



**THE BRIDGE COLLECTIVE CIC**  
**ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2011 TO MARCH 2012**

# Mission Statement

Adopted 10th February 2010.

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.

## The following notes are from two of our supervision sessions:

### What brings life to the Bridge Collective...

All taking responsibility for success – autonomy – everyone contributes – job well done – I can be me – trusting the process things happen without me making them happen – my contribution is valued – time is allowed – no “us and them” – trusting in people – valuing and validating people – can see the purpose of what we’re doing – beautiful and rewarding outcomes – freedom in how we work – believing it will work out well – real heart connection – group of people coming together with their resources – doing it on our own – people’s commitment

and making a commitment – laughter and friendship – peace – seeing that I can do something with my life – continuity.

## The things we really value about the Bridge

- a living thing
- a safe context
- changing the culture of mental health
- enables people to be themselves – to grow and progress
- unique
- non-judgemental, love, passion, trust, eclectic, self-generating
- we can be here, all together, with or without our holes
- commitment, heart, faith in people
- somewhere you can always go and be accepted

# **Activities at the Bridge**

**Social anxiety group**

**Experts by Experience**

**Open Day**

**Company.Secretary team**

**Underground Sound**

**Rainbow Mind**

**Escot and Lockbar camp**

**Greenwood - escot allotment stover eggesford walks**

**WAGS (Women's Art Group)**

**Cleaning/health and safety**

**Discussion group**

**Agenda meetings, directors meeting**

**Hearing voices/better believe it**

**DSEN (Devon Spiritual Emergence Network)**

**Dramatherapy**

**Wild Art Week**

# People at the Bridge

Number of members on 31st March 2011 30

Number of members on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012 28

Directors on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011: Andrew Barkla, Bridie Kelly, Bev Slade, Nicola Osman-Barter, Mike Parker, Richard Hewis, Fleur Hardman

Director resignations with date: Bev Slade 5/5/11, Nicola Osman-Barter 29/6/11, Mike Parker 5/5/11, Richard Hewis 21/3/12, Fleur Hardman 22/9/11, Martin Wilson 20/7/11

Director appointments with date: Bev Slade 19/10/11, Stuart Plant 14/2/12, Martin Wilson 5/5/11, Ji Vockings 16/11/11, Rick Wolkers 16/11/11, Mike Rabjohns 16/11/11

Directors on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012: Andrew Barkla, Bridie Kelly, Bev Slade, Stuart Plant, Ji Vockings, Rick Wolkers, Mike Rabjohns

Estimated number of people involved in Bridge groups and activities (not including recipients of Experts by Experience training) between 100 and 200.

keyholders and group facilitators

Neil, Lena, Sarah, Ji (health and safety volunteer), Bev, Andrew, Rich B, Sue, Nicola, Elaine, Bridie, David, Chris, Mike (volunteer wholefood manager), Fleur,

employees:

Underground Sound: David with relief support from Alex. New facilitator (Alex) was recruited to start at beginning of April 2012

Wags: Fleur, Chris (both posts funded for this one year only)

greenwood: Bev, Andrew

Cleaner: Nicola (started December)

Experts by Experience development worker: Nicola (started February)

Finance: Sarah

Community and Development: Sarah, Bev, Andrew

Rich Brown on placement and then volunteer at Underground Sound

Paul proof reading

Marcus - updating website calendar

Alison - typing

# Questions:

**When did you turn up?**

**Why did you turn up?**

**Why did you keep turning up?**

"I heard good things about the Bridge. I came to visit and enjoyed the laid back friendly, accepting atmosphere. I came along again."

# Help we've received

**Michelle Zebra Collective for supervision**

**Ian from Moorland First Aid**

**Judy Scott consultancy developing e by e payment policy**

**Thanks to Kelvin payroll services always helpful and prompt**

**Thanks to Clark(e)s Electrical for price gun for wholefoods**

**Rachel, CAB, financial capability training "money active" - learning more about part time work options when in receipt of benefit due to health**

**Harry from CAB**

**Martin (accountant)**

**"Present to the Bridge - we've got a head massager"**

**Ali - Direct payment talk**

**"Big thank you to Clare, got together with people at the Bridge to hear how it is for people individually what is most valuable in what we do, how we see the Bridge, what would make it work better for you. clare fed back at the Development day 22nd Sept 2011"**

**"Thanks to Maya of Esh - mid east street food, for lovely food on the Development day.**

**Alan Bruford**

**Chris Holland (Storytelling)**

**Financial support:**

**Awards for All**

**Self Heal**

**Devon County Council**

**Personal donations**



# **Consultation and communication within the Bridge**

**Agenda form**

**Newsletter**

**Treevaluation sheets (see collated feedback in Appendix)**

**Community and development meeting**

**Bridge development day and Clare's conversations**

**Solution focused group supervision with Michelle Virgo from the Zebra Collective**

# **Outcomes and achievements for the company**

**director role description**

**"22.9.11 - 6 Directors elected (subject to conditions) at the general meeting today - hooray!"**

**External team supervision set up with the Zebra Collective (July 11)**

**Fifth Birthday**

**"Door handle attached. We've got a door handle - thank you Ji"**

**"Getting the flickering toilet light fixed and the temporary measures to keep it safe"**

**"Improving security by getting a duplicate key for Underground Sound doors"**

**Health and safety notes -**

cleaner appointed

Regular monthly H&S team meeting continues

Ji has joined team

New systems in place for regular monitoring and review of risk assessments

Networking with groups

Areas to develop – training

Write a manual of procedures

There was one accident report this year, relating to a minor cut during a craft activity.

# **Outcomes and achievements in groups**

**Donations for allotment produce**

**WAGS (Women's Art Group) funding**

**Wholefood business steadily building up. Volunteer Wholefoods Manager's confidence, skills and knowledge of the job increasing**

**Discussion Group - we've discussed: Benevolent leadership; architecture; paganism; rules; rationality; achievement; meditation; love; greed; death and loss; imagination. People attending - average of 6 people per discussion**

**Experts by Experience - May 2011 Lived experience 9 days of marking, learning how to mark, learning what the students learnt and how to give constructive feedback.**

**Things enjoyed and gained from Experts by Experience work:**

**Ben's cake**

**Students gaining confidence to practice what they believe in**

**Our message seemed to hit home**

**Students learning something new**

**It was a great opportunity for students to get the other side of the story which I guess they can't do very often at uni**

**Having purpose**

**Making a difference**

**Self acceptance, self worth**

**It was therapeutic**

**It was great to counter some popular misconceptions**

**The importance of discussing nursing practice with service users**

**How much it helped me come to terms with my illness**

**Good opportunity to look around strong views and to understand each other better**

**Impressed with people's courage**

**Really liked discussion parts where students were open and shared differences of opinion**

**A good range of experiences and points of view were represented because of the number of experts involved.**

**Enjoyed the small groups as they were more intense and there were more questions**

**Further comments from Experts by Experience at a general meeting:**

**General meetings are very good – caring, helpful, well-mannered, welcoming**

**Self harm training**

**PCMD (peninsula college of medicine and dentistry)– communicating with mental health service users and tea and talk**

**Lived experience and marking – Sue Lindsley can't thank us enough**

**Clarifying employment status**

**Hiring a project development worker**

**Judy Scott Consultancy Work – payment policy and benefit rules guide**

**Support from Sue Parr and Jobcentre; with return to work, permitted work, and benefit issues**

**Telephone text reminders are good**

**Systems for recording and invoicing work**

**Rachel CAB permitted work and financial capability workshop**

**Exeter University – Psychology Students**

**Plymouth University – Psychology Students**

**Work towards funding bid**

**Lived Experience 2012**

**Count the Folk! – to be done**

**New trainers joined the team**

**Putting together a trainers' and facilitators' being prepared and resources folder**

**EbyE opportunities advertised in Be Involved Devon.**

# **Outcomes and achievements for people within the Bridge**

**Underground Sound interviews - 3 people who had not done interviews before**

**4 people did emergency first aid at work with Moorland First Aid**

**Becoming involved with Underground Sound - opportunity to create a musical track - Paul**

**People chairing and minute taking at the Directors' Meeting for the first time**

# Challenges we have faced

## Funding and finances

WAGS funding from the Self Heal Association ended at the end of the year

director crisis – for a period we fell short of the required number of directors. A general meeting was called and a strong new team of directors appointed

# Challenges and hopes for the future

Independent funding for E by E

People trained in company secretary skills

Hope to work with other Gov' Institutes ie Jobcentre

Making being involved more accessible

Funding for WAGS and independent funding for all creative projects



# Networking and communication outside the Bridge

SOCOPS used room in the Bridge

Donations for room use - Tai Chi group

"Friday night was excellent! -thanks for letting me do it - Dave"

Attended the Exeter Mood Disorders Centre Health and Well Being Day

Soberlink - visited and made friends

Tai Chi group have become our neighbour

Rainbowmind going to Pride parade - meeting up - making new friends - hearing Samba - playing drums - being part of something bigger

Underground Sound on Phonic FM Community Radio playing their music, chatting and saying what it means to do it.

Many groups trained by Experts by Experience – including Student Doctors, Nurses, and Clinical Psychologists

# Appendix

## Evaluation

*Collated Treevaluations.*

*These were responses from people attending creative groups at the Bridge – Underground Sound, Women's Art Group, Greenwood Project, Devon Spiritual Emergence Network*

### How do we know there is a need for our project?

- To give people with mental health problems a safe and worthwhile opportunity to do new things with others with something to show and keep others.
- Because it supports people that are in need of it
- Because others are being closed down
- Because there is a demand free woman's art workshops and people turn up. And also there is a need for a safe and supportive group for women under the mental health remit.
- I know that I need it! It starts my week off in the right positive frame of mind. It is the only woman's art group that provides a safe environment, peer support and is in a mental health setting. The woman's art group is not in a traditional mental health arena, which suits me better.

I can't afford to attend other art groups.

- Many people become isolated or don't have the opportunities to meet others with similar interests and experiences.

Most art groups are mixed rather than single sex.

- A lot of people need somewhere interesting to go and do things.
- It is supportive of people with mental health difficulties.

There are some really good ideas for things to make.

Without the art group I would be unsure for activities to do.

There are no other groups for women that are free.

Because so many people attend the days, some come for a short time some come for much longer. This I feel means that people have a spiritual need to spend time in a natural setting and a purely open, non-dogmatic informal way.

- Other people I have met have a positive comment to say and me also.
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### What does being here now do for you?

- Having a purpose to get up and somewhere to meet friends and share some creative time together.
  - Helps my self esteem and mental health
  - Social interaction, relaxation, self expression, artistic practice, fun.
  - Exploring my creative side.
- Meeting people – lessens isolation.

- Gives me ideas to try at home in the evenings that I find hard.
- Gives hope. Increases confidence. Learn new skills. Meet new people. Something to look forward to.
  - Unwind a lot.
  - It is a chance to meet other people contact with other people.
  - Gives me an aim
  - It gives me a sense of peace and “time out” from my otherwise chaotic and stressful existence, in a safe, non threatening, non judgmental setting.
  - Happy inclusion

### How does the project impact your life?

- It makes me happy to be creative and reduces anxiety and depression when in deep concentration and forgetting problems for an hour or so.
- Stops depression setting in
- In a positive helpful way
- I really enjoy art and it has meant I have become very creative at home also. Mentally it calms me. It has impacted in my life because I find I am learning new ways to focus my creative energy which means I can express myself. I have also been doing a lot more art with my children at home too.

Thank you for a wonderful project and to Fleur for your kind support.

- It has really helped me to get over a sense of failure at art – I can explore safely, enjoy and grow.

At school I always felt that I was being judged.

It makes me laugh, have fun experiment and feel good about myself.

- Look forward to the rest of the week.
- It give me structure to each week, beginning the week.  
It is supportive of people we are shown how to do each project.
- It makes me feel well
- It helps me to try to retain a personal moral framework in my life and has been a comfort at times I have felt afraid and alone.
- Helping to be part of a group and also making friends.

## Things I will take with me

- Learning new skills using old skills again. Seeing a result for your work.
- Time to chill out and relax
- Happiness. A feeling of having created something
- Confidence. More art skills, knowledge, experience.
- Lots and lots of amazing ideas – a sense of being free and me positivity.
- Painting and drawing collage
- Lino prints, stained glass. I like to do more art after group.
- A commitment to do the best I can in life, to not hurt others and be more caring.

- Inspiration. Social interaction.

### Things I will leave behind

- New friendships and social contact with others with mental health problems
- Feeling useless
- I have enjoyed all the art projects we do.
- A few paintings.
- The past, bits of me, I don't find useful anymore.
- Good memories

### Further comments

- I hope to continue doing different things.