for the project and how were these overcome?

A major challenge was getting local authorities to accept and commit to family mediation as an integral part of an overall accommodation pathway of support, especially when the project was first launched. Similarly, when we proposed launching the service inside HMYOI Rochester it was a challenge to get the prison to recognise the added benefit of relationship support alongside the resettlement support we were already giving. In both cases our experience with young homeless people and our research findings with our clients proved that there was a real need for the service and that it was having a real impact.
What are the plans for the project in the future?

We plan to expand our Reconnect programme to other parts of the country where we work such as in the North East. We hope to further develop our mediation work inside prisons with young offenders.

Is there any other information you would like to include?

The most common cause of youth homelessness is relationship breakdown (cited in a Joseph Rowntree Report 2008), usually with parents or step parents. For many young people this is a consequence of long term conflict within the home and often involves violence. This research and many others like it, prove that there is a real need to help re-build family relationships before they get to breaking point to prevent youth homelessness and encourage young people to fulfil their potential in a safe and secure environment.

Case Studies from Reconnect project run by Depaul UK:

James had previously had his own home and was holding down a permanent job. However after a relationship breakdown with his pregnant girlfriend and losing his job, James spiralled into depression. He was unable to keep up the care of his tenancy and lost his home. After taking an overdose for the second time, James ended up in intensive care. James had a bad relationship with his alcoholic father and was unable to return home to the support of his family. He was placed on incapacity benefit and was staying in an emergency hostel when he was recommended to Depaul UK’s Reconnect scheme requesting that we help him develop his relationship with his family and help provide housing.

Our trained mediation staff worked with James and his father to help re-build their relationship. We worked with James’s father to combat his excessive drinking and worked with them both on their anger management problems through a series of phone conversations and face to face counselling sessions. The mediation counselling improved James’s family relationship a great deal and he is now on good terms with his father and has moved in with his brother, solving his housing problem. Both James and his father have reduced their alcohol consumption and James has gained full time work and has come off benefits. We have also directed him onto a series of life skills courses that will enable him to deal with his tenancy effectively and manage his relationships.

Eddie was re-housed at 16 on a rough housing estate far from family and friends because his home was deemed unsuitable as his mother had problems with alcohol and heroin. With no money and no support he soon got arrested and was sent to prison for theft. A Depaul UK worker met Eddie inside prison and contacted his mother who had stopped using drugs. Our worker held mediation sessions between Eddie and his mum to resolve their issues and on his release he was able to return home with continued mediation support from Depaul UK. With support Eddie has become enthusiastic and positive, signed up to a training programme and is gaining work experience in a local business.

Personal input

How did you initially become involved with the project?

On joining Depaul UK I took over the line management of the existing Reconnect schemes, with a specific focus on London and the South East.

What has been your personal role in running the project?

I have developed the project by securing substantial funding from the Big Lottery Fund. I have developed the Reconnect model and successfully replicated our mediation service into a young offenders institute for the first time, and have also aligned our outcomes with the Every Child Matters agenda.
What would you do differently if you were involved in a similar project again?
I would ensure that appropriate support structures for staff were in place from the start, due to the emotional nature of the case loads, and build this into funding budgets. I would also consider how to package the service better to sell it into beneficiaries, as the term family mediation can fail to represent the diverse service we have on offer.

Organisation: East Living Floating Support Service
Submitted by: Comfort Ademola

Project description
Please describe this project in one sentence:
A unique opportunity for someone living at home with carers/family to choose the type and location of their own home

What was the name of the project?
H.O.L.D (Home ownership for people with learning disabilities)

What were the project’s objectives?
1) Choice of where client wants to live, and what sort of property they want to live in.
2) Give client greater independence and security, regardless of their changing support needs
3) Give client peace of mind that repairs will still be done by the housing association.
4) Give client more control as shared owners also have control - they are homeowners like anyone else and can make decisions on that basis.
5) Client needs to be improving their current housing situation

What were the project activities?
1) Identify suitable properties
2) Arranging viewings & meetings with solicitors
3) Complete Welfare benefits forms/applications and follow up
4) Complete grants applications
5) Support with identifying and choosing appropriate furniture
6) Arrange meetings with relevant parties and keep everyone informed
7) Liaise between parties and on behalf of clients

Project organisations
Which organisations were involved in the project and what role did they play?
Social Services – have to be on board and agree to pay for the support/care packages that may be required
Local Authority Housing & Council Tax Benefits – had meetings with and got them to agree to pay the rent and service charges that normally accompany such projects
My Safe Home – specialist mortgage brokers who helped acquire a mortgage which caters for the needs of our clients
Department for Works & Pensions – have agreed to pay interest payments on mortgage in special arrangement
East Homes Sales & Development – arrange viewings, progress of flat, sales negotiations

Which organisation took the lead in running the project?
Our organisation – Floating Support Service
### Evaluation and reflection

**How successful has the project been? (please include any feedback or evaluation)**

In 2006 East Living successful supported 2 people with learning disability to part buy their homes as a pilot project. Following on from that success East Living recently received grant to help 5 more people with a Learning Disability to part buy their own homes across London borough of Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest. Most recently we have supported a couple who were living separately in supported accommodation to buy their own home and they are now living together for the first time. We have received positive feedback from all our clients and their families and so far all the people we have supported in this project are now successfully living in their own homes.

### What were the major challenges for the project and how were these overcome?

As the flat they had decided to purchase was a brand new development there was various delays which had a knock on effect on mortgage applications. The initial mortgage offer expired due to the delays so we had to arrange for another offer. By that stage the credit crunch had kicked in so values of the properties changed which had an effect on the mortgage.

All meetings had to be arranged with social worker and family members and other relevant agencies so it was quite difficult to arrange. The clients themselves were very enthusiastic and had become a little frustrated with the whole procedure. The large number of agencies/departments involved can also create difficulties in communication.

### What are the plans for the project in the future?

Expand to other boroughs and offer more choice and variety of properties. We have received lots of interest especially from people with physical disabilities so if we can grants for these categories than we can help more vulnerable people to become homeowners.

### Is there any other information you would like to include?

East Living first provided floating support in 1998 to seven people with mental health problems in Waltham Forest. Since then our service has grown to include five specialist teams working across east London and Essex to provide support to over 200 clients at any one time.

East Living has achieved major recognition for its commitment to its staff as an ‘Investor in People’ organisation. In addition we have been awarded ‘Charter Mark’ in recognition of our high standards in service, equal opportunities, accessibility, innovation, efficiency and integrity.

### Personal input

**How did you initially become involved with the project?**

It was pilot which we ran originally in another borough, I was the support officer.

**What has been your personal role in running the project?**

Liaising between relevant agencies, problem solving, arranging meetings, advocating on behalf of clients, supporting clients to claim benefits and ensure their transition is as smooth as possible.

**What would you do differently if you were involved in a similar project again?**

Work to a time schedule, improve communications with DWP & HB, more choice for clients.
Project description
Please describe this project in one sentence:
Arts and IT based activities for older and vulnerable people (55+) in East London encouraging skills development and social inclusion.

What was the name of the project?
Life Long Learning Programme

What were the project’s objectives?
To encourage active participation in activity sessions, improve existing skills and provide enjoyment. Participants were consulted and helped to determine the subject of activities. These were adapted to suit individual needs such as disability and financial limitations. The activities aim to increase training opportunities and promote health and well being.

What were the project activities?
After consultation a programme of activities were decided for the year. Four Arts and Craft courses lasting five weeks were held in sheltered housing schemes teaching basic skills and improving residents’ use of colour and design techniques. Workshops included stationary design, hanging ornaments and frame decoration. Due to the popularity this was followed by an Advance Arts course in which residents could suggest ideas for future classes and voted on the sessions they wanted to pursue. Workshops feature clay model making and jewellery creation. The residents have commented on the benefits to the joints in their fingers and hands. Tutor Zoe White has seen definite improvement in the residents’ work and mental well being, by just holding the classes there has been an increase in resident involvement and general communication, as well as the improvement in their skills.

We have one off seasonal activities such as Christmas card making, Easter flowers or Summer crafts. At these activities we ask for a small donation to a local/national charity.

Finally we organise IT training and refresher training. Our tutor Richard Bowyer has visited eight different schemes across East London and taught individual residents basic skills, such as using a mouse, opening an email account and playing solitaire. This has progressed to refresher training and includes digital photography and designing posters/leaflets. From evaluations we found an interest in Family History and held a five week course to enable people to trace their family tree with the help of a qualified tutor. The chance to take part in these courses has opened up a wealth of opportunities and most importantly has enabled many more people to become digitally included.

There is a huge demand for the activities which are very popular with different residents in our sheltered schemes and general needs accommodation.

Project organisations
Which organisations were involved in the project and what role did they play?

Genesis Community – Funded the project and provided an officer to organise and coordinate the activities and manage the volunteers supporting it. Responsible for evaluating and monitoring the project and publicising the programme.

Springboard Housing Association – Residents (55+) living in sheltered housing or general needs accommodation in East London boroughs benefitted from workshops and courses that were run in the communal areas of the sheltered accommodation.

Zinfinity Arts, Millrace IT, Independent Tutors – Designed workshops and training that was
Which organisation took the lead in running the project?

| Genesis Community |

Evaluation and reflection
How successful has the project been? (please include any feedback or evaluation)

| I think the success can be measured with the attendance, last year we engaged with over 450 residents through art classes, one off workshops, computer courses and training. We had to organise a second day of activities where we had waiting lists. From our evaluations we have found 98% of participants enjoyed the activity and would take part again. 92% enjoyed learning a new skill and felt they had improved over the course and 96% enjoyed meeting new people and socialising. The tutors have also monitored the project and produced case studies on individuals who have really benefited. |

What were the major challenges for the project and how were these overcome?

| The financial constraints this year has meant we have had to reduce the number of activities therefore reducing the number of participants. However we have looked for support from our volunteers and to larger venues so we can run one off workshops on a larger scale with more people attending rather than three or four smaller workshops. We have also had to cut certain suppliers due to cost. In this case we have trained up one of our volunteers, who now runs the IT sessions and Refresher Courses and is much better value for money than the original company we used. |

What are the plans for the project in the future?

| We would like to continue the current activity plan but introduce cultural based activities in line with the Olympics that feature heavily in East London. We want to promote different countries and encourage older people to embrace this opportunity. By including intergenerational work with local community groups we would like to host workshops that (for example) cover exercise but in the form of tai chi, arts classes covering Chinese calligraphy, dance classes using African music to help change some of the existing negative opinions about different nationalities and countries. |

Is there any other information you would like to include?

| This project brings older people from different boroughs across East London together to share information, socialise and learn new skills. For many of them a morning or afternoon visiting another scheme is a day out for them. The project provides disabled transport so nobody is excluded because of mobility, disability or the financial cost of getting around. The tutors we have selected are patient and knowledgeable when it comes to working with Older and Vulnerable people. They are aware of the problems and issues they may have and design the workshops to work around these. There is also a health aspect to the activities. Mentally the residents have an opportunity to talk freely. At one art course we had stories from the war, something the residents refrain from talking about normally – it seems this time two hours a week is their time to talk freely in a safe environment. Physically there have been improvements in mobility, joints, happy emotions and the regular activity plan encourages people to look forward to something and helps with forming a routine. The age range is very diverse and our oldest participant is 98. There are also limited facilities in the local area. Many of residents do not venture outside of their homes and by holding the activities in their communal lounge it feels safe and inviting to them. Others enjoy |

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travelling somewhere else but do not have the hassle of walking to bus stops, or waiting for trains as they are picked up at their door.
This project gives people the opportunity to try something new which differs from the stereotype of bingo or checkers. It is also providing training for our older volunteers who support the programme and who are still developing themselves in their 80’s.

**Personal input**

**How did you initially become involved with the project?**

When I joined Genesis Community I was tasked with organising a programme of activities for Older and Vulnerable people, as there was nothing currently in existence. After a large amount of consultation I formed a group of volunteers (70yrs+) who act as representatives and discuss ideas that have been put forward. We found the top five activities included arts and craft, IT, day trips, exercise and quizzes! We have built a varied programme on top of this and adapted out activities to suit the needs identified through our consultation. The programme continually changes to reflect the needs of the residents.

**What has been your personal role in running the project?**

I organise the activities and consult first hand with the residents to make sure the project is delivering its objectives and meeting the residents’ expectations. This includes organising coffee mornings to gauge interest and find out the residents’ needs – this includes health and disability, financial implications, venue and distance. I manage the older volunteers and help access training for them to enhance their skills. I am responsible for the budget and making sure the project is promoting value for money. I research activities, tutors and venues and also raise the profile of our organisation by writing press releases.

**What would you do differently if you were involved in a similar project again?**

I would train up another volunteer/staff member so we could share my role within this project and then I could look for funding to continue the project and expand it to include different activities such as music and dance and to promote it to more people to participate in.
I would also look into partnership work with dial a ride schemes to see if we can get a discounted transport service to free up some money for other activities. I would also like to recruit more volunteers to act as representatives to promote the activities and consult with the residents.

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**Organisation: Hampshire County Council - Ethnic Minority Learning Disability Project**

Submitted by: Dominique Rawlings

**Project description**

**Please describe this project in one sentence:**

Two groups for people with a learning disability from Black and minority ethnic background

**What was the name of the project?**

Proud2B

**What were the project’s objectives?**

- To have fun
- To make new friends
What were the project activities?

People in the group come from a variety of origin. Some access social care provision, some don’t. Their level of need also varies greatly. Several are bilingual. Activities for the groups were decided according to people tastes, interests and own ideas. People in the groups have watched films and videos about their country of origin. They brought pictures and objects from their country of origin as well as family pictures which they shared at group meetings. Speakers came from specific countries and run workshops; they included people from South Africa, a lady from Bangladesh who did some henna hand painting, and several from South America. The group organised a Carnival event as one of the group members comes from Brazil; there was dancing, music and Brazilian food (see photo). One of the groups also took part in a textile workshop based on patterns from Ghana. The other group (where everyone was very interested in food) is compiling a restaurant/food review of the town where they live by tasting different food, either in eating places or through recipes that are provided by family members. Both groups took part in drumming workshops exploring different rhythm in world music (photo). Finally, one group is taking part in an oral history project in partnership with Hampshire Records Office. They interviewed family and community members around the theme of “favourite places”. They had to learn how to use the recording equipment and the recordings will now be kept at the records Office and illustrate diversity in Hampshire through real people’s stories. This small project had a very positive outcome for one group member in particular. While it had been arranged to interview one family member, the meeting turned into a very big family gathering and he interviewed many but most importantly, he met again many relatives who had not seen him for years (as they were unsure whether they could visit him in the home where he lived!) and new, younger family members who he had never met. The day ended with many relatives asking for the home details and how they could visit R. It was also very positive for another group member: his mother recalled their experience when coming to England as refugees; she was very pleased to have a recording of her voice telling the family story which the group member can listen to in years to come.

Project organisations

Which organisations were involved in the project and what role did they play?

- Ethnic Minority learning disability project (Hampshire county council): set up and run
- Fareham and Havant Day services and day opportunity brokers: help with transport, publicising project, support at meeting (general and personal needs)
- Hampshire records Office: Favourite places Project
- URC Church Hall (Basingstoke), Ashcroft Art centre (Fareham): venues, catering

Which organisation took the lead in running the project?

Ethnic minority Learning Disability Project

Evaluation and reflection

How successful has the project been? (please include any feedback or evaluation)

Extremely successful. The groups are meeting their original objectives: lots of fun, meet new people, make new friends and workers and families have commented in a recent evaluation exercise that they see the difference the group is making to members in terms of pride and confidence. Comments included:
“G. told everyone when he came back that he was from S.. He was beaming”
“This has been a tremendous opportunity for R.”
“I hope this group can carry on. F. looks forward so much to the meetings”
“R talked to me using a full sentence at the meeting today! When we talked about H (country of origin)”
An other positive outcome is that inviting speakers from different countries, usually from the local community, has allowed them to come and meet people with a learning disability. This has dispelled myths and fears, help them to understand modern day learning disability concepts such as advocacy, support worker, independent living, community inclusion (the fact that people are not locked up in institutions anymore); they have been able to take back positive messages to their own communities which will help to dispel myth, stigmas and prejudice that still exist in some community groups.

What were the major challenges for the project and how were these overcome?
The major challenge was and still are to find members (people from BME groups with a LD). Day opportuniy brokers were excellent at helping us to identify some people to start with and are continuing to do a great job recruiting new members. Having stands at local Melas and other multi cultural festivals and having pictures to show the group’s activities are now also helping to recruit new members. Another challenge is transport but we have been fortunate to be able to use Day services minibus on some occasions. We are also trying to organise a volunteer driver for one group member.

What are the plans for the project in the future?
Young people from a travellers community have seen picture of the groups and expressed an interest in setting their own. Initial talks are happening. The existing groups will run until march 2010; in one location, it has inspired the Day centre to run its own “worldwide” group (culture and citizenship group). Funding will be sought to try and continue the second group as, as a result of a local event several new members have come forward.

Is there any other information you would like to include?
Please see pictures

Personal input
How did you initially become involved with the project?
I have worked in education before with bilingual learners. I saw the difference having an opportunity to celebrate your own culture and origin can make in people’s lives. In Hampshire, the ethnic minority population is growing but comes from a variety of origins; except for a large Nepali group in the North there are no other big specific groups. Travellers is still the biggest minority group.
I was looking at creating a tool that would allow the Ethnic Minority Learning disability project (which I started in 2005 as a result of Valuing people) to make a real, quickly identifiable difference to people’s life. This would give me something positive to offer when trying to engage with minority groups where learning disability is often not well understood.

What has been your personal role in running the project?
I have set the group up. I developed contacts and partnerships to identify and recruit members and offer fun and enriching activities. I organise meetings, activities, outings. I applied for funding and am administering the finances for the groups. I co-ordinate transport, sometimes also transport members myself. I co-ordinated and planned all interviews for the Favourite places project, I supported members to conduct interviews. I write evaluations and feedback and trying to promote the work of the groups widely (hence this application!) as an example of something which can make a difference to people’s lives.
What would you do differently if you were involved in a similar project again?
Ensure longer term funding

**Organisation: HMP Forest Bank**
**Submitted by: Eunice Jones**

**Project description**
Please describe this project in one sentence:
A bank account project in partnership with The Co-Operative Bank, which enables prisoners to open a bank account prior to release.

What was the name of the project?
A Fresh Start

What were the project's objectives?
- Help to prevent ex-offenders from re-offending after release. A bank account assists with employment and secure housing. Financial stability aids social stability.
- To reduce the risk of financial exclusion. A bank account offers better money management and security through good habits of saving and payments by direct debit.

What were the project activities?
The project activities are centred on advertising the availability of applying for a bank account whilst still in custody and educating prisoners about budgeting and money management. Lack of a bank account seriously jeopardises employment opportunities. Creating a project which allows prisoners to open an account prior to leaving the prison is unique. Prisoners who apply to open an account are also invited to attend a short course on how to use the account and about the banking system in general. A more in-depth course called ‘Budgeting and Money management’ is also offered which lasts for 2 weeks. The activities of the project are designed to raise awareness of the usefulness of having a bank account; increase respect for money and to appreciate how to handle it; and to encourage the exercise of personal responsibility in the hope of reducing debt. All prisoners who are within the last four months of their sentence are invited to attend the Education Department. During the visit they are advised of the various pre-release courses on offer and given information about the Cashminder Account. The bank account scheme is also advertised by the various departments within the prison such as Housing, Carats and Probation.

**Project organisations**
Which organisations were involved in the project and what role did they play?
Working together for approximately 18 months HMP Forest Bank and The Co-operative Bank developed, in partnership, a pilot scheme which allowed prisoners to apply for a basic bank account prior to release.
Staff from The Co-operative Bank worked with staff from HMP Forest Bank to develop a system of account opening which encompassed the needs of the prisoners and adequately incorporated the operational requirements of the prison.
The Financial Inclusion Unit at Liverpool John Moores University conducted a research study into the impact of the pilot scheme at HMP Forest Bank.
Which organisation took the lead in running the project?
Both organisations initiated the project within their respective businesses.

Evaluation and reflection
How successful has the project been? (please include any feedback or evaluation)
Since the bank account scheme was launched in 2006 over 760 bank accounts have been opened for prisoners at HMP Forest Bank. Only 37% of prisoners released from Forest Bank with a bank account re- offended. Compared to the national average return rate of 67%. Due to the success of the pilot scheme The Co-operative Bank now conducts business with a further 28 prisons. 69.1% of prisoners stated the account helped them to manage their money.

What were the major challenges for the project and how were these overcome?
During the planning stage every effort was made to foresee potential problems. Some problems arose after initiation of the scheme. These were general operating problems caused by the administration and processing of the applications. Regular meetings were held to highlight the problems and talk through the solutions.

What are the plans for the project in the future?
Since January 2009 the project has been successfully conducted and The Co-operative Bank has absorbed the partnership with HMP Forest Bank into the normal business of the organisation. Plans for the future include the possibility of allowing prisoners to save money into their accounts whilst still in custody.

Is there any other information you would like to include?
Previous research has shown that being in sustainable employment significantly reduces the chances of re-offending. (May 1999, SEU 2002, Home Office 04, Howard 06). However job opportunities were jeopardised by the lack of bank accounts for prisoners.
“A prisoner got a job but there were real difficulties because he had no bank account. In fact, no bank account meant he had no job”. Eunice Jones, Resettlement worker, HMP Forest Bank.
These bank accounts offer prisoners a fresh start upon release. The benefits not only cover financial exclusion but also rehabilitation and reductions in re-offending which have a positive effect on the local community. The result has had a tremendous impact on the success of the resettlement strategy at HMP Forest Bank specifically within the Finance, Benefit and Debt Pathway.

Personal input
How did you initially become involved with the project?
During a visit from the Prince’s Trust I met Sheila Macdonald, the then Chief Executive of the Co-operative Bank. I explained the problems faced by prisoners trying to secure employment without the possibility of opening a bank account. I also discussed with Sheila the reasons why this particular section of society failed to open bank accounts when in the community.

What has been your personal role in running the project?
I have been involved with the project at every stage and now I personally administer the scheme within the prison. Initially I liaised with Gayle Ramouz the Co-op Bank’s Community Projects Manager. I was then involved with the ‘New Business’ staff on designing the system which is now in place. I then launched the pilot scheme within the prison in March 2006.
What would you do differently if you were involved in a similar project again?

I would request more background information on how the systems work within the bank. Perhaps visit different departments within the bank to see how they function first hand. This knowledge would have been of great help to me at the initial opening of the project.

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Organisation: HMP Wolds
Submitted by: Sandy Watson

Project description
Please describe this project in one sentence:
The programme gives offenders the opportunity to spend quality educational time with their partner and young children whilst in prison.

What was the name of the project?
Family Learning

What were the project’s objectives?
To provide an opportunity for fathers to be a ‘proper dad’ for three hours a week in the confines of a prison sentence. For a dad to experience and be involved in play, crafts, feeding babies and changing nappies and especially developing reading skills with his young child.

What were the project activities?
The activities involve a family having lunch together—something that does not normally happen in a prison environment—and allows dad to get off the ‘red’ seat (where he is normally confined) and interact with his child in a positive way. The child leads the way throughout the session and this could mean dad supporting his child playing with toys, taking part in making crafts and listening to, and reading a story. At the end of a session bats and balls come out along with little bikes and other sit-ons—the equivalent of dad taking his child to the park but within prison!

Project organisations
Which organisations were involved in the project and what role did they play?
The Learning & Skills Department of HMP Wolds took the lead on this and supported getting the accreditation for the course—so that it would be taken seriously in the prison setting.

Which organisation took the lead in running the project?
The Children & Families Resource Centre

Evaluation and reflection
How successful has the project been? (please include any feedback or evaluation)
The project has been very successful. Families have sent in letters of thanks, dads have learned skills of disciplining, building self-esteem and playing with their children. Estranged dads have become part of the family again. Offenders’ behaviour has improved in other areas of the prison. We have had an independent evaluation from the NFER which concluded that ‘Family Learning represents a meaningful and worthwhile activity which may ultimately play a part in minimising the risk of future re-offending.’
What were the major challenges for the project and how were these overcome?

Security is always a difficult area to overcome within a custodial setting and this has been achieved with careful collaboration between all departments. Public and staff perception has also been difficult (why should prisoners get extra visits?) and this has been overcome by the project having very specific and educational outcomes and families being offered activities that already happen in a community setting.

What are the plans for the project in the future?

We would like to extend our provision by offering families the chance to cook and prepare family meals. To promote the work we are doing (using the enclosed DVD) in the hope of persuading other prisons to start a similar project.

Is there any other information you would like to include?

On one of our first visits a dad went to shake hands with his four year old son – he really did not have a clue how to relate to his young child but the following week the barriers were broken down they were hugging and playing as any other father and son. Family Learning has helped this and other families to prepare for release.

Personal input

How did you initially become involved with the project?

Because I had children I was asked to develop parenting courses and the family learning came from a desire for offenders to spend quality time as a family.

What has been your personal role in running the project?

I have been responsible for pioneering this work and organising the sessions on a weekly basis.

What would you do differently if you were involved in a similar project again?

I would work more closely with other departments at the outset of the project.

Organisation: Leicester City Council - Family Support Service
Submitted by: Alexandra Dean

Project description

Please describe this project in one sentence:

The family support project endeavour to work together to create a positive future for homeless families, children and young people.

What was the name of the project?

Family Support Services

What were the project's objectives?

To deliver an exceptional service to vulnerable and homeless people with support, dedication and respect. Offer a quality service that empowers parents/carers’ take positive future steps to live independently. To work together with services to ensure that every child matters and has an equal opportunity to reach its milestones.
What were the project activities?

The Family Support Service is based in a hostel for homeless families and works alongside Duty Officers who deal with the housing need. The project concentrates on 5 main areas – Education for children, young people & adults. Substance use, Child Protection, Primary Health care and Mental ill health in adults & children. We support families through a series of group work and support planning. The group work consists of – Baby massage – to promote attachment & bonding, Safeguarding Children – this looks at tools for parents to use when setting boundaries, Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities – a group looking at parenting skills, Freedom Programme – to support survivors of Domestic Abuse, Stress Busters – to learn stress relief & assertiveness skills and Hello Baby – a group for pregnant and new parents. A Family Support Worker will be allocated a family and together they will create a support plan which details areas of support needed to ensure the families are able to build skills to sustain tenancies. The service also refers families onto a resettlement service to ensure a smooth transition into the community. The service also has a childcare facility on site which has 4 full time NVQ level 3 staff and is Ofsted registered – it provides free full day care to the homeless families that reside in the hostel. In the evenings there is a youth group and a study support group. This part of the services enables parents to attend groups and educational activities and it also gives the children a chance to meet their milestones, mix with peers and learn through play. Out service also provides a Sexual Health Drop In, in which the service users can discuss any sexual health needs, get free birth control, carry-out Chlamydia testing & pregnancy testing.

Project organisations

Which organisations were involved in the project and what role did they play?

Leicester City Council Adults & Housing Department alongside Health (CAMHS – children & adolescent mental health services) set up the service in 1997. Health carried out research with the families living in the hostel, the research showed that families were not only homeless due to the lack of housing, but due to many contributing factors, such as – parenting skills, education, mental ill health, substance use & child protection issues. The research also highlighted a high number of families returning to the hostel. Leicester City Council & Health felt a service dedicated to supporting families with these extra non-housing related needs would be of great benefit to the families of Leicester.

Which organisation took the lead in running the project?

Leicester City Council – Adults & Housing Department – Hostel Section

Evaluation and reflection

How successful has the project been? (please include any feedback or evaluation)

The project has been a massive success and has shown a reduction in repeat homelessness & referrals to C&YPS. Over the years the project has grown & now has many specialisms to its name for example a dedicated Homeless Health Visitor, Children’s Nurse & Nursery Nurse.

What were the major challenges for the project and how were these overcome?

One of the major challenges faced by the service was supporting families from abroad. We overcame these barriers by using a team of interpreters to communicate with the families which enabled us to adapt our service to suit their needs. With their help we were able to identify areas of support that were of most benefit to them, one being to offer English as a second language course. We also found that there wasn’t any facility for children with special educational needs. We applied for funding and were awarded £1500 to create a sensory room which was a massive success.
What are the plans for the project in the future?

Future plans are to continue to support the families of the hostel and gather more specialism’s to branch out into different areas of support. We would love for the service to be city wide and to offer our support in other hostels and even in family homes before they become homeless. We would love to have the Children’s Youth groups open later in the evenings and have a weekend club so the young people have something meaningful to do in their spare time.

Is there any other information you would like to include?

I am very proud of the Family Support Service and I feel we are a massive support to the families of the hostel. The team are dedicated and hard working often going over & above the call of duty. Our vision statement is Creating a positive future for homeless families, children and young people with respect, support & dedication.

Personal input

How did you initially become involved with the project?

I was initially employed as a Family Support Worker in 2002, I then became the assistant family support manager and I have now been the manager of the service for the past 2 years.

What has been your personal role in running the project?

My role is to oversee the running of the project by supervising the staff and ensuring service delivery is exceptional. I have developed my team to ensure that they have knowledge and understanding to support the families. I have created partnerships with Children & Young People’s service, Health visitors, resettlement agencies & Child Mental Health teams to ensure that all children & their parents/carers are not only reached and supported but to ensure that no child is lost in the system and their welfare is paramount.

What would you do differently if you were involved in a similar project again?

I would involve service users to draw on their experiences and to be a part of the service plan for the future. I would ensure that the project had a parent volunteer to sit on a panel when interviewing staff and setting up service provision. I would love to roll out the service to reach families that were in Bed & Breakfast accommodation. I would involve the community so they could use the service to break down barriers and myths that surround homelessness. I would make links with schools and offer awareness sessions regarding homelessness for the young people.

Organisation: Mencap
Submitted by: Alan Sheldon

Project description

Please describe this project in one sentence:

An urban-garden project introducing new work-skills to people with a learning disability within a south London residential housing estate.
What was the name of the project?

The Streatham Garden Project

What were the project’s objectives?

- To develop confidence and friendships between people with and without learning disabilities.
- To encourage team work and other disciplines associated with work.
- The most able to achieve a paid gardening job.
- The less able to receive a sense of purpose within a fun and safe gardening community.

What were the project activities?

The gardening project has been running since 2005 within a large 1930’s residential housing estate in south London. Currently, twice a week, 14 people with a learning disability (PwLD) are involved in plant propagation using raised beds and greenhouses. They produce flowering plants, as well as vegetables, for their selves and residents. Participants are aged between 20-64. All are on a low income, most receiving a range of benefits. The majority have spent much of their adult life attending day centres with little stimulation or opportunity to participate in community based activities.

They are supported by Pam Periera, Mencap’s gardening jobcoach, who monitors their progress via Mencap’s Essential Skills for Work paperwork. According to ability, tasks are agreed and carried out under her supervision. The estate employs Ryan and Patrick, both able gardeners, who mow the extensive lawns. The less able workforce are encouraged to learn about the cycle of life through a kinaesthetic-learning process, i.e. the process of planting seeds in compost, through cultivation and cropping, and then back to composting. The formal gardens involve activities such as: planting, weeding and watering. Pam delegates all of these according to ability. Other activities include sowing and “potting on”. Importantly, it is the learning processes, rather than the tasks their selves, that are central for the workforce. For example, successfully raking leaves together, on their own, is an achievement for the most vulnerable. For others, social interaction is the activity.

Each Summer the team hosts an annual Open Day. This involves opening up the propagation centre to visitors. Residents are encouraged to see how their gardens are maintained and to mingle with the workforce. The workforce generally feels proud of their achievements as it is a fantastic confidence boosting day.

Project organisations

Which organisations were involved in the project and what role did they play?

Mencap is involved in project managing the Streatham Garden Project and employs Pam, through a grant from the Lambeth Endowed Charities. It also liaises with managing agents Frank Bailey and Partners to ensure that the project runs smoothly from the residents’ perspective. Frank Bailey and Partners represents estate residents and employs gardeners, Ryan and Patrick. Local housing support organisations, MST, Rathbone, Oddysey and Mencap Housing all refer people to join the project. The project also takes referrals from Lambeth Council Adult Community Services.

Which organisation took the lead in running the project?

Mencap
Evaluation and reflection

How successful has the project been? (please include any feedback or evaluation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The project has integrated over 25 excluded PwLD into society through their transformation of previously derelict areas within a Lambeth housing estate. Four PwLDs are now in part-time work. The project gained local press coverage and enjoyed a visit from Mencap’s ambassador (and Eastenders star), Kellie Shirley. PwLDs have benefited from:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• increased confidence and independence levels and team-working skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• increased potential to gain qualifications, volunteering opportunities or, where possible, paid employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents have enjoyed:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• greater sense of understanding/acceptance of PwLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• an improved environment, increasing their sense of ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• free flowers, herbs, plants and vegetables.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What were the major challenges for the project and how were these overcome?

| Working in this outdoor environment involves PwLD using potentially harmful tools. Mencap has devised training and support strategies to limit these risks, including adapting equipment and establishing what people can do as part of detailed individual risk assessments. Initially, some residents were concerned about the “odd” behaviour of people with a learning disability around the locality. However, conversations with residents alleviated these fears. This also helped people with learning disabilities to understand how their own behaviour can affect others. |

What are the plans for the project in the future?

| For the project to act as a platform for more PwLD to progress into voluntary work and paid jobs. To continue locally to build awareness of PwLD can, rather than cannot, do. To increase the number of days the project runs for from two to three days per week so that more PwLD can benefit. Our long-term goal is to use the project as a launch to establish a social firm run by and employing PwLD. This will supply gardening services and wooden planters around the London borough of Lambeth. |

Is there any other information you would like to include?

| Currently no funding exists beyond October 2009 for Pam’s salary. We are currently applying for grants from local Trusts and Foundations to ensure that the project continues. The project will close if future funding is not secured. |

Personal input

How did you initially become involved with the project?

| In 2005, as part of my role at Mencap, I ’jobcoached’ a person with a learning disability whose job was to clear the scrubland on the estate where the Streatham Garden project’s wildlife garden is now based. During this time, I developed a relationship with the Resident’s Association and the Managing Agents. This was important because when the individual left the job, I was able to negotiate the transference of their salary to Mencap. This pool of money then enabled PwLDs from a local day centre, with no outside space, to use their gardening skills on the estate. |
What has been your personal role in running the project?

The project is close to my heart. It is essential that PwLD are active in our communities; a place where all should thrive and succeed. It also breaks down prejudice. Seeing an opportunity on the estate, I was determined to achieve these goals. With a limited budget, I asked residents to donate plants and seeds. I also enlisted local builders to carry out necessary safety work; facilitated meetings with the Resident’s Association; and transported PwLD from the day centre to the site, supervising their gardening activities. I now manage Pam, who supervises PwLD two days per week on site.

What would you do differently if you were involved in a similar project again?

In order to drive the project forward, sometimes I was on site until 9pm. Some residents complained that this invaded their privacy. Consequently, access to the site was restricted allowing no weekend work. In retrospect, I should have considered the residents’ needs more. More strategic planning would have also allowed me to develop a more ambitious project vision sooner. This would have enabled me to seek funding to increase the time length of the project and for a covered workshop area during the winter months.

Organisation: Mind In Exeter and East Devon / The Devon Partnership Trust

Submitted by: Richard Spencer and Ian Siddons Heginworth

Project description

Please describe this project in one sentence:

A programme of exciting, expressive and therapeutic outdoor activities to users of community mental health services in Exeter.

What was the name of the project?

Wild Things in the community

What were the project’s objectives?

1. Offering a wide range of outdoor activities to users of community mental health services.
2. Creating a Wild Things directory, detailing the activities, how to access them, the cost, photographs and feedback.
3. Supporting participants in then accessing the activities of their choice independently of the Wild Things team.

What were the project activities?

The service runs every Thursday. Activities include climbing, abseiling, caving, adventure tree course, horse riding, sailing, kayaking, power boats, dry slope skiing, llama walking, falconry, archery, quad biking, scuba diving, go karting, storytelling, fire by friction, shelter building, wood carving, natural crafts, tree planting, singing, drumming and didgeridoo, music improvisation, Tai Chi, Chi Gung and shiatsu, animal encounters and zoo keeper experiences. Participants make a list of their choices at the beginning of each three month season and are offered places on the activities accordingly. Participants meet at the PHEW centre and are taken to the activity. All photos are taken by a service user and all the information for the directory is collected by the participants. The directory is then available for anyone to use. Photographic momento booklets are given to all participants at the end of each season.

Once individuals have identified activities that they particularly enjoy they are helped to
**access these independently. This may include booking the activities, finding out how to get there, sorting out funding (i.e direct payments) and networking with other service users to set up groups. At the end of every season we stop for one week, in which time we invite all service users to fill in outcome forms and give their choices for the next season. The programme is then planned accordingly.**

### Project organisations

**Which organisations were involved in the project and what role did they play?**

| Devon Partnership Trust set up the original Wild Things programme for users of the recovery and independent living service at Wonford House Hospital. They have now provided the funding for this new project, including the salary for Ian Siddons Heginworth, (specialist practitioner). Mind in Exeter provides the PHEW centre and I.T facilities and also the salary for Richard Spencer (support, time and recovery worker). Everyone using the PHEW centre is now offered access to the project. This collaboration allows for a seamless transition for those accessing the project in hospital as they move into the community. |

**Which organisation took the lead in running the project?**

Devon Partnership Trust proposed the project initially.

### Evaluation and reflection

**How successful has the project been? (please include any feedback or evaluation)**

| Very successful. Feedback includes: “Really enjoyed myself, good fun, brilliant, good exercise” “Wow, an exhilarating experience” “Great stuff, looking forward to next time” “Great laugh, would recommend to any body as a great fun thing to do” “really enjoyable, something that I have never done before” “Wild Things help me meet people and have some fun, I find it interesting and everyone are really nice people” “The view was beautiful and I felt safe. I’ve been longing to visit Dartmoor and would like to do it again.” “A good experience and worth coming again for” |

**What were the major challenges for the project and how were these overcome?**

The second stage of the programme invites service users to begin accessing activities independently of the Wild Things team. This can be challenging for people who are used to having services provided for them. Consequently we have allocated a part of the budget to fund Richard Spenser in giving one to one support to individuals, helping them to access funding and meeting them at the activity until they are confident to do it by themselves.

**What are the plans for the project in the future?**

To increase the number of people accessing the project. To improve systems of networking among service users to enable more independent groups to develop. To explore new activities and possibly expand to include activity based holidays.

**Is there any other information you would like to include?**

In so many ways Wild Things brings people back to life. It nourishes their physical, psychological and emotional health, enhances their sense of personal well being and builds self confidence, self esteem and self worth. Most of the people that access our service are vulnerable young adults, mostly male, who have traditionally been hard to engage. Wild things offers them something that is both thrilling and empowering and is proving extremely popular. It reconnects people to Nature, to beautiful locations, to the cycle of the seasons and to adventure, wilderness and fun. The original Wild things project which runs for two days a week at Wonford House hospital has been running for eight years now and has been consistently effective in aiding in the recovery of its participants. This new project has built
upon this success and has taken its ethos out into the community where it has been warmly received and enthusiastically embraced.

Personal input
How did you initially become involved with the project?
Ian Siddons Heginworth set up the original Wild things project. Richard Spencer coordinated sports and activities at PHEW so was the obvious candidate for this collaboration.

What has been your personal role in running the project?
Ian Siddons Heginworth and Richard Spencer run the project together.

What would you do differently if you were involved in a similar project again?
This community project is still new so we are still learning.

Organisation: NS Housing Supported Housing - Floating Support Services
Submitted by: Gareth Powell and Alex Gutsell

Project description
Please describe this project in one sentence:
A Life skills project, covering various elements to promote independence to vulnerable clients and increase participation in the community

What was the name of the project?
Forward4Life

What were the project’s objectives?
To enable and empower vulnerable people with a poor history of tenancy sustainment to manage life more independently, to increase confidence and motivation to participate more fully in their future. Aimed at managing housing issues, debt & money management, accessing employment, education & training, voluntary work, improving health & wellbeing.

What were the project activities?
A seven week course covering a different topic each week, 4 hours per session. It was run 3 times during 2008. All sessions were interactive and encouraged delegates to participate where they felt able.

Home4Life – Tenancy management, housing rights, accommodation types, utilities management, resettlement. This involved role play, Q & A session, scenarios & games – Free Information Pack at end – this first session delivered by Support Workers which helped with those a bit nervous in attending
Click4Life – Accessing IT for beginners. Hands on session learning the basics.
Eat4Life – Healthy eating, recipes, workshops. Hands on session – all had the chance to see and cook a selection of recipes – Included free food and a recipe booklet.
Save4Life – Financial advice, debt, benefits. Included a Quiz on budgetting. Free Benefits check offered
Go4Life (linked to LA initiative) - Health and fitness advice. A health quiz + various fitness sessions - Tai Chi, Pilates and a walk. A free pedometer for all attending.
Money4Life - Session delivered by Barclays Bank Credit Union & CAB. How to access bank
accounts, how to save and borrow easily and cheaply. Barclays provided a goody bag. 

Train4Life – Community café style session. Local agencies from education, training and voluntary sector invited to attend and occupy a table at the café each. Attendees moved around the café spending time at each table to find out more and perhaps sign up for future activities. Included waiters and café style environment. The theme to Benny Hill prompted clients to move on to the next table!

All participants were encouraged to join our local credit union and save up to £5 per week – this was matched for those completing the course up to £35 per person – Money for Free!

Project organisations
Which organisations were involved in the project and what role did they play?

Barclays Bank  
NSHousing  
North Somerset Community Learning Services  
North Somerset PCT  
Helen Thornton – North Somerset Council -Back to Work  
Weston-super- Mare and District Credit Union  
Judith Morris (Healthy Eating Specialist)  
Malcolm Day (Tai Chi)  
Sainsburys PLC  
Carol Hartley (fitness instructor)  
Tracey Barnsley-Scott (internet tutor)  
North Somerset CAB  
Bristol Wessex Water Billing  
Weston College  
The Shaw Trust  
Voluntary Action North Somerset  
The For All Healthy Living Centre  
North Somerset Museum  
The Carlton Centre  

These agencies participated in the delivery of the sessions. Some provided venues, some provided goodies and some gave additional funding.

Which organisation took the lead in running the project?
NSH Floating Support Service & Wendy Fletcher Project Manager NS CAB

Evaluation and reflection
How successful has the project been? (please include any feedback or evaluation)

Some Service Users have gone on to obtain paid / voluntary work. Many have identified training needs and most attendees said their confidence in addressing issues had increased considerably. 3 people now doing further IT training and old PC’s sourced for 2 participants. Prior to training 25% of participants didn’t know how to open a bank account and after training 96.9% new how to and 60% of participants opened a credit union account. Several participants have renegotiated debts. Many now cooking more healthily.

Please refer to attached ‘Technical Report’ which briefly outlines outcomes, more specific outcomes are available on request.

What were the major challenges for the project and how were these overcome?

Engaging people with little confidence / motivation to attend all sessions was difficult; credit goes to staff for the attendance success.

Childcare provision / cost of transport – course covered costs for these – people wouldn’t
have turned up otherwise.
Providing an accessible, enjoyable course relevant and meaningful to its audience - this took planning, based on needs identified by service users / support staff.
Poor health reduced attendance at sessions – delegates were encourage to attend missed session on a subsequent course.
Continuing engagement in activities (that would benefit independence / improve self esteem) – ongoing support sessions helped sustain client motivation.

**What are the plans for the project in the future?**

| This project was successful and continues to run (funded by NSH fully) and has been adapted and delivered to general needs tenants in 2009. |
| It has also been adapted by support staff for specific client groups on request eg a shortened version (Home4Life session) for the Probation Service, tailored and delivered to prolific offenders. |
| With funding the team will consider ways to improve and adapt this course for clients. We provide generic support services so there are a variety of clients types that we could tailor support for and it could be an opportunity to develop some BME involvement activities. |

**Is there any other information you would like to include?**

| We would welcome the opportunity to provide further information should we be shortlisted! Other support providers and housing organisations have contacted us for more information about how it was set up and delivered as they wish to develop something similar. |

**Personal input**

**How did you initially become involved with the project?**

| Barclays Bank approached NS Housing offering the chance to apply for some funding from their annual grant for a financial inclusion project. A proposal was put together that was initiated by ideas generated by Floating Support Staff. Whilst the basis was for financial inclusion we felt that if someone can manage their money this impacts upon all areas of life and Barclays accepted the proposal for a broad Life Skills project that had a good focus on other areas of health and wellbeing as well as Financial areas. |

**What has been your personal role in running the project?**

| I had a role in helping to design and deliver the project in conjunction with the floating support team and Project Manager. (Also I played the role of Ron Moody Landlord extraordinaire in Home4Life and Pierre (the slightly iffy) waiter in Train4Life). These courses have been made possible by the hard work and enthusiasm of many people – Each course and session was delivered in conjunction with support workers. |

**What would you do differently if you were involved in a similar project again?**

| To amalgamate the financial elements of the course (join the budgeting and debt sessions as one). Invite and train service users to help deliver the course or support others attending. May be offer ‘one off’ topics e.g. Tenancy Management for new service users. Incorporate a confidence building session or improve your communication skills session. |
Organisation: On Yer Bike (Impact Housing Association)
Submitted by: Damien Morris

Project description
Please describe this project in one sentence:
A Cycling Scheme for Homeless & At Risk Residents in Carlisle
Category - Well-being – physical, psychological or spiritual health

What was the name of the project?
On Yer Bike

What were the project’s objectives?
On yer Bike was set up to provide cycling sessions for at risk residents and to help mix those residents with general needs residents. OYB other objectives have been to include training in skills for riding, mechanics and offering volunteering opportunities. A workshop & storage space has been secured, along with a small steering group. Future objectives are to move to St James park, & development of a small skills park within the park.

What were the project activities?
The scheme started last December 2007 and has developed over 2008/9. OYB has used cycling as a way to encourage social inclusion of the most hard to reach and engage with tenants.
Impact is an RSL of 3000 properties and the largest provider of supported accommodation for homeless, domestic violence, young people at risk & those with special needs residents in Cumbria. A small committee meets every month that has residents & agencies on it.
Using cycling as an engagement tool has helped to include those who or have been marginalised. The scheme has helped to increase health & exercise with residents while promoting independence as most residents are given a free bicycle to use at home and in-between OYB cycling sessions and trips.
In 2009 so far just over 200 residents have taken part in one or more cycling taster sessions which also included cycle mechanics and some red/black mountain bike rides in the lake district for younger residents from our young peoples supported housing schemes in Penrith.
Breaking down barriers particularly socially & health wise has been very important.
Homeless residents with drug/alcohol issues, and residents through domestic violence have been the biggest participants. Each ride, or taster session includes owner occupiers as most of our Carlisle schemes and general needs housing is mixed within neighbourhoods of interest as to geographically clumped together for example into estate Everyone is helpful & supportive and we have good fun.

Project organisations
Which organisations were involved in the project and what role did they play?
Denton Holme Community Association, CA2 Green Group, Sustrans, both City & County Councils, the local councillor & the Countryside Rangers. These organisations have been involved in the steering group & their officers have also supported OYB by taking part in the cycle rides.

Which organisation took the lead in running the project?
Impact Housing Association
## Evaluation and reflection

**How successful has the project been? (please include any feedback or evaluation)**

It’s been very successful at targeting & involving the most hard to engage, those at risk. General residents & members of the public have also taken part that has helped to break down barriers. Joe McGuire an ex supported housing tenant has really got into it, as a registered volunteered, helping to organise & run rides. Its organic & flexible, either doing group or one to one rides.

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**What were the major challenges for the project and how were these overcome?**

- Accommodation to start with was a problem, and has now resurfaced, hence why we are looking to move into the Park. We have used containers that will transfer to the Park.
- Making sure we had good representation from the organisations & residents involved. We targeted residents & others who are interested in cycling that has helped to grow the steering group.
- Access to cycles. We approached Center Parcs and managed to get 35 Cycles of them for our fleet. Funding, in kind from Impact HA & 2 small start up grants totalling £5000 from The City Council & Riverside Housing – to buy equipment/training & transport.

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**What are the plans for the project in the future?**

- Complete training so that we can use Watch Tree Disabled Cycling Site & Trail Leaders Course so we can run our own Mountain biking sessions in the Lakes.
- Secure the Park as a preferred location & training centre.
- Purchase a range of brand new bicycles various sizes.
- Aim for a quality mark for project.

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**Is there any other information you would like to include?**

OYB has impacted on tenants physically, socially & by increasing well-being & confidence. The Olympics showed how GB cyclists are now nos1 in the world. OYB cycling, like most cycling is extremely affordable & accessible. OYB has promoted opportunities using local trails urban & rural. Bicycles, instruction & encouragement have been given in ways that are not stigmatising as staff & tenants cycle together. As a result tenants are taking up cycling at levels that suit themselves and their lifestyles – been included – mixing supported with general needs & private tenants has helped to develop common agendas – for example around neighbourhood green/environmental issues. OYB has helped supported housing tenants set realistic & achievable personal goals as part of their own resettlement/move on plans.

Our scheme has made significant contributions to the well being of our local communities where not only our residents live but owner-occupiers & private tenants.

Cycling is green & promotes low carbon emissions, many residents groups have and our refocusing efforts around local green issues OYB has reinforced this offering a very practical experience for those groups members & families.

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**Personal input**

**How did you initially become involved with the project?**

I am a keen cyclist & meet with the local Cycling Officer from the County Council. Our gut feeling was to try it and see what happens. We have been going ever since.

**What has been your personal role in running the project?**

To facilitate meetings, pr , programme & physically be involved , with driving & buddy ing up with volunteers involved in running it.
What would you do differently if you were involved in a similar project again?

Probably get the funding first, but then I think that when a project is funding led & reliant, its always harder to main stream it.

Organisation: Southend Borough Council
Submitted by: Matthew Mint

Project description
Please describe this project in one sentence:

Faith Supports helps people with learning disabilities practise their faith, and promotes the faith needs of people with learning disabilities within faith groups.

What was the name of the project?
Faith Supports

What were the project’s objectives?

We had three main objectives:
- To support adults who have learning disabilities to participate in faith communities; whether worship or associated activities.
- To promote the spiritual needs of adults who have learning disabilities.
- To provide information for people with learning disabilities about different faiths.

What were the project activities?

People who wanted to participate in a faith community would contact us. We would then contact the place of worship and support the person to attend. The exact nature of a person’s participation was arranged around their support needs.

For example: one lady had decided to rejoin the local synagogue after she had stopped going when she was young due to her not understanding the services. We supported her to meet with a representative from the Synagogue who suggested that the lady join a social club and attend shorter services held at a Jewish older people’s home that would suit her concentration levels better. The representative also helped to explain what some of the books in Hebrew were that had been passed down through the family.

We are also arranging to promote the Council’s services to faith communities whose uptake of these services is traditionally poor. We are working in partnership with places of worship and other community centres for minority groups. We particularly concentrated on targeting Southend’s Polish communities in partnership with two local Catholic churches.

We also produced a multi-faith calendar showing people with learning disabilities participating in local faith communities. The calendar was in accessible English with a guide to each of the major faiths in Southend on the back cover. This was produced at no cost to Southend Council by a local company. We sold these to raise money for a local advocacy charity.

Project organisations

Which organisations were involved in the project and what role did they play?
The project was initiated by Southend Council’s Learning Disability Partnership Board. There were numerous contributors to meetings from various support providers (e.g. residential...
homes, self advocacy groups and people with learning disabilities). These also provided many of the pictures that appeared within the calendar. The various faith groups in Southend also participated within the project, including the Church of England, Catholic Church, Southend Hindu Association, Southend and Westcliff Hebrew Congregation and the Sikh Federation. The Southend Faith Forum also provided invaluable advice.

**Which organisation took the lead in running the project?**

Although Southend Borough Council managed the project, most of the people who participated were adults with learning disabilities. All of the accompanying paperwork was in accessible English.

**Evaluation and reflection**

**How successful has the project been? (please include any feedback or evaluation)**

- By producing and promoting out multifaith calendar; engaging various faith communities and exhibiting at various multifaith events we have promoted the spiritual needs of adults with learning disabilities.
- By supporting people to attend events at places of worship Faith Supports has encouraged people to participate in community activities and reduce social isolation. We have also reduced prejudicial attitudes amongst some members of the public.
- This project has encouraged staff from various organisations to work in partnership. It has furthermore proved an educational experience that allows all organisations involved to provide a more person centred level of care.

**What were the major challenges for the project and how were these overcome?**

We often found that many organisations expressed concerns with supporting people with learning disabilities to participate. We therefore had to adopt a flexible approach when approaching places of worship.

Although a small amount of money had been allocated for the project, Faith Supports has so far accrued no costs owing to partnership working with both community organisations and the private sector.

**What are the plans for the project in the future?**

- We will continue to support people who wish to participate in faith communities.
- We are currently working on a booklet in accessible English with pictures about faith for adults with learning disabilities. This is a subject that people are often unwilling to discuss with this group of people.
- We will continue to build positive relationships with all of the faith communities within Southend and use this to promote awareness of the needs of people with learning disabilities.

**Is there any other information you would like to include?**

I would like to include three instances from the project where I feel we were particularly successful in achieving out aims:

- We supported a lady who wished to attend a Scrabble club held at a local church. When the organiser was initially contacted he stated that it ‘wasn’t a charity’. One of our representatives supported the lady to attend one evening. She managed to beat two regular attendees by a considerable amount before winning the award for the ‘word of the week’. She has been going now for eight months and has gained the confidence to start travel training on buses and has subsequently joined a social club a few miles from her home. We are currently supporting her to find people to play chess and whist with her.
- We met with Reverend Denis Huntley who is the disability advisor to the Bishop of Chelmsford. One of the members of Faith Supports told him that she would like to
see pictures alongside hymns so that she would know what she is singing about. Afterwards he commented that he has previously always thought about accessibility in terms of ramps and handrails in churches, but know he realises that is a much bigger issue.

- We were able to put a local Hindu family in touch with a Temple within Southend of which they had previously been unaware. A photo of the son attending a Diwali service appeared within the calendar.

**Personal input**

**How did you initially become involved with the project?**

I had previously been involved with making a 2006 multi-faith calendar. This was successfully concluded and I was looking at ways of increasing the scope and community involvement of the original project.

**What has been your personal role in running the project?**

My role was to organise meetings and ensure that all of the venues and paperwork were accessible for the project members. I also ensured that all of the faith groups in Southend were aware of the project, as were the organisations that provide support for adults with learning disabilities. In addition, I was responsible for arranging the meetings when someone wished to visit a place of worship and support them to attend.

**What would you do differently if you were involved in a similar project again?**

- We would start collecting pictures for the calendar earlier to allow more time to sell them; it was a bit of a rush towards the end of the year.
- We would choose a more centralised area to meet in Southend.

**Organisation: Springhill High School**

**Submitted by: Margaret Barbour and Anne McHugh**

**Project description**

**Please describe this project in one sentence:**

The creation and maintenance of ‘off site’ provision to support young people at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education Employment or Training)

**What was the name of the project?**

Turf hill Learning Centre. T.L.C.

**What were the project’s objectives?**

1. To accommodate the needs of young people not accessing education due to:
   - Short term exclusion
   - Persistent absence due to truancy or medical problems
   - Social and emotional difficulties
2. Provide support in a facility outside school
3. Establish active support for the project within the local community
What were the project activities?

At the TLC we have developed programmes of support tailored to meet the individual needs of the young people we accommodate. We offer them 1-1 and small group support. We raised funding to convert 2 rooms in the local community centre to provide a range of learning opportunities including I.C.T. access. We also kitted out a small kitchen area for pupil and mentor use.

Pupils are able to access lessons going on in school using the computer facilities so they are not disadvantaged on return. In addition more personalised support is provided to improve literacy and numeracy and life skills all of which are accredited.

A wide range of additional activities such as therapeutic play, goal setting, negotiation work and thinking skills development are used to raise self esteem and encourage more positive attitudes.

The facility operates in the mornings for 3 ½ hours with breaks as appropriate. The community centre has a recreational facility in the form of a kick pitch and an outside seating area which has allowed us to encourage physical activity between our service users.

We have taken the opportunity to promote social interaction whereby friendships and new relationships have developed. We have found that practical and vocational activities have been most successful, for example last year one student successfully completed a work based skills placement. This was part of an accredited citizenship course where the student joined the canteen staff in the community centre. She assisted in the provision of a 2 course lunch served weekly from the centre to older members of the community. In addition to the accreditation this student was able to socially interact with adults in a positive manner.

Other activities involving school and community on this site include:
- Teenage intervention project
- Alcohol abuse group
- Drugs group
- Environment group

Project organisations
Which organisations were involved in the project and what role did they play?

Initial set up costs were met by NEET hot spot funding and European social funding was obtained to cover some of the staffing costs over the next 2 years.

We developed excellent professional relationships with externally funded agencies and have maintained robust relationships with the key workers to offer the best possible support for our young people. The agencies that have provided support include: Early Break, Connexions, Rochdale Connections Trust, Youth Improvement Programme, Child and Mental Health Support, McMillan Bereavement Service, Parenting Partnership, Sexual Health Team, Health Practitioner, Behaviour Management, Development Team, Children’s Society, Child and Family Support Service.

Which organisation took the lead in running the project?

Springhill High School leads the project.

Evaluation and reflection
How successful has the project been? (please include any feedback or evaluation)

The project has been and continues to be an outstanding success. Evidence in the form of exam results provides details of a successful outcome for our older students. This year we have 100% pass rate at A-G grade. These figures confirm that every student in the year group achieved a grade as opposed to the previous year’s results where we had students that were un-graded due to non attendance. Attendance data offers proof that the students want to participate in the project and appreciate its value. Students are invited to complete
self assessment documents as part of the evaluation process. Results from student questionnaires offer evidence which states that many students believe that if the facility did not exist then they would have been permanently excluded from mainstream school.

What were the major challenges for the project and how were these overcome?

Initially the young people did not trust the project. It was viewed as disciplinary measure as opposed to a support mechanism. The intimate environment, being totally opposite from a classroom was disconcerting at first glance. Home visits by the TLC staff were carried out to encourage not only the young people to participate but the parents/carers as well. We are fully aware that if we work towards creating a holistic approach the outcome is more likely to be successful. We had to convince the young people that the facility was an additional provision for students to develop at a slower pace with one to one support, therefore creating the opportunity for them to flourish and increase their life chances. Through the commitment and enthusiasm of the staff fantastic relationships have been created and this underpins the whole ethos of the project.

What are the plans for the project in the future?

The project has an outstanding reputation for being successful. The staff and students at the school appreciate the facility which is now embedded firmly into the whole school provision and viewed as another layer of support for a minority of young people. Our vision for the future is to extend the provision to post 16 students and young adults who are not in education, employment or training (NEETS). We have a brilliant facility that is established enough to accommodate young adults who have a desire to further their education. The facility is not used in the afternoons or evenings so our room within the community centre building is available for use. Funding is required to provide tutors and support staff in order to offer relevant courses. Life skills, numeracy and literacy courses are available for delivery currently but the idea to increase this selection is under discussion.

Is there any other information you would like to include?

At the end of this academic year we are due to merge with another high school in the area. This will increase our catchment of students from 800 to 1200 across the whole school. We believe that this increase in student numbers will have an impact on our current levels of support. Our obvious aim will be to maintain appropriate support necessary to ensure all needs are met. The merger process will rely heavily on a robust transition protocol to be in place to avert problems regarding the sufficient settlement of students in the new school. The need for an extended service is obvious, not only for the students of the school but for parents and carers who may wish to further their own education. The provision is an excellent opportunity for NEETS to change their life course and develop themselves to create increased opportunities within the work place.

Personal input

How did you initially become involved with the project?

Working in the school environment with vulnerable pupils we became aware through conversations with pupils and parents who had experience of exclusions. We became increasingly aware over a period of about 4 years that young people were missing there education when excluded from school. In addition to concerns regarding loss of academic achievement parents were concerned that when they were out at work and forced to leave their children at home alone they would be subject to unknown risks. We approached the Head teacher with the project idea of accommodating young people and supporting their academic progress in an alternative environment local to the school site. It was agreed that we should pursue funding to provide an appropriate facility that allowed young people to remain focused and engaged in their education.
What has been your personal role in running the project?

The role we have at TLC is to deliver academic and social development programmes to young people irrespective of age, gender, cultural background, ethnicity, and ability. Our aim is to motivate and engage young people in the education process. We offer tailored material to accommodate ability. The programmes include community based sessions to incorporate the delivery of practical elements that enhance opportunities within the job market. We believe emotional literacy is very important to the developing young adult and therefore we offer programmes with this particular area built in as an underlying developmental process. Excluded students are offered the chance to reflect on the issues regarding being placed at TLC. Specific programmes have been introduced to encourage change in behaviours to occur. Restorative justice initiatives have also been introduced following our evaluation process. The facility has to operate as a remote site but consistency in following usual school procedures is essential to the overall success of the project.

What would you do differently if you were involved in a similar project again?

From the outset we would have introduced the idea of split sessions being offered. This would provide the opportunity for people to access the facility during morning, afternoon and evening sessions. This plan would allow minority groups and individuals such as young parents, NEETS and community members with medical issues to access further education. Following the success of TLC members of the community have requested information regarding the facility and what it has to offer. We have investigated the introduction of additional courses to accommodate a more diverse audience. If we can improve our availability we can facilitate courses that would lead to improve the opportunity and prospects of members of our local community. We would instigate a volunteer programme to run concurrently with our accredited programme. It would be our aim to involve our successful volunteers in future programmes in the role of support mentors.

Organisation: Supporting Tenants and Residents (STAR)
Service User Group
Submitted by: Paul Davis

Project description
Please describe this project in one sentence:
House to Home delivers tenancy training to people who have had a history of homelessness.

What was the name of the project?
House To Home

What were the project’s objectives?
To empower people with a history of homelessness to keep their home.
There were 12 modules including:
Money Matters-looking at budgeting, getting a bank account, dealing with debt.
Furnishing a flat- how to furnish your home on a low income.
Power to the People which dealt with fuel poverty.

What were the project activities?
The project was developed and delivered by a combination of Service users and support workers, the latter of which were trained by service users.
House to Home was developed to appeal to people with a wide variety of learning abilities.
The general ethos was ‘if you hated school you’ll love this’.
The idea was to give people the confidence to take control of their own lives by learning from the modules and each other. The modules were made up of a series of activities which included a wide spectrum of learning styles e.g. seeing, listening, doing. The activities were organised to encourage both group work and individual participation. This meant service users of all ages and experience could be involved.

**Project organisations**

Which organisations were involved in the project and what role did they play?

- STAR and STAR service users were key coordinators of the project.
- Modules were delivered to a range of voluntary and statutory organisations in Leicester.

Which organisation took the lead in running the project?

- STAR and STAR service users.

**Evaluation and reflection**

How successful has the project been? (please include any feedback or evaluation)

- Individuals involved have gained in confidence, experience and abilities.
- Such was the success that the project has been made a future requirement by Supporting People Leicester Strategic review of Homeless services. It was also highlighted as good practice in the Homeless strategy.

What were the major challenges for the project and how were these overcome?

- To get people ‘fired up and interested’ in attending, this was overcome by the nature of the learning and that service users were delivering the modules.
- This ensured that even the more diffident and sceptical were in attendance.

What are the plans for the project in the future?

- Plans are in place to continue the development of additional modules by the service users and to roll out the programme to other statutory and voluntary housing providers.

Is there any other information you would like to include?

- The project has been successful because of its motto – ‘a hundred different service users – a hundred different stories’.

**Personal input**

How did you initially become involved with the project?

- I was a service user and was interested to get involved in something that addressed the problems I had experienced adapting to a new tenancy.

What has been your personal role in running the project?

- I have been involved in all aspects of the project and have given my time willingly, because I believe in it passionately and I have the difference it has made to others and myself.

What would you do differently if you were involved in a similar project again?

- I continue to be involved in the project and big goals have been achieved by getting it made a Supporting People requirement. We are now in the process of adding more modules having learnt along the way from those who were involved.
Project description

Please describe this project in one sentence:

Providing people with a bank account and personal finance skills in preparation for leaving prison.

What was the name of the project?

UNLOCKing Banking

What were the project's objectives?

- Open bank accounts and provide training for 150 people in prison
- Develop sustainable partnerships between partner banks and prisons
- Work with industry and government to effect national policy change and enable the wider development of partnerships between prisons and banks

What were the project activities?

- Identifying and securing the support of banks, prisons and other stakeholders
- Establishing the necessary processes, documents and materials
- Training staff working in prisons to deliver training/support sessions
- Delivering monthly sessions in prisons, providing support completing application forms, an innovative ID solution for those without standard ID and financial capability training covering:
  - What’s in it for me?: Employment, Benefits, Power & Control
  - Bank Accounts: Types, Choosing, Opening, Application Forms, ID
  - Using a Bank Account: Getting Money Out (e.g. Types of Card, ATMs)
  - Using a Bank Account: Putting Money In (e.g. Employment, Benefits)
  - The Clearing Cycle, Overdrafts, Standing Orders & Direct Debit
  - Money Transfers, Telephone Banking, Internet Banking
  - Managing Money: Bank Statements, Budgeting
  - Debt: What? Why?, Dealing with debt, Improving your Credit Rating
- Checking all applications for completeness and accuracy before forwarding to bank
- Contacting customers to ensure they receive their account details, card and PIN and to offer ongoing support
- Collating and sharing management information
- Identifying issues preventing the efficient and effective running of the service and working in partnership to identify solutions
- Encouraging industry and government bodies to increase the provision of access to banking within prisons

Project organisations

Which organisations were involved in the project and what role did they play?

UNLOCK developed and manages the project. It provided the initial operating plans and staff training, collates shared management information and, as challenges arise, facilitates solutions between all partners. It offers support to the customer after release and campaigns for a roll-out of prison banking projects across the country. Foundation Training Company (FTC) staff members provide the face to face delivery of training and support to
the customer in three prisons, with Prison Service staff deliver in the other three. Halifax and 
Barclays banks provide basic accounts under special dispensations that allow the project to 
operate within a prison.

Which organisation took the lead in running the project?
UNLOCK

Evaluation and reflection
How successful has the project been? (please include any feedback or evaluation)
Projects have been established in 6 prisons. 234 people opened an account and received 
training in the year to July. Average self-reported financial confidence rose from 57% to 89%. 
Customers indicated on feedback forms that the project will;
- “...help with employment and stop me living like I have for 25 years.”
- “...give me an opportunity to build my credit rating and also somewhere to have my 
money paid into, thus giving me control of my finances and not relying on others.”
HBOS gained the BITC Community Mark. Transact (National Financial Inclusion Forum) 
identified the project as best practice.

What were the major challenges for the project and how were these overcome?
The biggest challenges were; convincing banks that they should engage with people in 
prison, meeting the different requirements (e.g. processes, security) of two banks and six 
prisons and managing a project which includes staff from 10 different organisations. These 
were essentially overcome through passion, perseverance, patience and hopefully logical 
argument! Early in the project we sought to establish ownership at a senior level in each 
organisation and develop positive relationships between organisations. Setting expectations 
was crucial, so that all partners recognised that challenges were inevitable and overcoming 
them was a central purpose of the project.

What are the plans for the project in the future?
Currently the project is opening an average of 45-50 accounts per month and this should 
continue as a minimum. Future strategy is a rolling programme of capacity-building, with 
resources being refocused on new prisons as the service is normalised in existing ones. 
Capacity-building has provided a relatively high degree of sustainability. Embedding the 
project into FTC’s resettlement service allowed them to demonstrate ‘additionality’ to the 
charity’s Prison Service commissioners. It now forms part of their core service in three 
prisons.
NOMS, BBA and UNLOCK are working in partnership to encourage more banks and prisons to 
establish their own projects.

Is there any other information you would like to include?
People in prison have been recognised as vulnerable to financial exclusion in reports from 
the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, New Philanthropy Capital and the FSA, as well as in our 
own work. The Prison Inspectorate found 60% of prisoners thought they would have 
problems with money and finances following release and 45% thought they would have 
problems opening an account. Data from the London Prison Service showed that only 9% of 
people with an ‘indentified financial management need’ had a relevant ‘intervention’ in their 
sentence.
A bank account is a foundation stone for financial inclusion. It not only serves as a key to a 
broader set of products but as a signifier of social inclusion. One customer wrote, “I have never 
had a bank account before as my life has been so chaotic. This has given me the opportunity 
to start leading a normal existence”. Another wrote, “I feel welcome back in society again”. 
People leaving prison often find themselves in a ‘chicken or egg’ situation in which they are
barred from everything. Exclusion can increase the risk of re-offending as one customer explained, “I sometimes find it hard to fill in forms, and also I do not have ID. If I have no ID I may not be able to sign on or even find housing. I then may be homeless and just go on and commit crime.”

The success of the project, and a mention in Inside Time, has resulted in many prisoners (and staff) in other prisons asking for assistance. In response we produced a short information leaflet and an extensive IAG pack, which are available from our website for free. We’ve also delivered capacity building training to staff and peer supporters in 33 prisons and 16 community organisations, so they can deliver their own financial training sessions.

**Personal input**

**How did you initially become involved with the project?**

I had been working in the private sector for the four years since I left business school but felt very unsatisfied. I was looking for a chance to make a difference to people’s lives and so applied to work at UNLOCK. Bobby Cummines (UNLOCK Chief Executive and formerly a prisoner for 13 years) gave me the opportunity to look after UNLOCK’s projects, including UNLOCKing Banking. The charity had only 3 staff at the time but since then we’ve made it to 5!

**What has been your personal role in running the project?**

My role has been to set up and manage the project. Initially I developed relationships with the banks, prisons and Foundations Training Company. I designed the training materials in conjunction with the men and women at HMPs Coldingley and Cookham Wood. At first I delivered the monthly financial capability and application support sessions. Later on I trained prison/FTC staff to deliver locally and focused on co-ordination and development. In the last year I’ve had the support of UNLOCK’s fifth member of staff, who now co-ordinates the projects, giving me the opportunity to concentrate on establishing a national prison banking framework.

**What would you do differently if you were involved in a similar project again?**

There are hundreds of things that, with the benefit of hindsight, we’d do differently. Innovative projects will always be about learning how to overcome challenges. If you are getting it right all the time you are probably not innovating! We would certainly like to involve customers even more, not just in service design but in actually delivering peer training and peer support. Our financial training is already being delivered by peer supporters elsewhere in the prison estate and they do a fantastic job.