



Staffordshire Through Care Mentoring Project

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Annual Report
April 2009 - March 2010



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For circulation to all staff, volunteers and other stakeholders

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Introduction

This Annual Report is written by the Staffordshire Through Care Mentoring Project Team and covers the period from 1st April 2009 – 31st March 2010.

Set up in 1999 Staffordshire Through Care Mentoring Project began as a partnership between SOVA, Staffordshire County Council Children and Lifelong Learning Through Care Service and The Princes' Trust to provide a mentoring service to young people leaving care in Staffordshire. The current partnership is between Staffordshire County Council Department of Children and Families services and SOVA.

Based on the outskirts of Stafford town centre within the Stafford Area Service Office, the project provides a mentoring service that is tailored to meet the needs of young people aged 13-21, (up to 24 if in full-time education), who are receiving a service from Staffordshire Through Care Service. Young people who are preparing to leave care are eligible for Through Care Service until they are 21. (A small number still in education may be eligible for a service beyond this age). The Through Care Service continues to fund the Mentoring Project, with current funding running until the end of March 2011. The project maintains a close working relationship with the Through Care Service staff team and other County Council employees.

SOVA

SOVA is a national voluntary organisation, which works to strengthen communities by involving local volunteers in promoting social inclusion and reducing crime. It is SOVA's vision that Volunteers, as members of the community, will actively seek to provide access to resources that offenders, ex-offenders and disadvantaged young people may use in developing their own potential in society.

SOVA's existing operation in England and Wales encompasses around 60 Projects and Schemes throughout England and Wales. There are 183 members of staff and 2,000 active volunteers working with more than 11000 offenders and disadvantaged young people.

SOVA Volunteers are recruited from all sectors of the local community to deliver 'befriending' and 'mentoring' activities. All SOVA Volunteers are appropriately trained and supervised by staff to operate within health and safety, safeguarding, confidentiality and equal opportunities guidelines.

The underlying philosophy of involving volunteers is derived from the belief that:

- We endeavour to make the experience of volunteering mutually beneficial to volunteer and participant
- The continuing support and involvement of local volunteers can assist rehabilitation and diversion
- Services for disadvantaged and socially excluded groups can be improved when statutory and voluntary organisations co-operate more closely
- Public participation in the care and integration of offenders, those at risk of offending and other disadvantaged groups reduces fear of crime, challenges stereotypes and prejudice and increases community awareness and understanding

Project Aims

Specifically, Staffordshire Through Care Mentoring Service aims to provide volunteer mentors, who are independent of statutory services, and who offer guidance and support to help young people access local resources and information, education, training, and employment, as well as offering a stable relationship and a listening ear. Volunteer mentors support young people to identify their own aims and objectives and support children and young people to achieve these aims, for a positive future and help them to build and develop confidence and self esteem. Referrals for a volunteer mentor vary according to individual needs, but often include the following, support to access education/training and employment, help to develop independence skills and general befriending and support. The work we do supports the 5 aims of the Outcomes Framework from "Every Child Matters" and the Children and Young People's Plan which are:

- 1. Be Healthy**
- 2. Stay Safe**
- 3. Enjoy and Achieve**
- 4. Make a Positive Contribution**
- 5. Achieve Economic Wellbeing**

Currently volunteers are involved in our Project Steering group, the publication of our volunteer newsletter, organising Volunteer Support groups, fund raising and assisting in volunteer training sessions.

The project continues to maintain membership with a number of Volunteer Bureau and Community Voluntary Services in Staffordshire, many of which are utilised for volunteer training venues and Support Group meetings.

For the year 2009-10 the project has been staffed by 1 full time Project Manager (35hrs) and 1 Support Officer (varying between 13 and 25 hrs). The project has also had support from current volunteers who have a good knowledge of the project, and have worked on a sessional basis to cover long term sickness. The project has also been supported by John Leach – SOVA's Midlands Area Manager.

The project is overseen by a Steering Group which meets quarterly and which during the period 2009-2010 was made up of:

John Leach	SOVA Midlands Area Manager, West
Kelly Buswell	SOVA Midlands Area Manager, East
Richard Hancock	Head of Service for Looked After Children, West
Marian Richards	Head of Service for Looked After Children, East
Gill Brogan	Through Care Development Officer
Hannah Evans	Project Manager
Michelle Elliott	Support Officer
Caroline Babb	SCC Senior planning and Partnership Officer
Darryl Gough	Through Care Inclusion Worker
May Dickens	Through Care Team Manager, West

Objectives and Targets

Staffordshire Through Care Mentoring Project aims to provide an effective mentoring service to children and young people who are in, or preparing to leave care in Staffordshire. SOVA aim to do this by maintaining a pool of volunteer mentors who can be matched to children and young people, and provide assistance and support to reduce isolation and increase self-esteem and confidence, whilst also supporting them to access local community resources and enable them to make informed choices and decisions.

Annual targets for 2009-10 were:

- To recruit, manage and supervise at least 65 volunteer mentors from the local community
- To provide support to at least 60 participants

Volunteer mentors are recruited from across Staffordshire, which is a large county with many rural as well as urban communities. Volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds with many different experiences, skills and knowledge. Volunteers must be aged 18 years or above, and are expected to make a minimum, regular commitment to the project of 2 hrs per week, for a minimum of 6 months. Wanting to help young people fulfill their potential is a vital element of becoming a volunteer mentor, as is having the time available to mentor.

All volunteers must complete SOVA's Core and Mentoring Skills for Volunteers training course and build a portfolio of work to demonstrate their learning, which is assessed internally within SOVA and submitted to the Open College Network for accreditation at Level 2.

Volunteers receive on-going support through supervision, group meetings and regular contact with project staff, other volunteer mentors and the Through Care Service.

Volunteer Achievements April 2009 to March 2010

Statistics as at 31st March 2010	Year 08/09	Year 09/10	% Increase/Reduction
Number of application packs sent out	98	94	-4.08%
Number of applications returned	48	61	+27.08%
Number of volunteer interviews	38	45	+18.42%
Number of volunteers trained	35	28	-20%
Number of volunteers attaining OCN accreditation	39	10	-74.36%
Number of volunteers withdrawn	25	44	+76%
Number of volunteers on hold	5	7	+40%
Number of matches at the end of the year	33	37	12.12%
Number of volunteers awaiting training	12	36	+200%
Volunteers available for matching	23	18	-21.74%
Total number of volunteer hours in year	3550	3031	-13.21%
Average hours per volunteer	56	48.8	-12.86%

During the year 2009-10 the project has continued to gather statistics to evidence the 5 outcomes of the government white paper Every Child Matters. Project staff continue to meet regularly with Gill Brogan and Caroline Babb from Staffordshire County Council to ensure that the statistics collected are evidencing the required outcomes. The project is producing case studies to demonstrate qualitative 'soft outcomes' for young people receiving support. All volunteers have been taught to divide the hours they spend directly on mentoring into these 5 categories, which has enabled project staff to prepare quarterly reports on the number of young people matched with mentors and the hours spent on each of these five outcomes, as requested by the Through Care managers and shown next.

Volunteer hours spent on each of the five outcomes						2009/10
Volunteer Contact Hours	1 Be Healthy	2 Stay Safe	3 Enjoy and Achieve	4 Make a Positive Contribution	5 Achieve Economic Wellbeing	Total Contact Hours
1st Quarter	62	24	49	5	18	158
April, May, June						
2nd Quarter	75	27	128	46	18	294
July, Aug, Sept						
3rd Quarter	92	29	61	7	72	261
Oct, Nov, Dec						
4th Quarter	63	16	61	42	22	204
Jan, Feb, March						
TOTALS	292	96	299	100	130	917

Volunteer mentors have shown that the support and guidance they offer can be of enormous benefit to young people leaving care in Staffordshire and form the backbone of the work undertaken within the project. Without the support of volunteers the project could not continue and their commitment and contribution towards positive outcomes for young people leaving care is most valuable and greatly appreciated.

Volunteer Recruitment

Enquiries to the project continue to come to us via local volunteer bureaux, the SOVA website, Do-It website, Staffordshire County Council website, or by word of mouth. Volunteers offer their time to support young people leaving care for a number of reasons, such as to gain work experience, to put something back into their community, or simply to make good use of spare time. Each volunteer brings their own unique qualities and skills with them to the project, which coupled with a comprehensive training and support programme, ensures we provide a valuable, quality service that meets the needs of our participants as well as our contractual obligations.

All volunteers recruited to the project must have an interest in the welfare of children young people in, or leaving care, to develop their full potential and make the most of opportunities, resources and services available to them. Volunteers are recruited from across Staffordshire, reflecting the diversity of local communities within the county. When recording ethnicity British has not been sub-divided in the past to include British with other ethnic backgrounds and more detailed monitoring will commence in April 2010.

Volunteer Recruitment Profiles 2009-10

Ethnicity		Employment Status	
British	70	Full-Time Employed	26
Caribbean		Part-Time Employed	11
African		Unemployed	11
Mixed	2	House/person Carer	8
Pakistani		Retired	1
Chinese	0	Student	6
Did not say	2	Self-Employed	5
Other	1	Other	2
		Do not wish to say	5
Age		Gender	
18-25	17	Male	Female
26-35	19	19	56
36-45	19		
46-55	15		
56-65	4	Have criminal convictions	9
65+	1	Have disability	6

Volunteer Training

SOVA Skills for Volunteers is a national organisational training programme, which aims to prepare all SOVA volunteers with the skills and knowledge to fulfill their volunteering role. Skills for Volunteers combine both Core Skills and Mentoring Skills modules which all volunteers must attend, and complete the full programme. Volunteers are also given the option to have their learning accredited through the Open College Network, although this is not compulsory. Accreditation is currently at level 2 although SOVA plan to be able to offer training at a level 3 in the future. The project tries to ensure that training programmes are accessible to all volunteers. To achieve this, we have recently held training sessions centrally in Staffordshire, but will look to move the training sessions around the county during 2010-2011, to meet the needs of our service.

On successful completion of their training, all volunteers undertake a second interview, sign a volunteer agreement and complete a Volunteer Personal Profile. The Volunteer Personal Profile provides us with relevant personal information to use when matching a volunteer to a participant and helps to ensure the most appropriate match is made to meet the needs of the participant. A directory of personal profiles is updated monthly including geographical area, sex and interests of each volunteer and if they are matched, available to match or will be shortly, this was made available to Through Care staff and has been very successful to assist the staff when referring young people.

Volunteers are matched to a participant as quickly as possible, however, this can depend on a number of factors including; volunteer location, the time a volunteer has available for mentoring, and volunteer skills/qualities versus participant needs.

Comments from learners evaluation forms following the training

All very helpful and an eye opener... the trainers course and content was clear and precise. **X**

Very interactive with lots of time for discussion **X**

The understanding and pace of the tutors allowed for all learning speeds and levels of education. **X**

Thank you for your time and patience in making this a fun, interesting experience. **E**

Having a mentor come in to talk, to put knowledge into practice showing how the project works and benefits everyone involved. **X**

All 28 trainees said they were more confident about their role as a mentor following their training.

Volunteer Support

Once matched with a participant volunteer mentors are expected to maintain regular contact with the project and receive regular supervision every 6/8 weeks. Supervision enables volunteers to discuss the mentoring relationship and any issues that may arise during the relationship and to discuss their personal development. Supervision is also an opportunity to revisit the aims of the mentoring and to ensure progress is being made.

Support groups are also available to all volunteers, from the time they are accepted onto the Project training programme. Support groups provide a forum for volunteers to discuss

general issues, share ideas, good practice and gain support from each other as well as from project staff. Through volunteer support groups volunteers are informed of new developments within the project and are provided with additional volunteer training opportunities. In 2009-10 additional volunteer training included an e-learning child protection course. The e-learning course will be compulsory and all volunteers will be required to complete this as part of their Core training during 2009-10.

Future support group will include training on using SOVA's 'soft outcomes' paperwork, to ensure SOVA is able to track and monitor the progress being made by our children and young people.

Project staff have also put booklet together on Money management, healthy meals and place to visit in Staffordshire. These booklets provide valuable resources to enable volunteers to support the children and young people they are matched with.

Regular newsletters are produced and send out to volunteers to update them on project business and training opportunities.

Participant Achievements April 2009 to March 2010

Statistics as at 31st March 2010	Year 08/09	Year 09/10	% Increase/Reduction
Participants referred to the project	75	55	-26.67%
Participants withdrawn prior to match (*New)		18	
Total number of new matches	33	37	+12.12%
Total number of matches ended	29	31	+6.9%
Number of participants awaiting match at end of year	20	34	+70%
Number of participants matched at beginning of year	32	28	-12.5%
Number of participants matched at end of year	54	62	+14.81%

In accordance with the Service Level Agreement, the project is expected to provide mentoring support to at least 60 young people who are currently receiving a Through Care service. The project continues to meet and often exceed these targets.

Referrals for a volunteer mentor usually come through the young person's Personal Adviser or Social Worker and can be for a number of reasons, including loneliness, lack of confidence, lack of skills, support to gain employment or training placements. Young people must give their consent before a referral can be accepted by the project. The project encourages young people to contact them directly and would welcome any self-referrals.

Once matched to a volunteer mentor, relationships can last between 3-24 months. Twelve week Mentoring Reviews take place throughout the mentoring relationship and support officer will make regular contact with the young person to determine how they feel about the mentoring and to ensure it is meeting their needs.

Participant Involvement with Project

During 2009-10 the Staffordshire Through Care mentoring Project arranged a residential with a small group of 8 young people. The residential took place in August 2009 and the venue was in Alton, Staffordshire. Staff and young people stayed in a church building where we used the first day for some team building games, a walk in the local area, followed by a barbeque in the evening, where young people helped to prepare the food. The following day comprised a visit to a local theme park, Alton Towers.

The aim of the residential was to encourage young people to socialise and also a chance for project staff to gain the views of the young people we work with, in order to inform our work in the future. A few hours were put aside on the first day to talk to the group about how they view our service and how they would like to see us do things differently in the future. Feedback from the group was generally positive, and all of the young people had the opportunity to participate. The general feedback was that all of the young people enjoyed meeting with their volunteers and felt that they benefitted from the support they received. A number of points that the young people made were that:

Young people would like more opportunities to meet socially.

Young people would like the mentoring relationships to last longer (even past 21).

Young people found it frustrating that couldn't contact their volunteer mentors directly.

The Staffordshire Through Care Mentoring project aim to address some of these issues into 2010-11 by providing more group activities, to include a walk and picnic on Cannock chase in Staffordshire, providing an e-mentoring service, and an Independent Visitor service (where relationships last longer).

A number of volunteers are keen to get involved in fundraising during 2010-11, which will enable us to offer more activities for young people and volunteers.

In aiming to provide a quality service the project tries to involve young people in aspects of its day-to-day running and development. The following feedback sheets show young people's satisfaction with the project and any ideas for improving the project (taken from 12 week feedback forms).

SOVA staff also complete a sponsored walk with SOVA derby, and were joined by a volunteer and a young person. The money raised was given to a children's charity in Derby. A similar event is planned in 2010, which staff and volunteers hope to be involved in.

Project Development

Over the last twelve months the project has continued to develop excellent working relations with the Through Care team. Although referrals have decreased, the number of new matches in the year has increased from 2008-9 and likewise; the number of young people receiving a service has exceeded its target of 60 young people.

Links have been made with allied projects and staff have attended information sessions aimed at foster carers in Staffordshire. Project have also been involved with the Training Flat, which enables young people to experience living independently before they leave care and Staffordshire Partnership. Furthermore, the project was heavily involved with Foundations to Employment project during 2009-2010. This project has been set up in conjunction with the government Care to Work initiative and provides young people with an opportunity to gain 10 weeks work experience in an area of their choice. SOVA volunteers have supported a number of these young people in their work placements and will continue to do so in 2010-11. The role of the volunteer is to encourage young people to maintain the work placements, and to support them to remain motivated to find training/employment, following the placement.

As part of our current delivery, we have also provided volunteers for the County Council's Level 5 fostering project. There are 2 young people currently in Level 5 fostering placements, both of whom have received support from a SOVA volunteer mentor.

Project staff have strong links with our partner SOVA projects in Birmingham, Derby, Lincoln and Nottingham, and have worked together to shadow other trainers and share good practice to achieve consistency in training delivery and OCN accreditation.

All volunteers attached to the project for more than 2 years are required to update CRBs, health, vehicle information and next of kin information. All of this information is now being held centrally on SOVA's database and is updated daily by project staff.

The future

The project has a long history of successful delivery, and is now in a position to look to expand its work in Staffordshire. During 2010-11 the Staffordshire Through Care Mentoring Project will be providing an Independent Visitors service to children and young people who are looked after in Staffordshire. The Independent Visitors service was previously provided by the NSPCC.

The aim of an Independent Visitor is to provide a long term stable relationship for a young person who has little or no contact with family members. The Independent Visitors meetings will be once a month and for around 4-6 hours, depending on the activities planned. Project staff will be liaising with other SOVA projects that provide an Independent Visitors service, to ensure we share best practice.

The project will recruit a Support Officer from the 1st June 2010, working 25 hrs per week, to meet the needs of the project. The existing Support Officers' hours will increase to 35 hrs per week to ensure we have adequate staffing to support the new and existing pieces of our work.

Conclusion

2009-2010 has been an exciting year in which the Staffordshire Through Care has achieved its targets and been involved in various new pieces of work. The project continues to go from strength to strength and relationships with partners continue to be strong.

2010-2011 is looking to be a busy year from the start, with the Independent Visitors project starting and continued involvement in projects we are already working with.

New staff starting with the project will give existing staff the chance to develop some new ideas and to continue to support the volunteers and young people currently on the project.

Appendix 1

Case Study 1

Brief History/Background to the case:

SOVA had received X's details from a list of Through Care referrals, sent from Through Care central Support. X was sent some information about SOVA by post. He then contacted the project to ask for a mentor. Project staff then contacted X's Social Worker to complete a referral form and a meeting was arranged to visit X. X lived with his Aunty and Uncle and had limited social networks. X also has a learning difficulty.

Main Action Plan objectives:

X wanted to meet with a SOVA mentor to support him in accessing and maintaining a place on a St. Johns ambulance course locally. X had previously attended a similar course but had difficulty in completing the written work due to his learning difficulty. X also wanted to be able to take part in some activities such as swimming or bowling.

Outcomes achieved & Objectives completed. What has changed / improved?

X has met his mentor consistently since they were introduced and enjoys their meetings. X started a St. John's ambulance course and continues to attend and do well. Whilst X and his mentor were meeting, X was considering going to college, the mentor agreed to look at courses with him. As the mentor has knowledge of learning difficulties/disabilities, she was able to help X to look at appropriate courses and supported him in arranging an interview. X now attends college and travels from Tamworth to Burton to do so. X and his mentor occasionally have a game of bowls when they meet but also use the time to discuss any issues that X is having at college or home.

Feedback from Beneficiary / Family / Agencies:

At a recent review, X's aunt stated how pleased she was with the mentors support, and stated that she didn't think X would have been able to manage at college if the mentor hadn't supported him to find the right course at the right level for him. X agreed with his aunt's comments and also said that he feels happier and more confident since he has been meeting his mentor.

Volunteer hours spent to support X from April 09 - March 10	
1. Be Healthy	27
2. Stay Safe	0
3. Enjoy and Achieve	19
4. Making a positive contribution	0
5. Achieving economic wellbeing	3

Appendix 2

Case study 2

A was referred by his Personal Advisor and was matched with his mentor in November 2008. He is living in his own accommodation but struggles with his budgeting. He also has a son who lives with his ex girlfriend. He is currently receiving legal advice with regards to access. He needs someone who can support him with these issues.

A has addressed his financial difficulties with the support of his mentor who accompanied him to the CAB.

His mentor has also supported him to choose and arrange decorating materials and carpets for his accommodation so he now feels more settled.

A has also attended solicitors appointments with regards to access to his son with the support of his mentor.

Feedback from M is that he has enjoyed meeting with his mentor and he is consistent in meeting with him each week. He also states his mentor has empowered him to make his own telephone calls to services and he is now capable of engineering a conversation without losing his temper.

Volunteer hours spent to support X from April 09 to end March 2010

1. Be Healthy	26
2. Stay Safe	14
3. Enjoy and Achieve	13
4. Making a positive contribution	3
5. Achieving economic wellbeing	26

Appendix 3

Case Study 3

X was a new young mother who was referred to the project by her personal advisor. He was concerned that she had a limited support network and was controlled by a dominant partner. He requested she had a mentor to support her to access mother and baby clubs etc

With support from her mentor, X and her son now attend the local Sure Start Centre where she is beginning to make a circle of friends.

X's mentor has also supported her with her application for her provisional driving license by helping her fill out the form and helping her to send off for her original documents to support her application.

Feedback from X has been very positive and she has always looked forward to her meetings with her mentor. She has found it beneficial to have a female mentor who she can confide in.

Volunteer hours spent to support X from April 09 to end of March 2010	
1. Be Healthy	8
2. Stay Safe	3
3. Enjoy and Achieve	7
4. Making a positive contribution	1
5. Achieving economic wellbeing	11

* To ensure confidentiality names have been changed.

Appendix 4

12 WEEK MENTORING REVIEW FEEDBACK FORMS 2009-10 Completed by Project Participants

1. How long have you been meeting with your Volunteer Mentor?

1-3 months	3-6 months	6-9 months	9-12 months	Over 12 months
3	8	3	6	4

2. How often do you meet your Volunteer Mentor?

Twice a week	Once a week	Once a fortnight	Once a month	Other
	22		2	

3. Does your Volunteer Mentor keep in regular contact with you?											Yes	No
											24	
4. Is your volunteer mentor reliable?											Yes	No
											24	
5. Do you find it easy to talk to your Volunteer Mentor?											Yes	No
											24	1
6. Has your volunteer mentor helped you with any of the following?												
Confidence/ Self-Esteem	Yes	No	Employment/ Training	Yes	No	Money Management	Yes	No	Improving Health	Yes	No	
	21	3		12	12		12	12		16	8	
Hobbies/ Interests	Yes	No	Other: Details:	Yes	No	Literacy skills Cooking Support with legal advice						
	17	7		3	21							

7. Are you satisfied with Staffordshire Mentoring project?											Yes	No
											24	
8. Were you given enough information about the Mentoring Project?											Yes	No
											24	

9. Please tell us how could we improve the Mentoring Project:

- YP1. Nothing – it is good as it is.
- YP2. Have younger mentors
- YP3. Interacting with other young people. Group days out.
- YP4. Help towards the cost of activities.
- YP5. It's alright how it is.
- YP6. More funding to help the project grow bigger and more activities
- YP7. More activities.
- YP8. Group outings and residentials.
- YP9. Don't give information to Through Care.

10. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

- YP1. My mentor has made me more confident. She sticks to the rules.
- YP2. Keep up the good work.
- YP3. it's been a good experience
- YP4. I like going out with my mentor.
- YP5. Meeting with my mentor has improved my behaviour.

