



COMMISSIONER REPORTS ON AN 'ACTION-PACKED' PROJECT

For the first time in 2008 – 2009 the Staffordshire Joint Commissioning Unit invited organisations to bid for funding from the Learning Disabilities Development Fund (LDDF). The Dove Service were successful in attracting some of this money as their bid met all of the criteria set around value for money, partnership working and would meet local priorities.

We thought the project was innovative in terms of setting up Peer Mentor Groups and would certainly fill some of the gaps in service across North Staffordshire.

This has certainly been the case and we know how many people have been supported, how many staff trained, how many people have received counselling, number of network groups established and numbers of peer groups in place.

Rising to the challenge

The project has faced many challenges as well as opportunities and from a commissioning perspective, Debra and Allan have risen to these. For example, access to care homes and GPs has sometimes been difficult, also, training being cancelled due to sickness, and the geographical boundaries of the project (i.e. not including Stoke), which is

An impressive result

By Christine Adams
Commissioning Manager
Learning Disabilities



appreciated. One of the key learning points early on was that gaining trust was imperative to the success of the project. This has been demonstrated throughout.

Starting with a blank canvas the project has been 'action packed'. It has been impressive to see the

results, good practice shared through newsletters, articles and information sheets. Also how the staff have networked across the locality with local organisations, e.g. Keele University.

The monitoring has been excellent and a model of good practice for others to follow. We have met with Debra and Allan regularly over the last 2 years and the importance of face-to-face communication as well as the quarterly monitoring reports and annual report has been invaluable. The Staffordshire Learning Disabilities Partnership Board have been kept regularly in touch with progress and recently NHS West Midlands invited Dove Service to share their good practice at a Celebration Event with NHS colleagues, family carers and people with learning disabilities across the West Midlands.

The Dove Service Project Celebration Event was an inspirational and thought provoking day which involved people with learning disabilities sharing their experiences of involvement with the Dove Service.

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Things are becoming tougher in the charitable world and I don't expect it to get any easier for the next year or two, not until the huge and unprecedented cuts in public sector funding come to an end and the new ways of working for them have started to take shape.

We now know that the PCTs and Strategic Health Authorities will vanish in the near future with commissioning being passed over to consortia of GPs, and the residual public health responsibility going to the local authorities which are themselves undergoing major changes to accommodate cuts in funding.

At the same time, they are instigating a huge change in the way that funding and services are provided for social care with the introduction of the personalisation agenda that provides budgets to individuals to allow them to purchase their care needs from providers of their choice. There is a corresponding move away from service delivery by the local authority.

The "Big Society" ideas being developed by the new coalition government suggest that communities and voluntary sector organisations will play a far

From the CEO's desk...



greater role in the delivery of what have traditionally been seen as statutory sector services; however, despite the potential opportunities that change could bring to third sector organisations, it is expected that the shift in who provides what services will take time to implement; therefore, there is a real possibility that, for the next year or two, the statutory sector will either maintain, slightly reduce, or cut Service Level Agreements/Contracts that they have with third sector providers.

With statutory sector funding all-but drying-up the traditional route to secure funding for charities has been to turn to Charitable Trusts and Foundations; however, the competition for those sources of funds has shot up with almost all Trusts and other funding sources experiencing massive increases in submissions for funding, making it increasingly difficult for even exceptionally good proposals to be successful.

So, with traditional funding streams being closed off or extremely difficult to secure where do we turn to secure the income required to at least maintain the services that we currently offer, let alone expand to meet current and expected demand or develop new services?

The answer is that we should not be afraid or embarrassed to ask clients for a contribution towards the cost of providing services. Almost everyone can afford to contribute a meaningful amount towards services that help them and that they value, if that is Gift Aided then we can also reclaim some of the tax paid on their contribution.

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ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

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The Dove Service is grateful to the
following major funders:

- NHS Stoke-on-Trent
- Stoke-on-Trent Adult Social Care
- Stoke-on-Trent Children's Services
- NHS North Staffs
- Staffordshire JCU LD Partnership
- Staffs CC Adult Social Care
- Shavington EIP
- Several Comm. & Learning P'ships
- Inspiring Communities Fund
- Big Lottery Fund YPF/AfA
- Souter Trust
- Chesterton Community Chest
- Pilotlight
- Newcastle-under-Lyme College

The Dove Service would also like to
thank:

- Blue Planet Communications, Keele
- Brown & Corbishley, N'castle-u-Lyme
- Select Coaching, Butterson
- Dean Statham llp
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- MHL & Bibby Line International
- Aspire Housing
- Tesco, Hanley
- Knightstor, Market Drayton
- The Printing House, Crewe
- Donna Louise Trust Prize Draw, Trentham

From the CEO's desk...

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We also need to be proud of the charity, the counselling and support that we provide, the workshops and training that we can offer and talk to anyone and everyone about the great work that we do and the significant benefits that we bring to those who access our services.

By acting as passionate and expert Ambassadors for the charity and being proud about what we do, we will be able to secure sales of our training and counselling services, the income from which will support the charitable work that we undertake.

We are seeking to change the culture within the Dove Service so that all of our trustees, staff and volunteers become Ambassadors of the charity.

A challenge to us all

However, it should not stop there. We ask that all of our clients and ex-clients, their families, friends, colleagues and others who have experienced and benefited from our services also act as Ambassadors of the Dove Service - after all, there are none better placed to talk positively and enthusiastically about services than those who have benefitted from them and who value them.

It is ironic that during these difficult times the services that we provide are in ever increasing demand and yet it is proving ever more difficult to secure the funding to meet that demand.

Therefore, it is down to us all to ensure that the Dove Service thrives through these difficult times so that we are able to realise future opportunities as they arise and continue to provide incredibly valuable services to those in great need.

Jill Jenner, Service Delivery and Development Manager, continues her series of articles on grief

Coping with suicide and suicidal feelings



The Dove Service works openly with clients who have been bereaved as a result of someone that they know killing themselves and also with clients who are struggling so badly with their pain, emotions, and sense of isolation that maybe for them the only way to achieve release is to consider the ultimate act of suicide.

We do not shy away from working with clients with suicidal ideation; however, we will always take any necessary steps to keep our client's safe and to support them during this extremely hard time. We will listen to their pain, their sense of the path becoming narrower and their feeling of not having a choice or chance to change direction.

We will listen and work with their options, possible routes and it is only if we feel that our clients may harm themselves will we consider breaking their confidentiality and inform their GP. Breaking confidentiality is not the choice of the individual counsellor - it is a matter for very serious consideration by the service managers within our organisation.

Suicide is probably the most traumatic of sudden deaths for the bereaved; it can touch 1 in 5 of the UK population. Even though the person may have threatened to kill themselves a "successful" action can be devastating. A person who kills themselves rejects life and also rejects all those that were

attached to them. How and where they die can be shocking and disturbing. The person already is beginning to be remembered for not how they lived but how they died. The Dove Service can provide immediate support to those bereaved by Suicide, either by telephone or by dropping into our centre in Hanley. As the shock, trauma, denial and helplessness diminish we can provide counselling weekly. Sometimes the isolation that the bereaved feel can be intense - they may feel that there is no-one else that they can talk to, no-one to listen, and may also feel judged by those around them.

The question "Why?" may never be answered. The rejection can be huge and there may be a sense that someone must be to blame. No-one helped them. no-one listened, no-one took action. The Dove Service will not blame, will not judge but we will actively listen.

We work with all who are involved in the sudden and traumatic waves of emotions; adults, children, young people and organisations such as employers, schools, colleges and other professionals. We provide support and training to help all those who are touched by suicide or any other bereavement or loss.

If you are interested in the Dove Service training on suicide please contact Miss Charlie O'Dell on 01782 683155.

My family and I owe a great debt to the Dove Service. As the mother of five, one of whom has special needs and a husband working away, I could not afford to crumble. I did not realise how close I was to that happening. A friend who is a health visitor spotted the signs and told me about the Dove Service.

"Counselling? Don't be ridiculous, I don't need counselling!" I replied, "Anyway they help those who have been bereaved, not me, I couldn't possibly go!" She showed me a leaflet and suggested it would do me good to just have a chat with an outsider. She still had to make the first call. It was only when I phoned the service to confirm her request and I spoke to a lovely gentle-voiced man (no idea who, sorry!) who obviously didn't think I would be wasting their time, that I began to feel that maybe she was right. I suddenly didn't feel quite so alone.

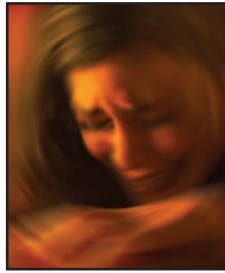
Where do you start?

I went along to the first session feeling very sick, not at all sure what I was doing there and with no idea at all what I was going to say. Where on earth do you start anyway?

I adore all of my children, we are a very close family. Having a family member with special needs, I'm sure, has made us even closer and very protective. She is very much loved by all, but it also places a huge burden on the family and on the mother who is constantly juggling everything to make sure everyone is happy and able to fulfil their true potential as they are growing up.

It is normal to swap stories with friends about things your kids are doing. Theirs are probably around the same age and doing the same things. You share the angst of the temper tantrums and teenage

Emotional rescue



A mother's searingly honest account of the mental anguish brought about by loss - and the salvation she found through counselling

rebellion. You can't share the problems of your special needs child in the same way. No-one knows how difficult my daughter can often be. You can say in the pub "Suzie wouldn't get dressed this morning" and friends will say "oh dear". You can't really describe the hour and a half of hell you both went through to get her through the door - the exhaustion of using every possible tactic, every ounce of patience, and every tear shed by both of you. They would not understand and anyway it would spoil the atmosphere of the evening where you are 'getting away from it'. You can't talk about your resentment of the condition that makes her behave as she does. The condition that means she will never grow up to be fully independent. They would be shocked. Neither can you talk of the heartbreak of watching her being left behind by her peers and overtaken by her younger brother and sister. Nor can you speak of the anger you feel as she has to struggle to learn what should come so easily. So you just smile and say "She's fine thanks, doing really well" because that's all they want to hear. So you are alone, so very alone with it all.

Everyone was so welcoming when I arrived at the Dove. Debra very soon put me at ease and by gently being asked the right questions I started to talk. Not just of the bad things, but also of

the joys – there are many – that Suzie brings. The joy of her achievements, her laughter, her ability to write and send funny text messages, her amazing sense of humour, the way she makes people smile. Her smile will light up the room. We are so very proud of her. In our weekly sessions Debra gave me such support as I struggled through finding the right place for her to go post 18. At that time she had a disastrous placement at a local college where she was always the scapegoat of staff inadequacies and I was made to feel responsible.

We went through the horror of assessment of needs where the social worker writes down how 'badly' your daughter is doing – a shock when you are used to concentrating on how well she is achieving. Debra was there behind me all the time.

Heartbreak

No-one had ever told me what a wonderful job I was doing before. I had never even thought of it. You gain a lot of strength from that, even if it takes you a while to start believing it.

Together we gently trod, in no particular order, on the past journey which had got us here. The fight to get Suzie into mainstream education, the terror when she nearly died, the heartbreak of discovering her condition.

'You can't really describe the hour and a half of hell you both went through to get her through the door - the exhaustion of using every possible tactic, every ounce of patience, and every tear shed by both of you'

from my secret torment

I sometimes found myself saying things I hadn't even realised I felt. Bringing up a child like Suzie in a busy household with all the normal stresses of having a large family gives no time to reflect on the battles and traumas we have faced, and apart from one amazing health visitor for a few years, there was no-one to share them with outside the family.

Having a disabled child singles you out from the rest of the world. People stare, and say unkind things without realising. Having a disabled child carries enormous guilt. 'Is it my fault? Am I doing enough? Why can't I be more patient?' Having a disabled child carries a huge responsibility. 'Is this the right place for her to be? Would she really like to be seen wearing that if it were not for her condition?' Trying to make her conform to society's rules so that she keeps her dignity. You can't get it right all the time and you beat yourself up when you get it wrong.

Counselling has made me realise all these things. I am now much more accepting of my own failings and I question society's values too. Sometimes Suzie IS right, it's the rest of the world that's wrong. I fear for her vulnerability. Counselling has helped me to trust others more, to share a little of the burden. Counselling has made me realise that I was bereaved when Suzie was born. I lost the little girl I thought I had. Our lives were to take a very different path. Over the years I have been constantly reminded of that little girl. For example, the joy of Suzie's first real word 'bear' turned to pain when two hours later a friend's child, younger than Suzie, answered their telephone to me

saying clearly "Hello who's speaking please?" It pierces your heart like a knife. All life's milestones are a reminder. And when you are reminded – usually out of the blue, you don't see it coming – you pull yourself together and smile at people thinking 'Don't go there, don't think about it'. But sometimes you do 'go there', however briefly, you can't help it. It's a very sad and lonely place. And then after you have, the guilt returns 'I mustn't feel this way, Suzie is wonderful and doing so well'. And then comes the anger.

Counselling has taught me that

'I could never have done it alone - far too dark and scary, and exhausting'

it's OK to have these feelings. We have looked at them together. I could never have done it alone - far too dark and scary, and exhausting. Counselling has taught me to be kinder to myself and to recognise and feel good about my own achievements not just Suzie's.

If any of these words strike a chord with you and you feel you would like to talk to someone who will listen and not judge what you say, please don't hesitate to contact the Dove Service. Don't wait until it's too late like I almost did.

If you imagine for a moment an airing cupboard jam-packed full of all that has happened in your life, but where major problems have been shoved up into the top like the sleeping bags and the spare duvet because they are too bulky to fold up neatly.

Pretty soon you'll open the door to get a pillow case and the duvet will fall, bringing everything else with it.

When I started counselling my duvet was hanging out of the door. Debra has very carefully helped me to look at events in my life and, though often painful and harrowing, to start to come to terms with them.

I am so much stronger for having done so. I see just how far we have come on our journey through life. I now realise and celebrate

my achievements as a

mother and as a person (or I'm trying to!) and in so doing take strength and confidence to carry on fighting Suzie's battles.

Although there are still wobbly moments, I can now open my imaginary cupboard door without fear of being flattened, which is more than I can say about my real airing cupboard at the top of the stairs – I wonder if I could get Debra to help sort that one out too.....

Thank you Debra, from the bottom of my heart. X



Due to the success of the LDDF project, which began in April 2009, it was decided to celebrate on July 21st, 2010, what has been achieved to date by gathering service users, staff and other organisations together to highlight the work everyone has done.

The aims of the LDDF Project are to reach adults in Newcastle and the Staffordshire Moorlands with any form of learning disability to offer support, training and counselling around bereavement, loss and life-changing illness. In the last 16 months we have been astonished at the demand for training for service users, staff, families and parents/carers and have progressed this training to start to develop peer mentor

CELEBRATING A SERVICE THAT ATTRACTED AN ASTONISHING DEMAND

By Allan Morris & Debra Brown (Counsellor Trainers)

groups within day service locations. At times this project has been challenging, but always satisfying, and we have both gained a great deal from working with these groups who have always been open, honest and an honour to work with.

The Ramada Hotel in Clayton proved to be an ideal location,

being wheelchair friendly and spacious and accessible to all. The day was very productive and truly reflected the hopes and achievements we were looking for.

Many individual stories were shared and two service users gave a personal insight into their journey with us.

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Robyn shares her experience of counselling

I'd like to share with you my story of how working with Dove has helped me to overcome some difficult times in my life. When it was time for the first meeting I felt scared and upset about talking about my Dad having cancer. You don't think one of your own family would have cancer. At first, I felt like it was my fault even though I knew it wasn't really, I still felt like it had to be.

When I met Allan for the first time he just listened to me. Other people may just say "oh it'll be alright" but there's something different about Allan because you can really be yourself with him. You feel like it's OK to have a good cry. Allan taught me about 'stuckness' which is like a knot inside and when you cry it releases all the tension and hurt inside.

Dad having cancer made me more aware of other people who have cancer and their family and friends. I would love to move on now and help other people, not just close the door on help because there is help and you don't have to feel alone.

If I can now start to help other people by giving them understanding of how I felt at first and how Dove and Allan have helped me then they needn't be alone which is a big part of it.

Believe me, when I first started working with Allan I did feel alone and I still have my off days - doesn't everybody? But I think I'm alright thanks to Dove and Allan. I think it's good to talk and not bottle things up because that can really, really hurt.

I felt like I was on a rollercoaster but now I feel I can

be more positive. I'm still on my journey with difficult times ahead but I know I have Allan for support.

Thank you Allan for helping me to understand how to move on and be positive. I now want to move on to peer mentoring and help other people how you have helped me, that would really please me a lot. If I could help change other people's lives like you have helped to change mine then that would mean the world to me.

Pictured: Robyn with Allan



Dr. Simon Hankins (CEO) opened the event with an overview of the project and was followed by Christine Adams (Commissioning Manager for Learning Disabilities for the Joint Commissioning Unit between Staffordshire County Council, South Staffordshire PCT and NHS North Staffordshire) who spoke about the project background and its challenges and opportunities, as well as the excellent way in which project activities have been recorded and monitored. She was also highly complimentary about the way the project continues to develop and share good practice.

Allan Morris delivered a presentation which looked at how the project had been received so far and the reasons that have prevented people from accessing those services.

"We talked about the organisations who have worked with us up to now because their input, feedback and support have been invaluable in helping us to develop and succeed", he added.

Allan introduced Ms Robyn Horne, a service user from Kidsgrove Day Services, who was brave enough to address the whole audience and share her personal and emotional experience of counselling. Robyn was supported by Karen Tyer (Senior Day Care Officer).

Debra Brown introduced an exercise where everyone was given a paper heart which they were asked to write on to describe a time when they had felt vulnerable and scared. "We then all stuck our paper hearts on our arms so we were truly 'wearing our hearts on our sleeves'. The intention of this exercise was to highlight how vulnerable people who access our services can feel and how much courage it takes to express that vulnerability. We also looked at how we can facilitate individuals who may have limited communication and understanding, and how important it is to be able to express emotions."

Ruth's story - treasuring the memory

My dad died on October 17 2009 two days after we came back from Spain. We'd all had a great holiday. It was a great shock for me. My mum and me returned from shopping, I was first in the house. My dad had collapsed, the paramedics tried to save him but sadly were unsuccessful.

Those first days after were dreadful, but my mum and family involved me in every aspect of our sad bereavement. We as a family including myself decided on which church, the hymns, music, flowers and where my dad would rest. I had the choice of whether I went to see my dad in his coffin, but decided not to. I wrote him a letter and my mum put it in his jacket pocket. My dad had always joked with me about Tina Turner. He was a big fan, so I suggested we had the song "Simply the Best" as we came out of church, I felt happy as this had been my request.

It is nice to go to the cemetery in Brown Edge, take flowers and sit and have a word with my dad. After the funeral I was very sad and confused. As I suffer with epileptic seizures I was having more than usual due to stress. The day service suggested counselling with the Dove Service. Debra came to my house. She was so kind and understanding. She helped me to understand about my very confusing feelings and also about the death of my dad. She suggested I start a memory box. In it I put personal items that belonged to my dad. I look into it and find this very comforting. We are also having a DVD made of my dad's life.

Through counselling, Debra has really helped me to understand and I now treasure all the lovely memories. I will always love my dad.



Pictured: Ruth with Debra

Ruth Walker, who worked with Debra, then spoke to the audience about the death of her father. This again was a moving and poignant account of her journey. Mrs. Walker (Ruth's mother) also spoke of her experience of accessing counselling at the Dove Service.

Everyone enjoyed the buffet lunch and then split into groups to work on their wishes and needs and think about how the LDDF project can meet their needs.

The heart of the LDDF project is in helping people to flourish, to be empowered and enabled as well as to promote the importance of partnership working.

We know that there are many

hearts still to be reached. We will continue to engage in working closely with other professionals to ensure that the voices of those with LD that they support are heard loud and clear. We would welcome any enquires about the project and look forward to continuing this work in the months to come.

Acknowledgments:

The Dove Service would like to thank the conference staff at the Ramada Hotel, Clayton, Christine Adams for her continued support of our work, and Margaret and Ruth Walker, Karen Tyer and Robyn Horne for their fantastic contribution to the day.

SIX NEW OUTREACHES

The Dove Service has opened new outreach services at the following locations:

Chesterton One Stop Shop

Tuesday.....10 am, 11 am, 12 noon

Stoke Local Service Centre

Tuesday.....10 am, 11 am, 12 noon

Newcastle High St. Med. Practice

Thursday.....10 am, 11 am, 12 noon

Kingsbridge Med. Practice Clayton

Friday.....1 pm, 2 pm, 3 pm

Bentilee Neighbourhood Centre

Friday.....10 am, 11 am, 12 noon

Middleport Medical Centre

Tuesday.....10 am, 11 am, 12 noon

This brings our total of active outreaches to 15. Further outreaches are planned for later this year.

The Dove Service really values its partners within the community and we extend our heartfelt thanks to them for providing these facilities. We are now reaching clients who have previously struggled to access us in Hanley, making our services far more inclusive and by providing them where they are most needed.

Anyone may refer to these outreach service by contacting Head Office on 01782 683155.

Concert in aid of the Dove Service, Saturday, Nov. 27 Meir Community Centre

Fancy something different? Then join us for a night of music and laughter. Stone Handbell Ringers have the largest set of American handbells in the country - a total of 116 bells in all and the team of 12 ringers ring a wide variety of music. Light classical, show tunes, rock, pop and Christmas songs are all part of their repertoire.

Tickets £5 inc. buffet and wine from 01782 683155. There will be a raffle.

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Although only a small number of health professionals, social care and health staff and family carers were in attendance to share in and listen to the good practice this was very moving and challenging. We need to ensure that the messages from this event are shared more widely.

As we know, the Coalition

An impressive result

government are already making a lot of changes. Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities will be abolished from 2013 and there are changes to the local Council structures.

We are working within a very tight financial climate both in health and social care and there will not be the development

money we have been used to in the past.

We do not know at this stage whether the LDDF will continue. A spending review will be undertaken in October 2010.

It is almost certain we will not invite bids again as the money will not be there to support new innovation.



The Dove Service has 8 available places in the London BUPA 10K in May 2011. If you would like to run, please apply for one of our slots! If you already have a place, please name us as your charity!

Contact:

charlie.odell@thedoveservice.org.uk
or check out the race website at
www.london10000.co.uk for more information.

