

BRIEF SOCIAL AUDIT REPORT ON THE BRIDGE COLLECTIVE CIC 1/4/14-31/3/15

A more detailed annual report is in preparation

Our 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."

Activities and Events at the Bridge Collective

The Greenwood project gives access to the physical and mental health benefits of being in woodland and other outdoor environments.

The Women's Art Group sessions aim to give women some much-needed personal space, offering an opportunity to explore artistic ideas..

The Sharing Circle takes place at a seasonal turning point and has a theme that reflects both the cycle of the year in nature and the cycles of change in our lives. The Discussion Group meets once a month as a space to share different viewpoints, with no pressure to speak. We offer the following principles for our discussions: 'everyone brings to the space valid knowledge from their own background, all knowledge is partial and incomplete, all knowledge can be questioned' – quoted from Open Spaces for Dialogue and Enquiry.

Rainbow mind (became Rainbowbridge) is an informal group for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people affected by mental health issues.

Underground Sound is a weekly music project primarily for people between 18 - 30 years old who are experiencing or have experienced mental health difficulties as well as their friends and younger people who have an interest in mental health issues.

Underground Sound have also performed at events in the wider community including raising £840 by Crowdfunding to take part in the Spacehive "Our Big Gig" with an Event on Exeter Quay.

The Experts by Experience project works to establish the sharing of personal experiences, beliefs and feeling sometimes labelled as mental illness, as a powerful tool in the education and training of health and community workers and in the personal journeys of individuals. We use our direct experience to explore diverse approaches to mental health.

Every Thursday the Bridge Collective has an Open Day, doors are open for anyone to come and have a drink and chat with whoever is about.

Sing-A-Longs started in September 2014 . Sing-a-long themes this year :1980's, 1970's & Mad Hatters

Sharing writing, reading and poetry – The Purple Was Already There - event October 2014

Open Minds started March 2015 A peer support group for people who see, hear or sense things other people don't (sometimes labelled 'psychosis'). Meeting every 2nd Wednesday of the month, for chat, coffee, support, sharing ideas and general discussion.

April 2014 - The Bridge Collective collaborated with the Soteria Network Southwest to host our Choices in Approaches Event about "Creating a local alternative to conventional mental health services". The event was jointly planned and delivered by people with direct experience of services, friends, family, supporters, local, national and international mental health workers and activists in community development and public health. The invitation in the form of a poster asked: What would we like to create together? and its intention was stated as wanting to be "A springboard to action locally".

Between April 2014 and March 2015, new groups, working parties and events were born out of this springboard event:

Open Dialogue meet-ups leading to forming the regular Open Dialogue Devon meeting – a group of people working together to promote the use of Open Dialogue and dialogical approaches locally.

May 2014 – Developing a local Crisis house - A collaboration between the Bridge Collective and Soteria Network Southwest. A series of meetings at the Bridge Collective for anyone interested in the development of creating a local crisis house. We researched local, national and international ways people have set up and provide a crisis house and crisis support.

Transformation Triangle working party Looking at creating local alternatives to hospitals and medication through: changing public attitudes, creating alternatives and honouring rights from Jim Gottstein's Transformational Triangle idea of how system change can be achieved.

Mental Health Act Workshops by Rob Manchester – mental health social worker

'This is Madness' - "a public forum where we can explore alternatives, attitudes and power within mental health and our society". In collaboration with Soteria Network Southwest and the Parish of Central Exeter we hosted four public forum events., attended by over 280 people. At each event people generously donated towards venue hire, accommodation and travel expenses for future speakers – raising a total of £1,065.12 .

There has been collaborative work with other organisations and we have allowed other groups to use our premises for activities which we believe to be consistent with the Bridge Collective's purpose. Examples: monthly "Speak Out" opportunity for feedback about mental health services through Be Involved Devon; Participatory Photography Course organised by Meridian Raw.

Our Stakeholders and how we consult with them

Participants in our groups and activities: estimated number of people involved in the Bridge groups and activities - between 150 and 250.

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.

Decision making From the beginning the idea of democracy has been key in the Bridge, and the point of authority and decision making has always been the monthly meeting that we now call the Bridge Community Meeting. Our legal structure entails that we have a formal membership who elect a number of directors, and these roles are important in the Bridge because they hold accountability for the principles of the company and for running it with integrity. However, involvement in the Bridge is much wider than formal membership of the company, and (except very

occasionally for discussion of sensitive personal issues) the Community Meetings are completely open and welcome to all, with most decisions arrived at by consensus.

Attendees at public forums and Choices in Approaches events - about 340 attendances. Attendees are invited to complete feedback forms which have informed our planning of subsequent events, and are also invited to join the planning groups for the Choices in Approaches projects.

People who receive training from us: Experts by Experience have spoken to approximately 355 trainee health professionals. Verbal and written feedback is invited at each session from students and the people who have commissioned the training and is used by trainers to assess and learn from each event and to inform future practice.

Formal Membership: Total members - March 31 st 2014: 19, Total members - March 31 Members, in addition to being invited to participate in the collective process described under "participants" above, have formal rights to take part in the running of the company set out in the Memorandum and Articles. These include voting for directors and putting themselves forward for election as directors. This took place at the AGM in May.

Our Grant Funders

Our principal grant funding this year was from Devon County Council. We provide updates on our work at the end of each year. They received our full annual report from the previous year and will receive a full report on 2014/15. From their feedback on agreeing our funding for 2014/15: "I am impressed by the way you involve your members in the running of the Bridge Collective and the wide range of activities you support and organise. As I am sure you are aware the Bridge Collective is well regarded for its involvement in the wider mental health recovery/DRRIG community..... In respect of funding for 2014/15 you should plan on basis of same level of funding for 2013/14 and invoice DCC as you have in previous years. "