



BRIDGE COLLECTIVE CIC
ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2015 TO MARCH 2016

Mission Statement

To be a company whose members are creating: A democratic community where people who have experiences, beliefs, and feelings that have sometimes been labelled as mental illness are welcomed and can talk about these experiences freely, safely and without judgement; a place to participate in friendship, support, learning, teaching, discussion, being active, and making a valid contribution both within the collective and the wider community.

How the Bridge Collective Works

The Bridge Collective has a unique organizational structure. It is a flat organization set up as a Community Interest Company with members; with each member having shared control and all staff are paid the same hourly wage.

The Bridge Collective aims for everyone involved to have the same power to make decisions as everyone else. Decisions about the running of the collective are made at monthly directors' meetings open to all. Directors are appointed by vote by all members at the AGM. There is no executive director, chair or treasurer. The chair or co-chairs of the community meetings are chosen monthly by people volunteering to chair or co-chair.

There is no co-ordinator/manager of the organization: management is by peer/collective management.

The Bridge Collective has a small part time staff team and is run largely on good will and volunteer input.

The Bridge Collective achieves a lot of peer support on a small budget. Keyholders (volunteers and part time staff) open and lock up the building for a group/activity and are the responsible person whilst the activity is taking place.

There is no assessment/referral process to take part in Bridge activities: people decide for themselves if activities are something they would benefit from. People at the collective may have multiple roles including: director, employee, sessional worker, self employed, facilitator, keyholder, trainer, volunteer, member, attendee, visitor; and people take part as both providers and beneficiaries of the collective's activities. The nature of the

Bridge Collective is that it is about participating in something together. In essence that participation is equal for everyone regardless of 'roles' they have.

How this report was produced

This Annual Report has been compiled and edited from the following sources:

Feedback received during the year from people who have interacted with the Bridge;

Content generated collectively by those present at our AGM;

Reports submitted by group and project facilitators.

Activities at the Bridge

The following regular groups and activities took place during the year. Brief reports from each group are in the appendix.

Bridge Builders – see “Consultation and Communication within the Bridge” section.

“Choices in Approaches” activities:

Crisis House Group

Transformation Triangle

Open Dialogue Devon

Community Meetings

Discussion and dialogue

Experts by Experience

Greenwood Project

Newsletter

Open Day/Afternoon. Thursdays, reduced from 10-4 to 12-4 in autumn 2015 because of recognition that facilitation capacity was overstretched.

Open Minds

Rainbowbridge

Sing-a-longs

Underground Sound

Wholefoods project

Women's Art Group

Here is a selection of other events and activities that took place during the year.

Bridget, a rhino sculpture, provided to the Bridge by the Great Big Rhino project. To be painted by people at the Bridge during 2016 and go on public display. The project aims to highlight and raise funds for rhino conservation in a way that involves local businesses and showcases the wealth of artistic talent in the area.

James Lee Devon Partnership Trust Pharmacist visit, 17th March.

7/5/15 – Theology reading session with Louise Lawrence from Exeter University – research on disability studies – biblical stories and mental health representation.

Diversity Training – 9 people attended training facilitated by Tat Ruck from Devon Grapevine and East Devon Citizens Advice Bureau. 2nd June 2015.

First Aid Training: 9 people completed Emergency First Aid at course with Ian Hutchins - Moorland First Aid.

Safeguarding training: 10 people completed in house Safeguarding training at the Bridge including training materials from Devon County Council for Safeguarding Adults – Level 1.

Facilitator training session in how to input groups and activities onto the website calendar.

We made a 3 minute video describing the work of the Bridge Collective and published it on vimeo and shared it at St Stephen's Church at our World Mental Health Day event, and on the home page of our website.

People at the Bridge

Members:

Members on 31 march 2015: 21

Members on 31 march 2016: 15

Attendees: Estimated number of people involved in the Bridge groups and activities in a year: between 150 and 250

Keyholders: Rachel, Lena, Ashley, Ben, Fleur, Alex, David, Andrew, Nicola, Sarah, Bev

Paid employee hours: Total of employee hours = 72 hours/week, which is the equivalent of just under 2 full-time workers (76 divided by 37.5 = 1.92)

Voluntary hours:

People input unpaid time into making the Bridge Collective happen both through informally getting involved and through named voluntary roles.

We are developing a method of measuring in full the voluntary input into the Bridge. Here are some estimates of parts of that input to give an illustration of the amount of voluntary time that goes into running the Bridge.

Volunteer group facilitators: Rainbowbridge, Open Minds, were facilitated by 4 volunteers. Each met for two hours monthly, amounting to 96 hours face to face facilitation, with additional planning, communication and supervision time. Volunteer input into Experts by Experience training is estimated at 220 hours.

Voluntary facilitation of the Discussion Group and Choices in Approaches project was estimated at 286 hours. There was additional voluntary input by others attending planning meetings and helping at events. Directors: two directors are also paid employees and part of their attendance at community meetings was in this capacity. The remaining two directors put in an estimated 40 hours total attendance at meetings. In the next financial year we aim to have an estimate of the hours spent fulfilling other director duties. Other formal and informal voluntary activity that we aim to develop a way of measuring includes cleaning and tidying, washing towels, driving, chopping firewood, and much more.

Volunteers (named roles):

Company secretary: Andrew

Directors: at 1/4/15, Mark Burnett, Sarah Trickett, Sarah Everson, Andrew Barkla, Mike Rabjohns

Mike Rabjohns resigned 14/5/15

Directors at 31/3/16, Mark Burnett, Sarah Trickett, Sarah Everson, Andrew Barkla

Crisis House meeting: facilitator Nicola

Discussion group: facilitator Nicola

Health and safety named person: Andrew and Nicola

Open Dialogue Devon: facilitator Nicola

Open Minds: peer support group facilitators: Ben and Ashley

Rainbow Bridge peer support group facilitators: Lena and Rachel

Sing-alongs facilitators: Rachel and Bev

Transformation Triangle working party: facilitator Nicola

Wholefoods Project facilitator: Mike

People on placement: Gemma from Plymouth University Trainee Clinical Psychologist

Experts by Experience Training Team:

Due to '*service user- involvement work*' being a special category of work members of the Experts by Experience training team take part in one of the following ways: paid employee, self-employed and voluntary capacity.

People taking part this year include:

Volunteers:

Ashley, Ben Durkin, Beverly Jones, Mark T.

0 hrs Bridge Collective employee contracts: Ali, Chris T, Sarah T, Katharina, David T, Nicola.

Session facilitators: Ashley, Ben, Sarah T., Sarah E., Nicola

Employees with regular hours per week.

Project facilitator: Women's Art Group Fleur (2hrs)

Project facilitator: Underground Sound Alex (6hrs), David (6hrs)

Project facilitator: Greenwood Project Bev (9hrs), Andrew (9hrs)

Community Development Workers Sarah (18hrs), Bev (12hrs) and Nicola (11hrs) including facilitating the Thursday Open Day, and responsibilities as below

Finance officer and website editor: Sarah

Newsletter editor: Bev

Experts by Experience project facilitator: Nicola

Safeguarding officer & named Health and safety person: Nicola

This has been a challenging year for the community development team which has involved flexibility, adaptability, tenacity, creativity, sharing roles and being mutually supportive. Thank you to the team and collective support.

Help we've received

Financial support we've received.

Thanks to Sarah T craft making and selling at Working with Wonford day - raising £77

Thanks to Devon County Council for our annual grant of £50,951.82

Thanks to all who gave donations for: room use; lunches, teas and coffees; speaker events; other individual donations.

People and organisations who have helped the Bridge in its work.

Thanks to Mark - donation of tripod for photography.

Gemma Budge, Trainee clinical psychologist - work on our survey Dec 2015 - lots of positive feedback.

Thanks to Devon County Council – Safeguarding Adults training team providing safeguarding materials.

Thanks to Mike and Fleur for donations of vegetables from their allotments.

Thank you to Helen - volunteer driving and carrying kit for Escot Camp.

“Great bike parking loops installed, hurray” – thanks to our landlord Graham.

Thank you to Shaun Dérioz for filming speaker events.

Thank you to speakers who generously gave their time for This Is Madness events.

Outcomes and achievements for the company

New negotiation of great funding relationship with D.C.C.

Bridge received Marsh Award for Mental Health Peer Support – Marsh Trust working with Mind and other Peerfest partners to deliver the award.

Success!! Self Heal Association funding for Art at the Bridge for the next 3 years.

Outcomes and achievements for people within the Bridge

“Reading Ashley’s piece of writing in May-July newsletter was a gateway to me feeling inspired to pick up a book and read again. Haven’t been able to for years. Am now half way through book 2 within 2 weeks of reading amazing piece.”

“Becoming a director; feeling a sense of contribution.”

“Attendance at two Open Dialogue conferences.”

Challenges we have faced

Money, Money & more Money.

Keeping together as teams despite time & other pressures.

Our Stakeholders and how we communicate and consult with them.

Our stakeholders include: Members, participants, employees, volunteers, funders, commissioners of training, trainees, people on placement, workers in local services.

Some information on how we have consulted and communicated with them can be found in the sections titled **Consultation and communication within the Bridge** and **Networking and communication outside the Bridge** below.

In addition in December 2015 we circulated a Survey Monkey online questionnaire to stakeholders in which 65 people responded to. The responses were analysed by Gemma Budge, a trainee clinical psychologist who is on placement with us. Her report on this study is included as an appendix to this report.

Consultation and communication within the Bridge

Currently the following is in place at the Bridge:

Bi-monthly group supervision for facilitators (facilitated by a guest facilitator, Mary Booker)

Bi-monthly Open Reflection sessions (facilitated by a guest facilitator, Michelle Virgo) for the Bridge Community to review, reflect and plan. We are moving towards these being quarterly within a broader quarterly cycle of work within the Bridge.

Monthly Community Meetings – these are the overall decision-making meetings at the Bridge and all participants in the collective are invited to contribute.

Monthly Community Development Team meetings for the Community Development Workers to work out the practicalities of working together as a part-time team, sharing of workload, mutual support and information.

Bridge Builders - Group meeting to discuss + plan fundraising ideas for the Bridge. A voluntary group that was formed in September this year.

Networking and communication outside the Bridge

Our biggest funders, Devon Partnership Trust/Devon County Council joined us at our October and December Community Meetings to discuss our future relationship with them, leading to continued funding at the same level.

Rainbow Bridge, Attending Exeter Pride!!

Margaret has talked with GP Practice and patients participation group about Bridge and non-medical opportunities & resources.

Ashley + Nicola gave a presentation at the 'Caring in Mind and Spirit' Conference at Palace Gate, November 2015.

Rainbow Bridge mentioned in the Ripple effect 'making waves' newsletters. (Autumn, winter & Spring).

Open Minds did a one-off workshop at Langdon Hospital Discovery Centre, Autumn 2015.

Ashley, Ben, Nicola + Sarah T attended Peer Support Awareness Training by the Institute of Mental Health, held at Plymouth Mind in January 2016.

Links with Parish of Central Exeter via Sheila- supporting Transformation Triangle meetings and events.

Links with Margaret Turner from Soteria Network supporting Choices in Approaches meetings and events.

Sample feedback

Feedback from Farhad Dalal talk on 1st July including: *'Great talk and discussion. I learnt a few things and feel mentally nourished'. 'All in all well worth coming too. :-) Happy customer'*.

Open and transparent decision making - monthly community meeting minutes written on flipchart in the meeting, photographed and up on our website on the day :-)

"On my first visit to the Bridge today.... The people were really friendly and welcoming and there was a lovely inclusive atmosphere. I will definitely be recommending the Bridge Collective to people and I'm looking forward to coming back here in the future."

"Fantastic Exeter Pride Rainbowbridge Artwork May 2015."

"Beautiful AGM spread – bring and share lunch."

"We are kind, warm, visionary, helpful, adventurous, creative and 'wicked'."

"Do more to do with wildlife & nature & RSPB."

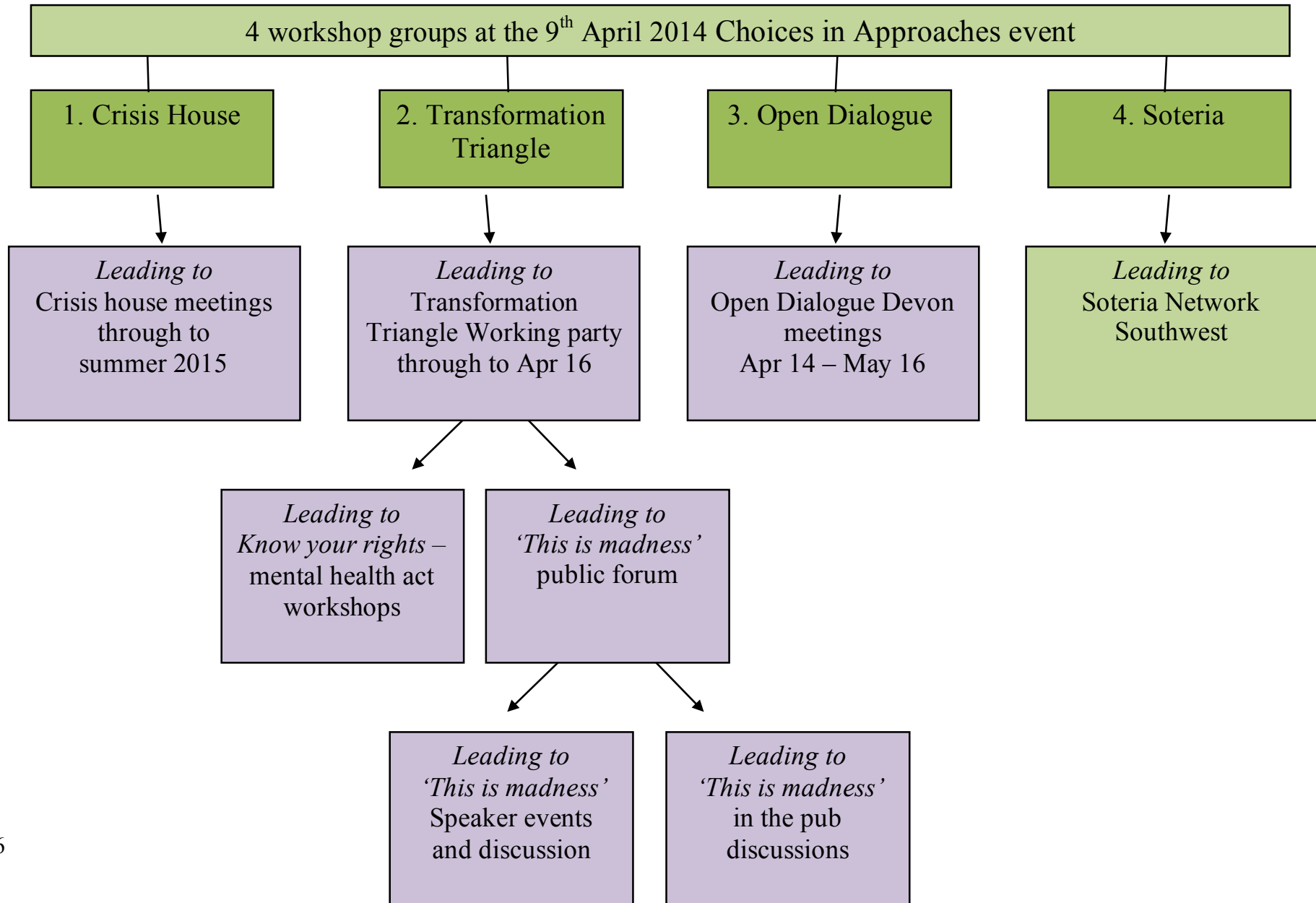
"Greenwood: consider extra long weekend away occasionally."

"Obtain a dedicated volunteer team with specific tasks to call on when necessary and in general. This is already partly in place and happening."

Appendix 1

Reports from groups.

**Activities growing out of the 2014 Choices in Approaches event:
Bridge Collective collaboration with the Soteria Network**



Crisis House

The Crisis House group met twice during the year, in April and June. We decided not to continue meeting for the time being. Since we started meeting after the Choices in Approaches event in 2014 the group had achieved:

Recognising that the idea of a Crisis House speaks to a lot of people;

Some visions of what people would like a crisis house to look like;

Information about and visits to existing crisis houses and related projects;

Ideas about steps that could make a crisis house achievable.

Records of this work are at the Bridge Collective.

We decided at this point there was not a team with capacity to take practical steps towards setting up a Crisis House project and that we would not set further dates for meetings, but have kept open the the possibility of returning to this in future – one idea being to hold a public community event that would air the idea more widely.

The Transformation Triangle group

The Transformation Triangle working party met seven times:

9 Apr 2015, 21 May, 16 July, 3 Sept, 22 Oct, 10 Dec, 3 Mar 2016

This led to:

3 *This is Madness* public forum speaker events – (average attendance 63 people)

25 Mar 2015 This is Madness talk - Lucy Johnstone - *'Alternatives to diagnosis' - such as formulation, narratives and personal stories*

1st Jul 2015 This is Madness talk - Farhad Dalal - *'The CBT Tsumani*

18 Apr 2016 This is Madness talk - Phil Thomas - *Austerity, government economic policy and the implications for recovery*

- **3 discussion events: *This is Madness in the pub***

An informal gathering and discussion over food and drink – (average attendance 13 people)

7 July 2015 – ‘*Stigma and mental health*’

3 Nov 2015 - ‘*Evidence, outcomes, accountability, what matters to me*’

22 Feb 2016 – ‘*Community strengths*’

- **An out and about open morning –** (attended by approximately 50 people)

World mental health day event at St Stephens Church, with art, print making, stop-motion filming, cake, crafts, books, poems, information tables about local, national and international projects, film showing, photography, a rhino, drawing with charcoal, a tree with leaf messages about: ‘*What keeps me going? What makes my heart sing?*’

- **Some comments from people taking part in these events and in making these events happen**

We've met new people

People participating have suggested topics for the next discussion

I've had some really good discussions this morning

Great talk and discussion. I learnt a few things and feel mentally nourished

I enjoyed making prints - relaxing

Meeting people through different venues in ordinary social environments

Events well attended by a mix of people from different backgrounds

Work across organizations, sharing resources, energy following energy

Cross-over between local community, user movements, professionals, community organizations

It's so good doing things together

Inspiration dominoes. We've been inspired by people active in their community in the UK and around the world. People in the UK and around the world have heard about what we're doing and been inspired to put on local public forum events.

Open Dialogue Devon Year April 2015 – March 2016

Open Dialogue Devon is a group of people working together to promote the use of Open Dialogue and dialogical approaches in Devon.

From April 2014 people with experience of using services, working in services, friends and family members, community workers and people interested began getting together to share resources, ideas, hopes, learning and experience of dialogical approaches.

In the last year we've had 7 meetings: 28th May, 30th July, 2015, 20th August, 1st October, 5th November, 7th January, 14th March 2016

We've shared short film clips about Open Dialogue and dialogical approaches with time for discussion, listening and being with each other and the topic. Members of the meeting have shared experience of Open Dialogue seminars and reading; ideas to move forward and practical steps taken in other parts of the UK; personal responses to working with families/networks in an open and democratic way; personal understanding and experience of embodiment and non-verbal communication when working in a democratic way; personal experience and meaning of space for polyphony, many voices and viewpoints.

Members attended two Open Dialogue conferences this year:

15th May 2015 Open Dialogue Experience in the UK - conference in Liverpool hosted by ISPS-UK (The International society for Psychological and Social Approaches to Psychosis)

2nd Feb 2016 Towards openness and democracy in mental health services. Open Dialogue and related approaches in the UK and internationally. Conference hosted by Open Dialogue UK

Members have raised awareness of Open Dialogue, making links with people interested, local service user and community projects and DPT (Devon Partnership NHS Trust). Paul Pilkington - DPT Listening into action Lead – came to speak to Open Dialogue Devon in the summer of 2015 about ideas and interest so far in creating an Open Dialogue team in the NHS service in Devon.

DPT staff attended Open Dialogue Devon meetings and members of Open Dialogue Devon were invited to attend the DPT Open Dialogue Steering group, leading to a Bridge Collective representative on the DPT Open Dialogue Steering Group. Members have so far attended two DPT Open Dialogue interest groups.

We have met psychologists, nurses, social workers, therapists working within the NHS and outside, community

group members, students, managers, GPs, psychiatrists, people supporting friends and family members, people interested in general and people wanting to access an Open Dialogue approach locally.

For more information about Open Dialogue in the UK:

NHS Open Dialogue Project: <http://www.nelft.nhs.uk/aboutus-initiatives-opendialogue>,

Open Dialogue UK: <http://opendialogueapproach.co.uk/>

Link to a film about Open Dialogue by Daniel Mackler

<http://wildtruth.net/dvd/opendialogue/>

Discussion and dialogue

4 discussion groups at the Bridge Collective in year Apr 15 - Mar 17

Using Open Spaces for Dialogue and Enquiry format (average attendance 8 people)

Apr 2015 – To label or not to label

Jun 2015 - Government

Jul 2015 - 'Freedom'

Aug 2015 - 'Money and financial freedom'

3 out and about discussions using Open Spaces for Dialogue and Enquiry format in year Apr 15 - Mar 16

'This is madness' in the pub, collaboration with the Sotertia Network Southwest and local health, social and community workers/community organizations.

An informal gathering and discussion over food and drink (average attendance 13 people):

Jul 2015 – 'Stigma and mental health'

Nov 2015 - 'Evidence, outcomes, accountability, what matters to me'

Feb 2016 – 'Community strengths'

OSDE principles offered for the space:

1. Everyone brings to the space valid knowledge from their own background
2. All knowledge is partial and incomplete
3. All knowledge can be questioned

'This is madness in the pub' was cited in examples of local involvement practice in Devon in the September 2015 report 'Improving Involvement at Devon Partnership NHS Trust - A Baseline Review from the "Together" Steering Group'

Experts by Experience

People have spoken about: 'what does recovery mean to you?', 'what makes a good psychiatrist?', 'what makes a good psychologist?', communication, peer support, self harm, hearing voices, seeing visions, isolation, belonging, what's helped, 5 ways to wellbeing, meditation, understanding medication side effects, listening to families and friends, open dialogue, metaphors and meaning, sharing art and poetry for Experts by Experience training.

What we've done:

We've delivered: 17 training sessions.

We've spoken to approximately 229 people including trainee doctors, trainee psychologists, student mental health nurses, masters psychology students, people interested in becoming psychiatrists, Exeter University students and staff.

E by E training has brought approximately £5350 into the Bridge this year.

Team work

4 new people have joined Experts by Experience and spoken at training sessions, attended training sessions and planning sessions.

5 people facilitating sessions this year.

1 new person has joined the Bridge Collective as an employee and are set up to receive payment for their Experts by Experience work.

Two people with personal experience of supporting someone/ being a 'carer' joined the team to plan training on the Lived Experience module this year.

Thank you to Sarah E who stepped in to provide facilitation and support for sessions that Nicola was not able to cover at the beginning of the year.

Organizations we've done training with:

Plymouth University School of Nursing

Plymouth University School of Psychology

Exeter University School of Psychology

Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry

Psychiatric Liaison team

Autumn School of Psychiatry

Outcomes and achievements in Experts by Experience:

Seeing better attitudes for professionals/ development

Seeing big shift in viewpoints

Growing together as a team – group dynamics

Collective planning a positive experience

Regular monitoring and checking achieving outcomes
Using a group experience to design and constantly review program development
Facilitation flowing, organic creative process
Real community

Outcomes and achievements for individuals in Experts by Experience:

Learning from others

Building confidence

Getting back into re-visiting re-gaining skills

Sometimes i think doing Experts is the only therapy I get

Doing timeline of experience therapeutic

Things more manageable, Experts by Experience supported that definitely

By explaining experience able to think differently about experience

Way listen to symptoms changes

Not binary is it this or that – more dynamic

Experts by Experience - Challenges and hopes for the future:

Capacity – opportunity to grow community development skills, facilitation skills

Putting together training programmes

Talking about context, putting into context more nuanced example of experience and individual response

Telling personal experience using animation

Some of the feedback from this year:

- I have seen a couple of talks by your team now and they are so unique and valuable, I would love for all medical students (and beyond) to be able to listen to your speakers stories and gain a better insight into living with a mental health condition. The talks completely changed my preconceptions and attitudes.
- Just quick Thank You to you all for recent talks with us. I have really benefited from listening and being able to ask some really quite personal questions to the team. I'm sure, like many students, I have worked in the past , trying my best to support (with regrettably limited knowledge) the good people that I was visiting, but feeling unable to ask too many 'inquisitive' questions purely for my own benefit/learning, although now I think that at the right times they might not have minded at all.
I was particularly intrigued by Bens story and of learning to live a fulfilling life alongside/with the voices. 'Don't feed the monsters' has really struck a chord with me . I'm sure that I wouldn't personally have been able to 'get this' in quite the same way through the usual teaching techniques (great as many of them are) without Bens insight and openness . I went home and hired and watched 'A beautiful mind' as suggested and this further reinforced this. Bit cross that I haven't explored and accepted this before but my views are changing and growing which is I guess, why we're here ! Am now aiming to write my main piece of work around this and value discovering it in my own life too so Thanks.
- Overleaf is a word cloud from feedback from participants after 3 days training with Experts by Experience (Plymouth 2015) in answer to the question: '*choose 3 words to describe the training*'. The biggest words are the ones that came up most frequently.

Greenwood Project April 2015 - March 2016

41 events including 2 three-day camps - slightly less than usual because we ran a reduced programme in the Winter while Bev was off work. However we were able to employ Chris to help facilitate the Wembworthy stay-over in November.

We continued with fortnightly visits to Escot throughout the year except for breaks in August and at Christmas. Escot Park changed management during the year and is now run by Wildwood, a charity who will be bringing new animals to the park. The greenwood centre is still managed by Alan Bruford who has continued to give us a warm welcome and excellent support, and Wildwood have been very helpful in accommodating us with little change in practice to our experience of Escot. Chris continues to support members of East Devon Mind to attend these sessions and is generous in contributing her time and skills to support us. Activities at Escot have included candle making, whittling, squirrel watching, gardening, jewellery making, iron work and the September camp.

We continued to meet in Exmouth to travel to Bicton College who generously allowed us the use of St Barbe-Baker Wood in their grounds to make a camp. However, changes in management and staff at the college meant it was not practical to continue this and our last session there was in October. We are looking for an alternative venue in or near Exmouth, and when we do we would like to find funding to support regular events there. Here are some comments about people's experience of the Bicton sessions:

Peace and chilling and connecting with nature

Finding out about the natural world

Pressing leaves and flowers

Building community

"I find it very therapeutic - relax, enjoy, be yourself"

Something totally different

No pressure

Different world - gets you out of a rut

Gap in provision for outdoor mental health in this area

Other activities were:

Walks at Bovey, Exeter riverside, Sticklepath to Belstone, Topsham ferry, Dartington - led by Gill, Steps Bridge. Exmouth beach art and picnic.

Lockbar Wood.

Visiting the RSPB reserve at Topsham and meeting new Visitor Experience Manager Sammy Fraser.

Weekend stay at Wembworthy Centre.

Thursday greenwood sessions at the Bridge open day including making pegs and stick people, and a focus group to help plan the project.

Thanks to Alan Bruford and Wildwood Escot, to Devon Community Action (Wembworthy), and to the RSPB for the use of their venues and for their hospitality.

The Bridge Collective Newsletter

The Bridge Collective has a quarterly newsletter that is posted and emailed to over 150 groups and individuals.

A copy of the newsletter is also posted on our website.

It is also on sale for £1 in The Bridge and a copy is given for free to people who are coming along for the first time.

Many people have contributed to the newsletter this year by writing articles and poems, by sharing recipes and favourite quotes, and by helping with formatting and compiling.

Thanks to Sarah E who coedited the November to January newsletter while Bev was off.

Open Minds

Open Minds is a peer-support group for people who see, hear or sense things that other people don't (sometimes labelled 'psychosis'). We meet once a month on the second Wednesday of the month.

The group has met every month since we launched in March 2015. Having two facilitators has helped to keep the group going from month to month.

We have welcomed a number of new members over the year. We don't keep a record of membership but estimate that 15 people have accessed the group over the year.

We agreed to change the meeting time (it was 2pm and is now 1pm) to allow for people who might have children to collect from school to attend the group. We also lengthened the session so that it now lasts for an hour and a half, with half an hour for clearing up and closure.

We received an invitation to visit Langdon hospital in Autumn to run a session at the Discovery Centre there. We also received a request from the Cedars to run a Hearing Voices group for DPT. After discussion it was agreed that we did not have the capacity to run a regular group outside of the Bridge, but that we were happy to offer support and advice to emerging groups like this.

The group facilitators received Health and Safety training and Safeguarding training.

Rainbowbridge

Rainbowbridge is our informal group for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and trans people affected by mental health issues. We meet once every month at the Bridge Collective.

On Saturday 16th May 2015 we attended our very first Exeter Pride Event. We had booked a stall in the designated health zone alongside other organisations concerned with the health and wellbeing of our LGBT communities. This was a new venture for our group; a great opportunity to mix with other LGBT groups from Devon, and from all over the South West. It was a fantastic day and I was extremely grateful to our team for help in transporting display boards, setting up, clearing up, and being there throughout the day. We engaged in plenty of conversations with other people, a lot of them with lived experience of mental health issues. We were able to distribute plenty of Bridge information, and pick up leaflets from other groups. It was especially inspiring to see a younger generation embracing their sexuality. They appeared to have a very open attitude towards the fluid and flexible nature of people's sexual orientation and gender identity.

Since this event we have seen our numbers slowly increase over the year. There has been an interest from individuals coming along to the group for themselves, and from family members wishing to attend the group to share their concerns. Our group welcomes anyone to come along for whatever reason – Individuals, carers or anyone with an interest in LGBT concerns and mental health issues.

We have also spent time networking and communicating outside of the Bridge Collective. As well as attending Exeter Pride we continue to have a good relationship with Intercom Trust, and are known to Exeter Community Initiatives (ECI) and to RISE Drug and Alcohol services. We are hopeful that our group will continue to grow and develop over the next year.

Rachel

Sing-a-longs

The sing-a-long sessions at the Bridge Collective began in autumn 2014 as a new idea. Some of us had been talking about our love of music, especially how we enjoy singing along to favourite songs from the past. We decided to have a '1980s' themed sing-a-long to find out whether or not people were interested in this activity. It proved to be so popular that we continued to run with the idea. It wasn't long before the sing-a-longs sessions became an established and regular Bridge Collective activity.

This year we have had a 'Reggae and Ska', and a 'Disney and Family Favourites' sing-a-long. Our sessions try to include different musical decades, themes and genres. We compile a list of songs and people can choose something from the list. Pretend microphones, instruments and any other costume accessories (hats and moustaches!) are always welcome.

The aim of the sing-a-longs has always centred on having fun and using singing and dancing as a way of self expression. No one is ever made to participate, some people simply enjoy sitting and tapping their feet, others join in with a couple of tunes, some people stay for the whole session. Singing and dancing in a group setting has the positive rewards of increasing feel good chemicals in your brain. You can have a physical workout whilst being among other people having a great time too.

The sing-a-long sessions are a good example of how easy it can be to initiate a new activity at the Bridge Collective.

Rachel

Underground Sound

'Heaven'

'Just being around people'

'Bringing people together'

As well as the usual things that go on at Underground Sound; people jamming together, people creating their own music, recording albums and just hanging out, there has been a lot of collaborative work going on.

Some people met up outside of the Bridge and made music together. A band formed from people who met at the project, called 'Cannibal Babies' and they are now gigging.

Ray has learned to produce to a level that he now supports others and produces their work for them.

M- is now producing his own tracks and putting them on icloud.

Alex, M- and R- did some gigs, including one at Poltimore and at the Phoenix.

Wholefood Project

The Wholefood Shop has been ticking over in the time period above, averaging just over £7 worth of sales weekly, despite the fact I can only be in attendance, mostly on a fortnightly basis - due to other commitments.

Over the years the Wholefood Shop makes 2 orders annually - by ensuring we send orders totalling over £200, we can get free delivery, from our suppliers Essentials, in Bristol.

Members can be customers and we also make sure the Greenwood Project/summer camps are well stocked up, not to mention keeping the Bridge well stocked up.

- Mike.

Women's Art Group

Building different techniques in collaging and printing, over weeks, to culminate in collaborative work.
Encouraging team work and confidence, in using new techniques along with working with new participants
Achievements: Using and introducing new techniques in printing on polystyrene to new participants creating confidence and building enthusiasm and self esteem, re pride in work.
participants appreciative of using this method compared to Lino which people in past found difficult to do.

Using tactile and sensory activities such as lavender bags helping to create a relaxing enjoying and satisfying workshp, many people said how relaxed they felt and what a good start to the week it was doing this activity..

Making cards for boy who was bullied at school participants made cards with Matisse cut outs.Encouraged compassion and ability to help others and feel good factor.

Through exploration in different paint techniques with fingers. Participants discovering their own techniques to overcome fear of making mark on canvas by finger painting and or using palette knife.

I introduced paper weaving to help with dexterity and concentration this was successful in the outcome as some participants hadn't wove since they were at school and said felt they jumped a barrier in terms of this goal.

Using wax resist and watercolour,using a tealight with participants who hadn't done art for along time helped them in breaking down fear. Comment was made 'cause it was a candle felt it was like play....

Please see Women's Art Group facebook page for pictures.

Women have enjoyed participating in painting Bridget The Rhino, under the theme of wellbeing. We have mixed different paints and used sponges to apply the paint and stencils for patterns and shapes. Women have found all

these aspects satisfying and enjoyable and have enjoyed seeing Bridget take shape. We have painted lettering to form the word 'Joy', painted lips in love of Bridget, painted different squares to represent the groups at The Bridge to represent the well being women get from this. There have been lots of smiles and laughter:)

Plans for the future

Feedback has been positive with regard to Christine and I working together and with regard to three years funding.

We have planned workshops with different collaging and painting techniques. We are creating a list of materials needed in view of different projects we are working on. Also different ideas re working across The Bridge with regard to integrating art into the whole of the bridge and wider community.

Appendix 2

Report compiled by Gemma Budge, trainee clinical psychologist on placement at the Bridge Collective

Gathering Views of the Bridge Collective: Survey December 2015

Introduction

The Bridge Collective is a democratic community where people who have experiences, beliefs, and feelings that have sometimes been labelled as mental illness are welcomed and can talk about these experiences freely, safely and without judgement; a place to participate in friendship, support, learning, teaching, discussion, being active, and making a valid contribution both within the collective and the wider community.

The Bridge Collective was set up as a community interest company in 2006 by a collection of smaller service user led groups and offers a range of activities, support groups and social events including:

- *The Greenwood Project*: Enables people to engage with woodland crafts and connect with each other in outdoor environments.
- *The Women's Art Group*: A space for women to explore their creative ideas in the relaxed company of other women.
- *Open Minds*: A support group for people who see or hear things that others don't (sometimes labelled psychosis).
- *Rainbow Bridge*: A support group for people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans.

- *Underground Sound*: A drop in project for people aged 18-30 years with a focus on creating music and other arts.
- *Experts by Experience*: A group of people who have used or are using mental health services, using this experience to promote understanding of mental health issues and improve services.
- *Open Day*: A weekly drop in project that allows people to come and visit the Bridge Collective, connect with others there and attend any meetings the collective are holding.
- *Discussion Group*: A monthly group which meets to discuss a variety of perspectives on issues such as freedom, culture, knowledge, conflict and consumerism.
- *Sing-alongs*: A group who meet to sing songs from different decades and themes, to allow people to benefit from the experience of shared singing.
- *Wholefood Project*: A project which enables collective members to purchase wholefoods during open days.

In response to a review of their funding in 2015, the Bridge Collective developed a survey for its members to share their views of the Collective.

Method

A short, open questionnaire was developed to gather people's views of the Bridge Collective and was carried out using Survey Monkey, a survey website. In addition, paper copies of the survey were made available at the Bridge Collective. The electronic version of the survey was circulated via the Bridge Collective's email list. Overall 65 survey responses were received in December 2015; 61 through Survey Monkey, 3 paper copies completed by hand at the Bridge Collective and 1 comment given to a member of the collective.

The following survey questions were developed and agreed by those attending a Bridge Collective Community Meeting in November 2015:

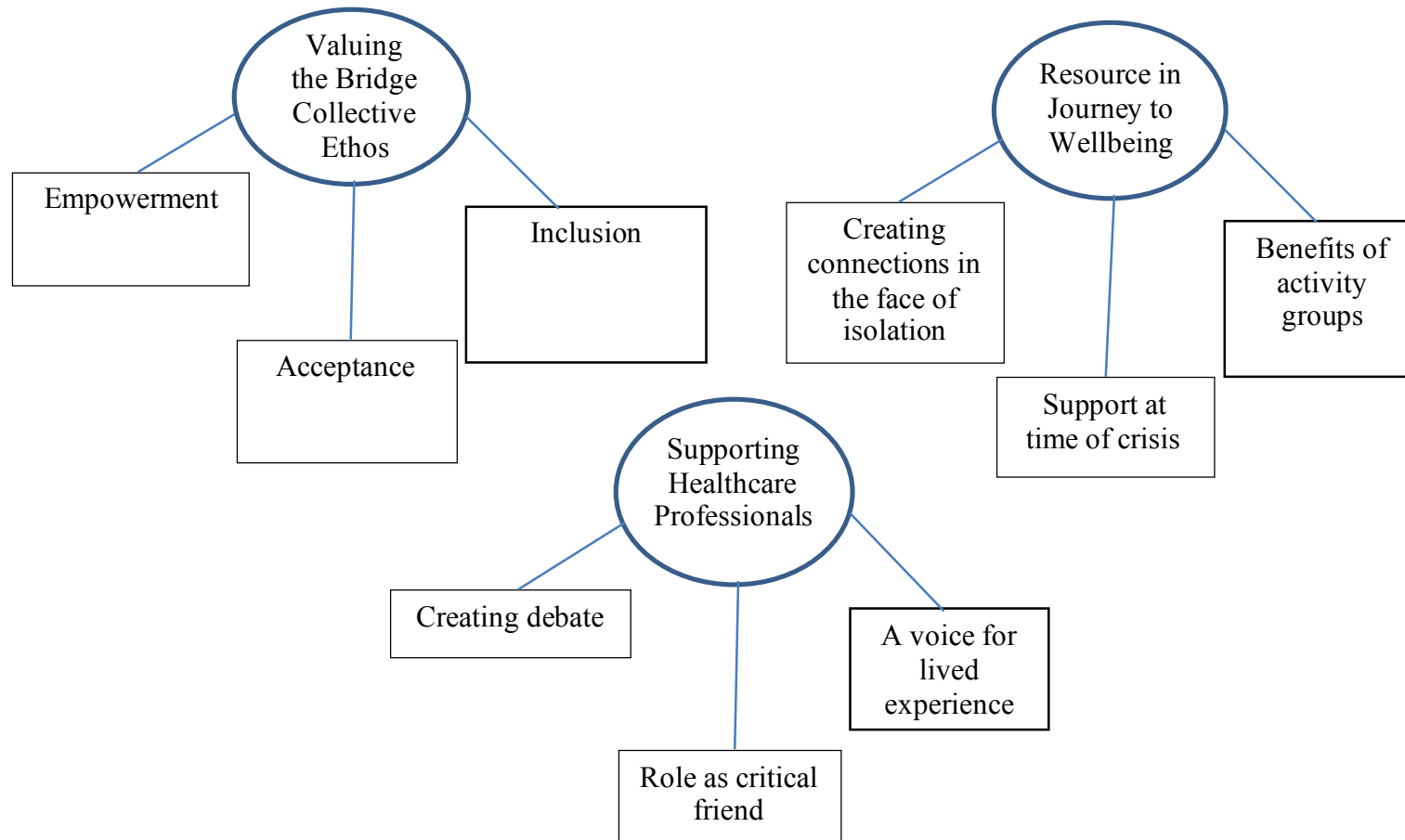
1. Is there something we've done or a way we work that you have appreciated or found helpful? If so, will you tell us?
2. Would you like to say something about yourself and the way in which you've been in contact with the Bridge Collective? (optional)
3. Any other comments? (optional)

A thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was used to analyse survey responses, in order to be able to identify overarching themes across the 65 responses.

In addition to the survey, two people who regularly attend the Bridge Collective agreed to share their story of how they became involved in the Bridge Collective and their experiences of being involved. Analysis of these stories will follow in the next report.

Results

The thematic map below summarises the main themes and subordinate themes resulting from the survey responses collected.



Valuing the Bridge Collective Ethos

This theme described how many respondents commented on the positive nature of the values and atmosphere created at the Bridge Collective. The subtheme “empowerment” describes how respondents described the activities and approaches of the Bridge Collective as empowering people with lived experience of mental health difficulties. For example, one respondent comment on the empowering role of the Experts by Experience group:

“I attended the Bridge to be part of their team of Experts by Experience and found it very empowering.”

This subtheme also captures how respondents described the democratic working style of the Bridge Collective to be positive and empowering:

“The informal, democratic and egalitarian quality of the Bridge is exceptional, but not something that can possibly be captured in statistics!”

The subtheme “acceptance” describes how survey respondents found the Bridge Collective ethos to embody as sense of acceptance of people with lived experience of mental health difficulties. In particular, one respondent described their view on the atmosphere of acceptance created at the Bridge Collective:

“It has the most accepting atmosphere of anywhere I know: warm, interested, sensitive, non-intrusive. It's where I'd think of going first if I needed help or to share an idea.”

The final subtheme under this overarching theme is “inclusion”. This theme communicates the way in which the Bridge Collective works in order to enabled all who attend to feel welcome and valued. One respondent commented on how the Bridge Collective’s inclusive ethos can leave those who attend with an important sense of belonging:

“Every time I have visited I have been impressed by the atmosphere, which is supportive, inclusive, open and welcoming. The very opposite of 'institutional'. People who attend gain a very genuine sense of participation and belonging.”

Another respondent commented on how the inclusive ethos of the Bridge Collective, enabled people to connect, without pressure to do so in a particular way:

“The welcome, inclusive approach where there is no pressure to speak yet a gentle way to encourage participation in whatever is going on.”

Resource in journey to wellbeing

This theme describes how many respondents explained that the Bridge Collective had been an important resource for them in recovering from mental health difficulties and maintaining emotional wellbeing.

The subtheme “creating connections in the face of isolation” describes how some respondents stated that the bridge collective had provided them with an opportunity to forge new and supportive relationships, at a time where this may have felt challenging for them. One respondent commented on how attending the Bridge Collective had helped them reconnect with others at a pace that felt manageable for them:

“When I first came out of hospital I found it difficult to speak to people. The Bridge was somewhere I could come and be alongside other people without feeling under pressure to speak. Over time my confidence came back and I started to get more involved. The Bridge has supported and encouraged me every step of the way and is an important element in my ongoing recovery.”

Another respondent described how the Bridge Collective had enabled them to connect with others at a time of isolation in their life:

“I have only started coming to the Bridge and felt very unsure and awkward about coming. I have found the people I’ve encountered very welcoming and invited me into their meetings to listen and I have found it very positive for me to be included when I feel very isolated a lot of the time.”

The second subtheme “support at a time of crisis” describes how the Bridge Collective has been able to support and work with people at times of significant distress. One respondent commented how at a time of crisis and change they had been able to find a way forward with their wellbeing and sense of self at the Bridge Collective:

“When going through a crisis, finding yourself anew through and out the other side, don't have to talk or give your name, a container, basket, flow, anonymity when becoming something else”

A healthcare professional responding to the survey noted how one of the Bridges activity groups had provided support for the people they work with at times of low mood:

“I have used Underground Sound on many occasions for my young EI clients. It has been an imperative resource in their recovery, when they have been feeling at their lowest. Underground Sound has offered Peer support, confidence building and opportunity to discover new skills in music”.

The final subtheme in the overarching theme of “resource in journey to wellbeing” is “benefits of activity groups”. This subtheme described the particular benefits respondents described from attending the activity groups run by the Bridge Collective. One respondent described how the Greenwood project had provided them with an opportunity to reconnect with the world around them:

“Being in the woodland brought my focus back to the value of the natural world and its many simple free benefits such as of hearing birds or rustling leaves on the trees. Enjoyment of simple basics such as any shelter, heat, cooking and a cup of tea were all amplified in the woods. These experiences have been a useful reference point to remember in very different urban environments.”

Another respondent commented on their enjoyment and sense of finding a safe space at the Women's Art Group:

"I like being creative at women's Art group & it is helpful to be in an all female familiar room."

Supporting Healthcare Professionals

This final theme describes the role the Bridge Collective have in providing input to healthcare professionals in training, providing a forum for professionals to consider a range of approaches to working with individuals with mental health difficulties and providing consultation to healthcare services.

The subtheme "creating debate" describes the role the Bridge Collective play in enabling healthcare professionals to engage in a dialogue about support for people with mental health difficulties with those traditionally described as service users and broader stakeholders.

One respondent commented how they had valued the Bridge Collective facilitating this forum for debate:

"I was impressed by the attendance at the meeting..there is clearly a demand for such a forum. I did not necessarily agree with all the comments made by the speaker, but that is the nature of debate, especially in mental health. Mental health is already such a cinderella specialty, it would be a great shame to lose forums for discussion and sharing...we need more of this, not less."

Another healthcare professional respondent commented on how attending events at the Bridge Collective has had on their clinical practice:

"I am on the mailing list to hear about events and really appreciate opportunities to attend these. I think they have added a different perspective to my clinical work. They events enable service users, carers and professionals to mix and talk together"

The subtheme “role as a critical friend” describes the position of the Bridge Collective as an organisation providing information about alternative approaches to working with mental health difficulties, to those provided in statutory services. One respondent commented on how they appreciated the Bridge Collective’s ability to provide alternative perspectives on mental health difficulties:

“I have experienced them to be respectful of, and thoughtful about, everyone. I have appreciated the critical voice they provide in relation to mental health services and especially like their recent 'this is madness' series of talks and dropins at the pub which can be accessed by anyone. It would be a loss to the whole local community should the Bridge Collective not receive further funding.”

In addition, another respondent commented how they had found it useful to discuss the alternatives to more medical models of understanding mental health difficulties:

“I attended the formulation talk with Lucy Johnson. This was a brilliant event bringing issues of mental health to the forefront of people's mind and a good discussion around the medical model of mental health”

The final subtheme of the overarching theme “supporting healthcare professionals” is “a voice for lived experience”. This subtheme describes respondents’ comments that the Bridge Collective had helped healthcare professionals connect further with personal narratives of mental health difficulties.

One respondent noted how the Bridge Collective had become an integral training healthcare professionals learning:

“The Project has been central to informing the BSc Nursing Mental Health Programme (mental health) contributing to curriculum development, participating in assessment of students and the processes involved in this and even more crucially members have been an integral part of the teaching programme ensuring that recovery principles and values based practice are central to the care and services that student nurses are

involved in. The mental health module The Lived Experience could not run without their expertise and input and their training is evaluated as the best in the nursing programme.”

Another respondent commented that they felt the Bridge Collectives input to training healthcare professionals helped to increase their empathy in working with people with mental health difficulties:

“Always professionally organised and reliable in arranging joint teaching to medical undergraduates. A very valuable resource for personal narratives to an area often misunderstood area which helps in reducing stigma and promoting empathy.”

References

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

Final Summary of Themes

- ***Valuing the Bridge Collective Ethos***
 - Empowerment
 - Acceptance
 - Inclusion

- ***Resource in Journey to Wellbeing***
 - Creating connections in the face of isolation
 - Support at times of crisis

- Benefits of activity groups
- ***Supporting Healthcare Professionals***
 - Creating debate
 - Role as critical friend
 - A voice for lived experience