



Mentoring Scheme for Young People
(BUDDY)
SOVA Annual Report
April 2009 - March 2010





Contents

Introduction	Page 2
Objectives and targets	Page 3
Achievement of period	Page 4
Volunteers	Page 8
Beneficiaries	Page 12
Project development	Page 17
Objectives and targets for next year	Page 17
Conclusion	Page 18



1 Introduction

This report is an overview of the contractual year for the Buddy project from 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010. It has been written by Craig Hamilton, Support Officer for the Buddy project.

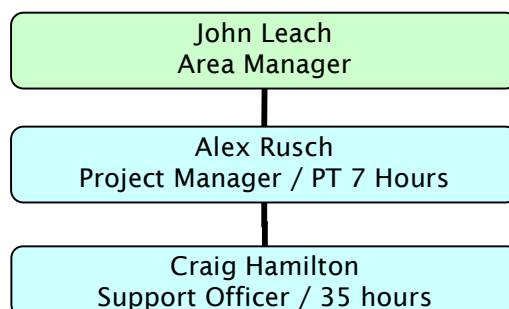
The SOVA Mentoring Scheme for Young People (Buddy) aims to provide a mentoring service for young people aged 8-18yrs referred to us from the Birmingham Youth Offending Service and Birmingham Youth Inclusion Programmes. These young people have either committed an offence, have anti-social behaviour contracts, are well known to the local police or simply have issues regarding their behaviour and attendance at school.

SOVA have delivered the service through the management of trained and supervised volunteers, who work one-to-one with the young people – supporting them with a range of issues with the ultimate aim to reduce the risk of re-offending and engage them in ETE (education, training and employment). Buddy's main objective is to motivate the young people to engage in and make accessible positive and constructive activities.

Between April 2009 and March 2010, SOVA were contracted to work with **42 young people**, providing **approximately 25 hours of support** per young person, **over 10 sessions**.

The service began with an initial 3-month contract between April – June 2009 when the contract was ran between the Birmingham Youth Offending Service and SOVA. During this time, SOVA were contracted to deliver 14 mentoring relationships. This contract was subsequently extended to March 2010 and since July 2009, funding for the project has come directly from Birmingham's PAYP.

Staffing and structure comprises of a full-time Support Officer (35 hours/week) and a part-time Project Manager (7 hours/week).





2 Objectives and targets

SOVA recruit volunteer mentors, providing them with continuous training and support. SOVA's aim is to deliver a one-to-one mentoring service with trained volunteers to 42 young people. It was anticipated that each mentoring relationship would last between 3-6 months involving 10 sessions or 25 hours.

The service commissioned was set to be measured against the baseline figures outlined below.

2009/2010 Outputs

- 42 Young people engaged with the service
- Aged 8 - 18 Years Old
- Up to 25 hours or 10 sessions during the mentoring relationship
- Young People will be regularly engaging in training, education or employment (ETE)
(ECM 3)

In the context of the Service Level Agreement, Outcomes can be described as the intended consequences of an intervention that can occur during or after a project. These are measured against pre-determined performance indicators.

At the beginning of the year, Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) agreed the outcomes below for 2009/2010 PAYP commissioning framework.

Children and young people's aspirations, interests, resilience and values are developed through inclusion in positive activities
Children and young people have knowledge, confidence and skills to make informed and positive choices.

All projects commissioned through the PAYP, including SOVA's Buddy project, must contribute to the specified outcomes. The outcomes defined for this programme/project are -

- 1. Young People will have increased confidence/skills to interact successfully with others**
- 2. Young people have the ability to plan for the future, make informed choices and develop life goals**
- 3. Young people develop key skills and abilities to live a safe/secure independent life**



3 Achievement of period

3.1 Referrals

Young People are referred to the project directly by case managers working across the 5 Youth Offending Service teams. Initially, particularly during April – June, referrals to the project were slow.

SOVA took remedial action to generate more referrals. This entailed attending team meetings held by various YOTs/YIPs to promote SOVA and the mentoring service, whilst also trying to resolve any issues and queries about the referral process. SOVA has attended 11 team meetings since September in a bid to address the lack of referrals.

Attendance at these team meetings has allowed SOVA to understand the issues and reasons behind why some YOTs and YIPs had not referred any young people.

One of the key reasons was that there still remained some confusion over the referral process along with a lack of confidence in the service. Once the method of practice, as explained in the report for the last quarter, was put forward in these meetings, the general mindset of the YOT/YIP seemed to improve. Support workers at the YOTs/YIPs seemed more comfortable with the idea of SOVA working very closely with them and feeding back any information they required.

SOVA will continue to attend meetings to ensure that any ongoing concerns are addressed.

Due to the proactive efforts of SOVA, the number of referrals for the latter part of the year increased significantly.



3.2 Volunteers

At the YOT/YIP team meetings a concern was raised about the skills of SOVA volunteers. To alleviate some of these concerns, SOVA decided to arrange for groups of volunteers to visit the YOT. The aim of these visits was to:

1. Show the volunteers around their facilities
2. Provide an opportunity for volunteers to talk to YOT workers about their job roles
3. Provide an opportunity for YOT workers to speak to volunteers and begin to form relationships with them.

The visits were very popular, and have started to breakdown some of the barriers around using volunteers to work with young offenders. It is felt that this has contributed to the increase in referrals over the past 6 months.

3.3 Three-Way Meetings

Over the year, the SOVA Support Officer (SO) has attended all initial 3-way meetings with the young person and their support worker. The SOVA Support Officer has attended these and remained flexible in terms of time and location.

Some visits have taken place at the base for the YOTs/YIPs. Some have entailed the SO accompanying the support worker on a home visit, whilst others have seen the SO visiting the young people at school. Due to daytime commitments for some of the young people such as school, evening meetings have also been necessary.

In most cases, these initial 3-way meetings have proved to be successful, ensuring good attendance of the young person. It allows a chance for SOVA to get to know the young person and find out more information about them which may not be written down on a referral form. More information can be gained from the support worker and in some cases from teachers/mentors within the young person's school or the parents/guardians.

This has increased the workload for the Support Officer as he now attends two separate introductory meetings with the young person, firstly with their YOT/YIP support worker, and then with their mentor. Furthermore, in order to work effectively for the benefit of the young people, the SO has also attended multi-agency meetings with the YOT/YIP and social services where further information/behavioral history is



obtained and the SO has explained the intended aims of the mentor programme. In some cases, SOVA has been seen as a key player in the intervention programmes for the young people.

In most cases this has worked well, however in order to ease the pressure and workload of the SOVA Support Officer as the main point of contact, an increase in communication between the YOT Case Worker and SOVA mentor would be beneficial. It would allow the SOVA mentors to work more closely with YOT Case Managers and avoid duplication of work completed, to the greater benefit of the young person.

So moving forward into the new contractual year, it has been agreed that in all cases there will be:

1. An initial meeting between YOS case manager and SOVA support officer to discuss the young person in detail
2. Followed, on the same day, by a 3-way meeting with the YOS case manager, SOVA support officer and young person. The support officer will then try to find a suitable mentor
3. A 4-way meeting will then take place between the YOS case manager, SOVA support officer, young person and their SOVA mentor.

Some caseworkers see the use of SOVA mentors as an exit strategy for the young person when they have finished with the YOS. In these cases they feel no need to be involved in or affiliated to any work or progress that the young person makes with SOVA. Whilst in the past SOVA has been willing to take such referrals, for greater clarity and understanding of what we can achieve collaboratively, the new referral process will be implemented, to ensure greater sharing of information between the YOT, SOVA and the mentor.

3.4 Younger Age Range

During the end of quarter 3 and throughout quarter 4, SOVA made a concerted effort to reach out to the YIPs and promote the service in a bid to generate more referrals. Whilst this has been a positive step for SOVA, it has also created some issues that have needed to be addressed.

The young people referred from the YIPS can be as young as 8 years old, and although they do not always have an offending history, many have anti-social behavior problems, displaying other specific needs such as



health issues (ADHD, dyslexia, autism, etc), and issues arising from their family environment. Subsequently a far greater emphasis on child protection is required.

There have been some cases where it has been felt a mentor to assist in positive and constructive activities would not be suitable, where stronger means of support and intervention are required. SOVA has refused to accept cases where it feels it would simply be used as a means of childcare and not as a means of support through mentoring.

However, SOVA has attempted to accommodate for this younger client group by providing further training to its volunteers in health disabilities and child safeguarding.

There have been some difficulties in getting the right match of mentor and mentee, as it is felt a more confident volunteer is needed to mentor a younger person due to the issues involved. In some cases, volunteers have specifically asked if they could work with a young person over the age of 14 years, which again reduces the options of volunteers available to mentor a younger person.

With the younger client group, the issue of transport has arisen. There has been a need for volunteers to pick up and drop off the young people from their house. For most of our volunteers, public transport is not a practical option, especially during the cold and dark afternoons of the winter months. Therefore SOVA has had to inform volunteers of its policy for using their cars for business use, and also pay for the insurance in doing so. This cost was not envisaged at the beginning of the project.

3.5 Enhanced CRB Checks

The length of time that it takes to receive CRB clearance has been an issue. In some cases it has taken more than 3 months, which has delayed the time it takes for trained volunteers to become active. In turn, this has made it more difficult to provide suitable mentor matches, and has taken longer than anticipated to match some young people with suitable volunteers.

In order to reduce the delay on CRB clearances and in turn the drop out rate of volunteers, SOVA have tried to assist the volunteer in tracking and chasing a response to their application after six weeks of it being submitted.



3.6 Mentor Matches

Achieving the correct mentor match is a highly important factor for the success of a mentoring relationship and ultimately the outcomes achieved with the young person. Most cases have seen a male to male, and female to female relationship. A further difficulty has been a shortage of male mentors, where more than 50% the applicants that apply to volunteer with SOVA are female. Most of the referrals received from the YOS have been young males, where male mentors have been required. This has added to length of time it may take to suitably match a young person with a mentor.

Over the coming months, SOVA will actively try to recruit more male volunteers for the project though greater advertising of the service.

4 Volunteers

4.1 Work and Processes

- Brief description of process of recruitment, selection and training. Most volunteer applications have come through via the SOVA website. The project is also advertised in the five Youth Offending Teams, local universities and BVSC.

Prospective volunteers are invited to interview, following which a decision is made to accept or decline the applicant onto the 3-day OCN training course.

Following training, applicants are reinterviewed to ensure their continued commitment and address any issues / questions they or SOVA may have. It is at this stage a final decision is made and the applicant is either accepted or declined to become a SOVA mentor.

- Brief description of tasks volunteers perform

The volunteer training programme, Core Skills & Mentoring Skills is accredited to the National Open College Network (NOCN) at Level 2. SOVA has been the internal verifying body and received external moderation from OCN. The training course combines core elements under Skills for Volunteers, with specific activity related modules.

Volunteers have then mentored a young person on a one-to-one basis to provide support in various issues that were highlighted by their YOT case manager and the young person themselves.

SOVA mentors have assisted the young people in activities that they might be interested in. Most of the referrals have been young males who



have expressed interests in attending gyms and boxing clubs, and these activities have allowed them to take a keen interest in their fitness as well as release any built up frustration and aggression that they may have.

Attendance at the activities or general weekly meetings with their mentors have resulted in an improvement in the lifestyle of many of the young people, where they have something constructive to do on a regular basis and focus their time and energy on.

Various mentoring relationships have seen an improvement in life-skills such as time-keeping and organisation. In some instances, mentor support has seen improvements in the physical appearance of the young people as well as their confidence and general happiness. One-to-one support from an adult has also seen the young people become better at how they interact with adults, sharing respect with their mentor.

SOVA mentors have assisted some young people in accessing information regarding their future. This has included college and university courses, and helping them identify any career options that they may have. Cases have seen mentors contacting educational institutions on their behalf and also accompanying the young people to the institutions to enquire at open days.

All project volunteers receive a minimum of 2 days Core Training, followed by 1 day training on working specifically with young offenders.

4.2 Statistics and Performance

Volunteers:

Number of Enquiries	95
Number Interviewed	65
Number Trained	52
Number accepted/accredited	50

The following table is statistical reporting on the 50 volunteers that were accepted and trained. Some volunteers chose not to disclose such information and therefore the figures do not necessarily sum to 50.

GENDER	Male	19	Female	31				
Age	Under 18	0	18-25	18	26-35	21	36-45	8
	46-55	2	56-65	1	66 or over	0		
Religion	Baha'i	0	Buddist	0	Christian	18	Hindu	1
	Jewish	0	Muslim	5	Other	0		
Sexual Orientation	Hetero - sexual	41	Gay	0	Lesbian	0	Bisexual	0
Employment Status	Full-time employed	4						
	Part-time employed	3						
	Registered Unemployed	15						
	Carer	0						
	Retired	1						
	Self-employed	2						
	Student	14						
Criminal Convictions	Yes	23	No	27				
Ethnic Origin	White	14	Mixed	8	Asian or Asian British	7	Black or Black British	9
	Chinese	1						
Disability	Yes	2	No	46				



Most volunteers applied to the project in order to gain experience for their career ambitions. Most students are studying related degrees and are being proactive by gaining experience to accompany their studies. Other volunteers have expressed that they want a career change and are using voluntary work as an entrance into a career in social and youth work. On the whole, most volunteers have said that they would like to give something back to the community where there is a strong need to support young people today.

Over the year there have been 5 training courses for the volunteers, with one of the sessions running on three consecutive Saturdays for those volunteers that have commitments during the working week.

Volunteers have given a total of approximately 2,660 hours of service over the year including any training.

4.3 Case Studies

Volunteer Case Study – LE

I initially applied to become a volunteer with SOVA whilst completing my undergraduate degree in Psychology. I thought engaging in some voluntary work would be a great way to gain work experience and build myself a pathway into employment. The first stage was to complete my OCN Level 2 in Core Skills and Mentoring. Once my CRB was returned I was matched by Craig Hamilton as a Mentor with a young person referred by Birmingham Youth Offending Service. I developed a good relationship with the young person and found that I really enjoyed the type of work we were doing together - examples of this work include CV skills, researching colleges and setting SMART goals.

Once this relationship came to an end I was involved in several other mentoring partnerships. As a result of this I was offered some sessional work as a Volunteer Support Officer with SOVA on the Buddy project. This involved me working in partnership with Craig Hamilton, who I had previously worked with as a volunteer. I began by attending three-way meetings between different agencies and allocating referrals of young people by working with the SOVA volunteer database. I gained a lot from this work and it was interesting to see the operations of SOVA from the perspective of an employee as well as a volunteer. Whilst working for SOVA I was notified of some job vacancies available on a project that was running in Partnership with Manchester College, funded by the National Offender Management Service. As a progression from a sessional worker I decided to apply for the position of a prison based Case Manager. Thankfully I was successful and I am now working as a Case Manager based in HMP Brinsford and HMP Featherstone.



5 Beneficiaries

5.1 Work and Processes

SOVA received referrals from the five Youth Offending Teams across Birmingham and the various Youth Inclusion Programmes. YOT case managers have sent referrals to SOVA by fax, which have composed of a SOVA referral form specific to the project and a PAYP referral form as evidence the funding body for the purpose of payment.

SOVA has then contacted the YOT Case Manager and arranged a suitable time to visit them and the young person at an initial 3-way meeting. These have taken place at either the YOT office, the home of the young person or at their school.

SOVA has found many of the young people have nothing to do in their spare time resulting in boredom. Those young people that are NEET often have nothing to do during the day and therefore don't get out of bed at a decent time, frequently staying out late at night. SOVA have found that when initially meeting the young people, they often do not have any personal interests or ideas of activities that they would like to do. Their confidence and self esteem is often very low and they don't feel that they are good at or have a talent in anything.

A strong focus of the mentoring relationships has been to gradually change the lifestyle of the young people, giving them something to 'get out of bed for'. We have discovered that many of the young people that are not in education tend to sleep for most of the day with little to do, and are therefore awake all night. Helping them to access leisure activities has given them something to do during the daylight hours, resulting in better sleep patterns and an overall healthier way of living.

Their confidence and self esteem is often very low and they don't feel that they are good at or have a talent in anything. A high proportion of the young people referred have known disability issues such as Autism, Dyslexia and the most common issue, ADHD.

Generally, those young people currently in education do not enjoy school and have a lack of motivation to attend. SOVA mentors have tried to work with young people to find out what aspects of school that they do enjoy and look at the reasons why they do not enjoy school overall. The mentors have tried to motivate them to attend school and stress the importance of doing so. In some cases, contact with teachers and school



mentors has been made and one instance has seen a mentor being given consent to view previous school reports and a log book of behaviour.

Regular contact with SOVA's mentors has seen an increase in the safety of the young people across the activities that have taken place. The mentors have attended activities, appointments, etc. with the young people, and in some cases travelled with them from their place of abode to the activity. Through empowerment, confidence building and general guidance from SOVA mentors, some of the young people have seen improvements in relations with their family and are spending more time at home, living in safer environments.

With the support of SOVA mentors, young people have managed to engage in various positive activities which they themselves have shown a strong interest in. These activities have included regular sessions at the gym, boxing, swimming, fishing and football training. As a result, the participants have been provided with some regularity in their daily lifestyle, with the encouragement from the mentors to maintain this healthier way of living. Activities such as the gym and boxing have helped some of the young people become more focused and release any aggression and frustration that they may have.

There has also been requests for more expensive activities such as go-karting, which whilst we could not sustain through the funding as an ongoing pursuit, it has been used as an incentive for a young person's attendance at appointments with their Youth Offending Team or meetings with their mentor.

5.2 Statistics and Performance

The following table shows the number of referrals SOVA received and the Youth Offending Team or Youth inclusion Programmes that they came from. Some referrals were later withdrawn and some young people chose not to engage in the service.

Referrals (April '09 – March '10):	Referrals	Matched
North YOT	10	4
East YOT	11	7
South YOT	4	2
West YOT	11	4
Central YOT	11	7
Kingstanding YISP	8	3
Sparkbrook YISP	9	4
Washwood Heath YISP	24	10
YOS Kingsmere	3	2
TOTAL	91	44

5.3 Case Studies

Case Study: Activity - Birmingham Wheels

On Saturday 23rd January 2010, a group of young people and their mentors attended an off-road buggy session at Birmingham Wheels, Saltley.

The group was encouraged to work a team to prepare two vehicles for later use. The team had simple mechanical tasks to complete involving identifying and labelling parts, problem solving and team working; once this was achieved safety briefings were delivered followed by the opportunity to actually use their buggies. The buggies were used on a purpose built off-road circuit.

During this last phase of the session the young people were encouraged to continue work together to ensure that their colleagues follow correct safety procedures, enjoyed equal turns and ensure their buggy performed correctly. If a buggy malfunctioned it had to be fixed, and it was up to the team to decide how best to achieve this.

The young people were encouraged to enjoy the challenges presented. Upon completion of the activity certificates were awarded.



Case Study: Mentoring – Young Person: DJ

Craig Hamilton met DJ at his sixth-form school, along with his case manager in November 2009. Whilst DJ already seemed to be a motivated individual, the YOT case manager was concerned that he was motivated for the wrong reasons, and without some regular support, DJ could easily find himself in trouble again. It was felt that a male mentor would be suitable for DJ to give him some advice on a regular basis and keep him focused on the right things. DJ lived alone in supported accommodation as it was difficult for him to live at home due to some hostility within his family. Craig matched DJ up with a suitable mentor the following week, who supported him in decorating his flat and remaining positive in order to concentrate on his studies.

With the assistance of Craig, DJ applied for a grant to take part in a 3-week residential in the summer 2010. The residential is intended to improve DJ's character, self-esteem and confidence, whilst also allowing him to meet others of different and similar backgrounds. It would take him out of his day-to-day city life and show him a part of the world (Lake District) that he hasn't had the opportunity to see. DJ was given guidance on writing a supporting statement in order to sell himself and show that he was the right kind of individual for a place on the residential with a grant. Places were very limited, however DJ was successful in gaining a place on the residential and cannot wait to participate.

In the meantime he remains positive at school, recently receiving results for his AS-levels. He intends to go to University and seeks knowledge and guidance from his mentor. Craig recently visited DJ at his newly refurbished flat and was happy to see that he was settled and was living in a suitable environment.



6 Project development

Moving forward into the new contractual year, it has been agreed that in all cases there will be:

1. An initial meeting between YOS case manager and SOVA support officer to discuss the young person in detail
2. Followed, on the same day, by a 3-way meeting with the YOS case manager, SOVA support officer and young person. The support officer will then try to find a suitable mentor
3. A 4-way meeting will then take place between the YOS case manager, SOVA support officer, young person and their SOVA mentor.

Some caseworkers see the use of SOVA mentors as an exit strategy for the young person when they have finished with the YOS. In these cases they feel no need to be involved in or affiliated to any work or progress that the young person makes with SOVA. Whilst in the past SOVA has been willing to take such referrals, for greater clarity and understanding of what we can achieve collaboratively, the new referral process will be implemented, to ensure greater sharing of information between the YOT, SOVA and the mentor.

7 Objectives and targets for next year

The project has received further funding until March 2010. SOVA has a target of 40 young people to mentor and support over this period. Referrals will now only come from the five Youth Offending Teams and not the Youth Inclusion Programmes allowing for a stronger focus on the ETE outcomes of the service.

Strong communication links with the Youth Offending Service must be maintained. There is also a need to recruit more volunteers, with a particular focus on attracting Male mentors.



8 Conclusion

The year has been a challenging time with much information being learnt over the course of the year. This has consequently meant that strategies for working more effectively with the Youth offending Service have only been put in place towards the latter part of the year.

Initially, referrals were low but SOVA has taken a proactive stance in order to generate greater referral numbers during the latter part of the year. Through working with Volunteer mentors, the Buddy project has successfully managed to engage with some young people, motivating them into constructive activities and challenge their mind-sets. SOVA have received ongoing funding to deliver Buddy in to the next financial year.