

Annual Report 2009-2010

**SOVA Young People's Support Project
BEXLEY**

Annual Report 2009-2010

Contracts held under:

Bexley Council

Orbit Housing Association

1. Introduction

1.1 Period Covered

The period covered by this report is 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010.

1.2 Authors

The report was written by Chrissie Wild (Project Manager), Jenny Hudson (Development Worker) and Phil Erswell (Appropriate Adult and Bail Support Officer).

1.3 History of Project

The project began as a pilot in 1997 under SRB3 funding to provide some of Bexley's care leavers aged 16-19 years with mentoring support focusing on employment, training and educational needs. SRB3 funding came to an end on March 31st 2004.

SRB4 funding from 1998-2004 allowed the project to expand its service into Abbey Wood and Thamesmead under the borough of Greenwich.

SOVA entered partnership with Prince's Trust Camelot Foundation Care Leavers Initiative in 1999. This developed the mentoring service for all Bexley care leavers and the funding came to an end in 2003.

A service level agreement with Bexley YOT in 2000 enabled the delivery of appropriate adult service to YOT via volunteers, bail supervision and support programmes to be raised for juveniles and increased mentoring provision to YOT.

Community Education funding originally supported the emergence of volunteer mentoring support for parents both one to one and in a group setting which is known as the Parent Support Network. The parent work continues to be commissioned by Bexley Council's Children's Fund until April 2010.

Following the end of SRB3 and SRB4 funding on March 31st 2004 the Project gained funding from the Community Safety Partnership to provide 400 hours of volunteer mentoring support over a period of 12 months to the North Bexley Youth Inclusion Programme. This continued with reduced funding in 2005/6 and 2006/7.

Children In Need provided funding for work with asylum seekers. This funding came to an end in November 2007.

The London Borough of Bexley launched the new local authority commissioning process in 2008 and the Project was successful in securing contracts to provide mentoring to parents (Children's Fund 2008-2011), Peer Mentoring for Care Leavers (PAYP 2009-2011), an Appropriate Adult and Bail Support Service (YOT 2008-2011). In addition the Project was approached by Orbit Housing South in 2008 to discuss ways of working in partnership and agreed a contract to provide tenant support to hard to reach tenants (April 2009-April 2011).

The Project is now recognised by London Borough Bexley as an integral part of the new Integrated Youth Service and along with Prospects, the Youth Awareness Programme, the Youth Offending Team, Bexley Youth Service,

Bexley Voluntary Service Council, Charlton Athletic Community Trust and Danson Youth Trust, is involved in the development and implementation of the change management strategy.

Each phase of development has been achieved by consolidating existing provision, recognising and responding to emerging needs and seeking to deliver a service, which compliments and enhances the work of partner agencies.

1.4 Aim of Project

SOVA Young People's Support Project aims to provide support, guidance and advice and to give a voice to young people aged 11-21 years, throughout the London Borough of Bexley including those in local authority care, care leavers, offenders, those at risk of offending and those deemed to be vulnerable; also to parents who may be experiencing difficulties with their children's behaviour and actions. The project is committed to encouraging and supporting the involvement of young people and adult volunteers from local communities in making a positive contribution towards community safety and crime reduction. Young people and adults are offered the opportunity to participate within SOVA's comprehensive equal opportunities policy.

Through our work we make significant contributions to the Every Child Matters Agenda through National Indicators NI 110 by encouraging young people to take part in positive activities, NI 117 by supporting 16-18 year old NEETs to engage in education, training or employment; NI 114 by assisting those in school to maintain their places and those out of school to reintegrate into education; N150 by offering emotional support to young people and parents and NI6 by providing volunteering opportunities to people aged 18 and over.

1.5 Funding Source

Contracts held under:

- Bexley Council Children's Fund
- Bexley Council PAYP
- Bexley Council Youth Offending Team
- Orbit Housing South

1.6 Staffing

At the time of writing this report the project has the following staff:

- Project Manager – Chrissie Wild (full-time)
- Appropriate Adult/Bail Support Officer – Phil Erswell (full-time)
- Project Development Worker – Jenny Hudson (part-time)
- Sessional workers – Linda Wilders and Debbie Williams

1.7 Composition of Steering Group

The Project has had a steering group to advise, guide and support the delivery of its contracts and agreements. The Project team welcomes meetings with representatives from partners' representatives and other interested parties.

As a result of the introduction of the government's integrated youth service strategy and SOVA Young People's Support Project's new and changing role in the local authority, the steering committee is currently being re-formed. Members to include:

- Alison Battersby – SOVA Manager Southern Region
- Jackie Larkin – Bexley Integrated Youth Service Team Manager

- Julie Grafton – Commissioning Officer for Bexley Council
- Charlotte Shrimpton – Head of YOT
- Tom Strannix – Children, Youth and Families Partnership Officer BVSC
- Chrissie Wild – Project Manager

2. Objectives and targets

2.1 Summary of objectives and numerical targets of the period in question

Multi-funding produces a range of objectives and targets under various contracts some of which relate to direct work with participants, some to the recruitment, training and support of volunteers, some to general delivery of service and some to project development issues. For the purposes of this report the authors have selected examples from each partnership in order to provide a general overview.

YOT SLA

Example objectives:

To provide a support officer, managed by the Project Manager, to:

- a) manage the specified Appropriate Adult Services, Youth Justice and Crime Prevention Monitoring Services and Bail Support
- b) To train, develop and supervise the group of volunteers involved in delivering these services
- c) To ensure that in the event that Appropriate Adult volunteers are not available during the Project's normal hours of operation a service will still be provided

3. Achievements of period

3.1 Summary of achievements (reasons for non-achievement) against objectives and targets

- a) 4 volunteer induction training sessions and 2 peer mentoring training sessions have been delivered throughout the period.
- b) 5 volunteers have given over 300 hours of volunteer support as Appropriate Adults
- c) Bail Support Packages have been raised in accordance with National Standards. Packages have been recognised by Courts and YOT as being robust, tailored to needs and offering balance of supervision and support of needs. 9 Bail Support Packages were raised at request of YOT, 9 of which were presented to the Court. 6 were subsequently accepted by the Court. 4 of these programmes achieved an attendance rate of 100%, 1 achieved an attendance rate of 85%, and 1 was discontinued.
- d) Varying factors influence the achievement of this target for example, YOT elected to attend some requests due to complexity of issues. Total number of AA requests = 48, number attended by SOVA =46, Number attended by YOT = 2. AA requests responded to by SOVA = 95%.
- e) Positive outcomes for Care Leavers matched with project mentors include: 5 care leavers completing SOVA peer mentoring and SOVA induction training, 3 care leavers achieving accreditation in NCB training programme "Saying Power".
- f) Project volunteers have not only contributed their skills, time and energy, but have also been able to use their involvement to pursue career path opportunities, e.g. residential workers in children's homes, SOVA project manager, school lunchtime supervisor, child minder, social work assistant, personal adviser.
- g) The Project continued to provide support to parents throughout the period. As well as one-to-one mentoring the Parent Support Network continued to meet fortnightly and workshops delivered included training

in drugs awareness, benefits, how to deal with challenging behaviour and meditation.

4. VOLUNTEERS

4.1 Brief description of tasks volunteers perform

Volunteers with SOVA Young People's Support Project are involved in a varied range of activities and tasks including:

- One to one community based mentoring
- Peer mentoring for care leavers
- Appropriate adults support for juveniles in interview at the police station
- Pro active involvement in bail support programmes
- Mentoring support to parents
- Mentoring support to parental support group
- Practical assistance with independent living, job seeking, access to education or training
- Emotional support re isolation, relationship issues and mental health issues
- Advocacy in support of re-integration at school
- Support in the transition from primary to secondary education, from care to independence, from school to college and from secondary education to higher education
- Outreach work in the community encouraging the take up of mentoring by parents and young people

4.2 Brief description of process of recruitment, selection and training

Volunteers are recruited via the SOVA website, Bexweb (Bexley Council's website), local and national press advertising, profile raising via local events and publications, targeted leaflet and poster information, presentations to interested parties, word of mouth and volunteer agencies.

Applicants are required to complete application forms and agree to CRB checks. They attend initial interview and if successful attend a core training programme totalling 24 hours, followed by post training interview and take up of references.

4.3 Brief description of how volunteers are supervised and supported (include reference to services provided by project)

Once accepted volunteers receive individual supervision if matched which is carried out every 4-6 weeks. Support groups are organised in order to share experience, identify training needs and deliver workshops. Access to borough training provision in safeguarding and in drugs awareness is also offered.

4.4 Number of enquiries

47

4.5 Recruitment sources

As described above.

4.6 Number interviewed

32

4.7 Number trained

32

4.8 Number accepted

32

4.9 By gender

Female - 26

Male - 6

4.1.0 By age

18-25: 11

26-35: 6

36-45: 10

46-55: 5

4.1.1 By ethnicity

White British: 21

Black African: 6

White Irish: 1

Any other white background: 1

Caribbean: 1

Do not wish to say: 1

Mixed European: 1

4.1.2 By employment status

Full time employed: 4
Part time employed: 4
Registered unemployed: 4
Unregistered unemployed: 2
House person/carer: 8
Retired: 1
Student: 3
Self employed: 4
House person/student: 1
Do not wish to say: 1

4.1.3 By convictions

2

4.1.4 By geographical area

Bexley: 27
Greenwich: 1
Other: 4

4.1.5 Brief narrative of typical reasons why people have said they are volunteering

Some reasons given for volunteering are: contribution to community, care and interest in young people's issues, experience relating to career path goals, placement opportunity, spare time, own experience, change of career.

4.1.6 Number of courses held during year

Core training programmes: 4

Peer mentoring training programmes: 2

Additional training events taken up by volunteers and Project staff via Bexley council (Youth Justice Board training, drugs, safeguarding, working with adults with learning difficulties, children and sexual exploitation, FPM management course)

4.1.7 Volunteer hours in period

5329

5. Participants

5.1 Brief description of how participants are referred

Participants are referred to the project from Social Services, YOT, Mental Health Teams, schools, Education Welfare, Youth Engagement Service, Community Safety Team, Police, parents, self, other community based agencies. Referral forms are held at most of these sources. Sometimes referrals are generated via networking, forums in which the project is involved or attendance of team meetings, as well as through informal discussion.

5.2 Number referred

109

5.3 Number accepted

100

5.4 Number participated

57

5.5 By gender

Male: 47

Female: 62

5.6 By age

Under 18: 65

18-25: 18

26-35: 7

36-45: 17

46-55: 2

Total: 109

5.6 By ethnicity

White British: 86

White and Black Caribbean: 1

White and Asian: 1

Indian: 2

Caribbean: 2

African: 5

Other: 11

Any other mixed background: 1

5.8 By employment status

Full-time employed: 4

Part-time employed: 1

Registered unemployed: 8

Unregistered unemployed: 8

House person/Carer: 18

Student: 51

Other: 19

5.9 **By conviction**

Criminal record: 12

5.1.0 **By geographical area**

Bexley: 109

5.1.1 **Examples of positive outcomes against National Indicators**

- Young woman of 16 who did not complete Y11 gained employment and college place NI117, NI91
- Having been at risk of permanent exclusion age 12, a young man , now 16 is predicted 5 GCSEs A-C and has a college place to do animal management NI114
- Two young people's school attendance increased from under 65% - 99% NI114
- A 16 year old boy previously unoccupied outside school and deemed to be at risk of offending has taken up kick-boxing NI110
- 3 young people between 11 and 14, previously socially isolated are now attending Arts and Crafts at Howbury Centre NI110
- 2 children aged 11 and 13 who have Child In Need status took part in and completed Charlton Summer Football Courses NI110
- 2 young people, one of whom has parents who cannot read, enrolled in the library NI9
- 2 parents under 21 now fully trained and accredited as volunteer peer mentors and leading peer mentoring group (2009/2010) NI16

6. Project Development

6.1 List of people/agencies/liased with

The project is in liaison with the following agencies, teams and departments on a regular and sometimes frequent basis:

Social Services, Leaving Care Team, field child care teams, Youth Engagement Service, Community Safety Team, YOT, Education representatives, school heads and teaching staff, police officers, mental health services, youth services, Prospects PA's, Connexions PA's, partners representatives as described above, parents, carers, participants.

This list is not definitive and there are other significant interested parties, which may have been omitted.

6.2 Conferences and training attended

MBF peer mentoring training, IYS forum, FPM management course.

The Project was invited by Bexley's Anti-Bullying Forum to present to head teachers and senior school managers at the Marriot Hotel in Bexleyheath on how to engage with hard to reach parents.

6.3 New initiatives undertaken

Parent Support Network

SOVA has developed the way in which it provides support to parents in Bexley. Through a process of review and evaluation it became apparent that some parents found it difficult to engage with a “group” and the Parent Support Group progressed into the Parent Support Network. SOVA are now able to offer parents a more flexible range of support including one-to-one mentoring, telephone mentoring, fortnightly structured by informal workshops developed in response to issues presented including family learning events.

Orbit Housing

SOVA has developed its relationship with Orbit Housing and is now providing support to some of their more vulnerable tenants to assist with debt management and mediation in neighbour disputes.

Peer Mentoring

The Project won a bid to run a peer mentoring programme for care leavers. Using an ex care leaver, now training as a social worker, as a consultant on the project the programme has been very successful and currently 6 care leavers have completed the training and are awaiting CRB checks before being deployed.

6.4 Any current issues

Success brings an ever-increasing number of referrals. There is commitment to respond to all of these positively. In order to do this effectively increased numbers of volunteers is crucial and, in turn, increased numbers of paid staff. Project staff continue to discuss how best to achieve this and to invite partners to share their views so that SOVA can continue to meet the demand.

7. Objectives and targets for next year

- Continued recruitment of volunteers
- Expansion of AA service
- Continuation and development of work with parents
- Continually seek new sources of funding
- To continue to meet targets under all funding agreements
- Further develop Peer mentoring programme for care leavers

8. Conclusion

8.1 General paragraph on 'how the year has been'

To say the year has been busy would be an understatement. All members of staff at the project have worked extremely hard and are rightly proud of the successes that have been made.

There is a true sense of belonging to the new Integrated Youth Service.

Feedback from participants, carers, referrers, partners and other agencies informs the Project that SOVA is delivering a service which is responsive to needs, adaptable to individual's circumstances, professional in its work, and maintains its strength through the independent and informal approach to the provision of support.

The positive way in which partners' representatives have given support, guidance and assistance has been a key factor in successful delivery and development of service. Therefore SOVA Young People's Support Project would wish to offer sincere thanks to all partners' representatives. Also to extend thanks to the many agencies, departments and individuals with whom the project enjoys excellent working relationships.

SOVA Young People's Support Project looks forward to continuing to build on this in support of young people and parents referred in the coming year.

9. Appendices

9.1 Case studies, what the participants say, comments from referrers,

A1 Advert copy for volunteers

A2 What participants say about SOVA Young People's Support Project
Case study précis 2009/10

A3 What the participants say - volunteers and mentees

A4 What the referrers think of the service

Appendix A1

Be a Volunteer for SOVA Young People's Support Project

IF YOU:

- Are seeking a new direction
-
- Would like to work with young people and adults
-
- Are looking for career opportunities
-
- Would be prepared to give your time for free
-
- Are able to attend 4 days free training

**THEN PLEASE CALL OR EMAIL:
SOVA YOUNG PEOPLE'S SUPPORT PROJECT
on
01322 356463
jhudson@sova.org.uk**

Appendix A2

What participants say about
SOVA Young People's Support Project:

"At PSN I am able to talk openly about my child's behaviour and know that I won't be judged because the other parents are going through the same thing."

"I talk to my mentor and she knows what I mean"

"I feel confident for the first time in my life."

"My daughter was all over the place. I was scared of her. I believed I was a useless mother who deserved a useless life because I'd always been useless. PSN helped me to start liking myself, which made me more confident. I knew I had to take control. At PSN we worked on devising realistic boundaries, which I could maintain, and review with my daughter at regular intervals. I recognise my daughter now. I've got her back. She's much happier. We talk to each other. I would be lying if I said there weren't blips. But they are blips. Not life 24/7. Just knowing PSN is there for me keeps me sane!"

"I would never have gone to the GP if my mentor hadn't come with me"

"I didn't know how to budget until the PSN helped me and I'm not scared to sort out my debts anymore"

"My weekly food bill is much lower because the PSN helped me to make meals on a budget"

"I didn't have the confidence before to go on a training course. Now I see a future"

"I have finally learned to stop shouting and now my kids listen to me and they've stopped shouting too!"

"I came here from London to escape domestic violence. My teenage son was permanently excluded from his new school. He couldn't cope. And I couldn't cope with him. He was getting into trouble with the police. I didn't know anybody. I went to the library to ask if they knew anyone who could give me advice and they told me about PSN. I've been going every 2 weeks for nearly 2 years. With PSN's help I got my son into a new school. PSN encouraged me to attend a Return To

Work course with Gingerbread where I learnt so much and where I made loads of new friends. "

"My youngest is at school now and I'm looking for a job and taking computer-training courses at the Howbury. Before PSN I sometimes thought about killing myself because I was so alone and isolated. PSN saved me and my family."

"I was indoors and I was thinking and I decided to stop fighting with everyone because it isn't working and my mentor always says you have to do what works not what don't work. Maybe listening to social services is a good idea so I'm going to give it a try because I want things to get better. I didn't care before."

NOTES FROM PARENT SUPPORT NETWORK

The teenage daughter of a PSN participant came to a session to take part in an informal Q&A with PSN members. The feedback from the session included the following:

From the teenager:

"I thought my mum came to this group to bitch about me. I'm glad I came along today because I didn't know that parents do get really upset and are really worried about their kids. But it was upsetting. It made me feel worthwhile to be asked so many questions and I felt listened to".

From one of the parents,

"I think we should do this again and get a teenage boy to come along as well. This young woman reminded me what it used to feel like to be a teenager and how I used to feel that no-one listened to me."

SOVA Young People's Support Project supports parents who face issues regarding communication with schools..

Here is what the parents had to say about that support:

"The best thing I learned at SOVA's parent group was that when I didn't understand what my child's teacher said I didn't pretend that I did understand or start to get angry, I said, 'I am not quite sure I have understood what you just said. Please could you explain it to me again?' The teacher explained and I didn't feel like an idiot anymore. I felt included. My relationship with Mrs B is much better now and I feel able to ring her to talk about my son."

"My mentor came with me to the meeting. There were lots of official looking people there. I hadn't slept the night before and just before the meeting my mum said she couldn't look after my little one and I was so tired and I'd been rushing round and I was shaking because I didn't know what was going to happen and I was concentrating hard on not crying if they told me my daughter was kicked out. They introduced themselves very quickly. I couldn't speak. My mentor seemed to know what I was thinking and asked if they could explain who they were and what they did again so she could write it down. I thought they would be cross. But they weren't and they told us. At the end they asked me to sign all these pieces of paper. I was so happy my daughter was being given another chance I didn't think I could ask them what the papers were about. I thought they'd think I was thick and the longer I was in there they might change their minds about her. But my mentor asked if we could read through them. They said this was fine. So we did.

After the meeting my mentor went through everything with me in my kitchen. She played me and I played the teachers. We had such a laugh. And I saw things from a different side. Next time I go to a meeting I will speak up! I see that I need to be informed if I am going to be able to support my daughter if she has difficulties at school."

"I stopped ringing the school because whenever I did the teacher was never available and I just couldn't afford the phone credit. I was frustrated because he never phoned me back even if I left a message. I couldn't get up there at the times they were giving me either because I have 2 smaller children at 2 other schools in a different part of the town. My mentor helped me to write to the teacher to explain this and give him times that I could make. He never replied. So my mentor helped me to write again. He phoned me and explained my first letter must have been lost in the post.

We found a good time for both of us.

My mentor came with me to help me keep calm. My mentor said she would come to meetings with me until I feel ready to go on my own but I know that if I am going to do my job as a mum properly I can't rely on her. So we've come up with a plan. She will come to two more meetings and then I'm going to do it on my own!"

"The school rang. My daughter was being sent home. She didn't have the right shirt on. I was too ashamed to tell the lady we only had one white shirt and my son was wearing it that day. Sometimes I think her teachers don't understand how difficult things are for us. When you are disabled and you have six kids, your benefits are up the creek, you have no phone credit and you are really trying your best, even though you can get a white shirt in the charity shop for under a pound, the choice between a meal and uniform should be clear to anyone!"

SOVA Young People's Support Project
Case study

The mentor's point of view

When I first started mentoring J it had been ten years since my son was his age. So the main difficulty for me was building our relationship and gaining an element of trust. It was also difficult for me to understand what J's home life must be like, as it seemed far removed from my own experience.

I had to learn more patience, as seeing progress in our relationship and his behaviour took more time than I had expected. I also had to try to put myself in his shoes and see things from his perspective.

Progress has been slow but incredibly rewarding. When I first met J he was withdrawn, rarely smiled and was difficult to engage in conversation. He now smiles and laughs and has made improvements in both attendance and behaviour at school. We feel comfortable in one another's company and have had great outings, which have been rewards for achieving targets we have set together. I have come to realise that the smallest of changes in behaviour can take a long time in coming but make my role as mentor worthwhile.

I hope I will continue to mentor J for a long time, but even if I stopped tomorrow I would like to think that during our year together I have sown seeds of information and behaviour that he will take through to adulthood, hopefully changing his life for the better even if it is in some very small way.

The mentee's point of view

My brother had a mentor and it seemed to go okay so I asked for one. I thought we would have fun and maybe it would be someone I could talk to, as some things in my life were not so good. It has helped a bit at school and home. We have been to the London Dungeons, 10 Downing Street and the Science Museum. We have also played football, tennis, basketball, pitch and putt and have been rowing and shopping.

I am glad I have a mentor.

How has the relationship impacted on the mentee?

J is more self confident, happier, has improved both his attendance at and behaviour in school, he has developed interpersonal and communication skills – particularly with adults, and has realised that there is 'another world' out there which he can attain.

How has the relationship impacted on the mentor?

The mentor is more patient, a better listener, more aware of the difficulties many young people face and understands more clearly the need to be non judgemental.

What referrers say. Here are just some of the things social services, children's centres and schools have said about our service:

"Just a short note to express my thanks for the mentor for Sharika Daniels she has grown so much since being engaged. I met her last week and she was strong and vocal and confident. Such an improvement from previous interactions.

Thanks for such a positive mentor."

"An excellent service."

"Thanks to SOVA who have really helped the leaving care group happen this term! SOVA have been an integral part of this term's group and we hope to continue this relationship"

"Well done to Sova for making such a great difference to lives of these families"

"The work you're doing is great and the results you're getting are to be commended".