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## Key issues check list

successful project development

# T O O L K I T



# Key Issues Check List



## Introduction

This checklist is designed to make it easier for local authorities, voluntary organisations and others to develop successful mentoring, befriending and mediation projects which will help prevent homelessness. These three measures were highlighted by the Homelessness Task Force as key factors in developing positive social networks and resolving homelessness. As we focus even more on preventing homelessness and sustaining tenancies, the importance of provision to support social networks and the priority given mentoring, befriending and mediation projects must increase.

This checklist introduces you to the key issues you should think about when developing or commissioning mentoring, befriending and mediation projects.

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# Background to Success

## 1. Project Origins

It is important to be clear about what your own areas of expertise are and what they are not.

- Whose idea was the project?
- Is there a similar project already?
- Have you or has anyone else piloted a similar project?
- Who in this area has experience in mentoring, befriending or mediation?
- Who in this area has experience of homelessness support?
- Have you consulted them?
- Have you consulted the Scottish bodies and looked at their guides?

The more experience and expertise you can bring on board from the start, the more likely the project will succeed.

*"Amber's expertise was generated from the partnership between Sacro and Edinburgh Cyrenians - blending Edinburgh Cyrenians' experience of supporting people affected by homelessness with Sacro's experience in community mediation." Viki Phillipps, Amber*

# Background to Success



## 2. Funding Sources

Matching the objectives of project and funder is crucial.

### Projects

- How do you plan to fund the project?
- Does your project meet the funder's strategic priorities?
- Do you have evidence to demonstrate this?
- Are you looking for pilot funding?
- If the pilot is successful will it attract continuation funding from the same source?
- If not, are you designing the project to meet both the current and future funder's strategic priorities?
- Are you incorporating a monitoring and evaluation system that will enable you to demonstrate that it meets both the current and future funder's strategic priorities?
- How early do you need to approach funders to ensure continuity?
- Will you have your evidence available by then?

Different funders have different priorities. A project may be judged successful when measured against one funder's priorities but unsuccessful against another's. It is important to involve potential future funders from an early stage.

*"Community Friends brings benefits to everyone involved. Local residents are trained and supported to befriend vulnerable people experiencing homelessness and help them to resettle in the community. The volunteers get great benefits in terms of personal development and improved employability; the individuals being befriended get the encouragement and support they need to move on from homelessness and live a good quality of life; and the public agencies get a great service which meets their needs at an affordable cost."* *"Community Friends is a great partnership between the churches, social enterprise, local residents and the public sector which helps meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness by harnessing the strengths and capacity of each and making the most of the resources available."* **Louise Christie, Chief Executive Aspire2gether.**



# Background to Success

## Project Commissioners or Funders

- Are there any similar projects attracting other funding?
- Could an existing project deliver your strategic priorities?
- Does the project have sufficient sustainable funding?
- Are you involved in the project development?
- What would the costs of losing this support option be in terms of the cost of tenancy failure, homelessness presentations or housing support?
- When procuring services are you considering quality and innovation as well as consistency, trust and positive relationships?

Project commissioners or funders can derive great benefit by building on existing projects and pilots - often avoiding expensive start-up costs and reaping the benefit of a tried and tested project. Early involvement helps ensure that the project develops to meet strategic priorities and so ensure continuity and avoid the cost benefits being lost or reduced through a break in funding and supply. This need not be contrary to procurement regulations as long as the 'contracting authority' is open and clearly evidences the thinking and decision making process.

*"Working with Scottish Council for Single Homeless we tried to put a financial cost on tenancy failure and were horrified at just how much one failed tenancy could cost. With isolation and a lack of social networks key contributors to tenancy failure, mentoring, befriending and mediation can be value for money." Julie Hunter, North Lanarkshire Council*

# Background to Success



## 3. Strategic Support, Champions and Backup

Building a broad base of support from the start is more effective than trying to plug the gaps later.

- What is the evidence that this project is needed?
- What is the evidence that this approach will address that need?
- Do the project objectives fit with the homelessness strategy?
- Are the project objectives supported by the local homelessness partnership?
- Is there support for the project from users (both service users and referring agencies) and partners?
- Who will champion the project and see it through all the stages?
- Are the frontline project staff committed to this approach?
- Is there sufficient frontline capacity to ensure continuous delivery?

*"The transition to independence is always difficult but particularly for the young people we look after. When The Rock Trust approached me suggesting that they could offer the Networks approach, which incorporates support from volunteer mentors, I was delighted, it was just what is needed for young care leavers. The Rock Trust has ensured that all 4 local authorities in the Lothians and our other partners have been fully involved in the Throughcare project from the start."* Greg McKenzie, Children's Services Team Leader -Through care and Aftercare Team, East Lothian Council.

## 4. Long Lead Time

It is difficult to draw up a realistic timetable for a project, but it is important to make a best estimate, flagging up key dates and reviewing the whole timetable as things change or develop.

- Does the timetable allow sufficient development time including:
  - Agreeing strategic fit with the organisation and partners?
  - Initial research and consultation on the project proposal?
- Does your timetable fit with funders timetable for bids and responses?
- Does the timetable allow sufficient start up time for:
  - Recruitment, disclosure and training of staff?
  - Recruitment, disclosure and training of volunteers?
  - Briefing of partners and publicity?
  - Recruitment of suitable clients?
- Does the timetable have realistic estimates for the duration and intensity of client involvement?
- How long will it be before you will have project outcomes?
- When will you be able to demonstrate how effective your project is?
- How does this fit with the duration of funding, funders expectations and continuation funding timescales?

When planning a continuing project (rather than a time limited intervention) it is important to plan for the long term from the start and ensure that your organisation, partners and current and potential future funders have realistic agreed objectives.

*"At the start we used The Rock Trust coordinator and our existing volunteers to speed up the process. This meant that we were able to offer befriending after just 6 months"* Luan Sanderson, Fresh Start.

# What does success look like?



## 5. Agreed Objectives

Often it is not until the project is underway that the partners discover that they have differing expectations. In successful projects all parties agree what they are trying to achieve from the start.

- What does the project hope to achieve:
  - in relation to homelessness in the area?
  - for the individual client?
- At what stage or stages in the homelessness journey will clients engage with the project?
- What outcomes will be considered successful?
- Is there a hierarchy of outcomes or do they all have common value?
- How will you identify and measure success?
- What will constitute evidence of success?
- Are these objectives realistic and achievable?
- Do all the stakeholders – deliverers, funders, referrers, clients, families, supporters – agree with these objectives?
- How will you review and if appropriate revise the objectives with the involvement and agreement of all partners?

*"Our service mediates between young people and their families to help reach a compromise to enable the young people to remain at home or to keep links with the family if they do leave. These objectives are supported internally by both housing and social work, by the families and young people who use the service and externally by partners like Ayr Housing Aid who recognise mediation as a vital part of our services to young people."* Fiona MacDonald, South Ayrshire Council.



# What does success look like?

## 6. Referrals

Projects can have too many or too few referrals, referrals at the wrong time, inappropriate referrals, reluctant referrals. Successful projects have sufficient appropriate referrals.

- How will clients be referred to the project?
- How will clients and those referring clients find out about the project?
- Have you involved those advising and referring clients in the project design and secured their commitment to the project?
- How will you ensure that referrals are appropriate and at the correct time?
- How will you ensure the correct volume and flow of referrals at the start and throughout the life of the project?
- How will you ensure the commitment of the client and the support of families and other players?
- How will you manage client referrals you do not have capacity for or for whom your project is not the correct option?

*"We only recruit clients once the mentors are trained and in place as waiting for a mentor can be a very negative experience"* Biddy Kelly, Move On.

# What does success look like?



## 7. Integration, Support and Links

Successful projects do not operate in isolation, they maximise the support and links with partners for the benefit of the client.

- Do you have support for your project from your partners?
- Have you agreed how you will work together?
- How will you support your clients and, where appropriate, their family, mentor or befriender?
- How does your project fit with other support measures for your clients?
- How will you keep everyone informed and give appropriate feedback?
- How will you ensure that all appropriate information is shared?
- How will you manage confidential information?

*"Many of our referrals have come from CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services at the Royal Ed). We keep in contact to make sure they really understand the type of support we can offer and, with the service user's agreement, keep the community psychiatric nurses updated on how things are going so that the service user is fully supported."*  
**Alistair MacDermid, Networks Project, The Rock Trust.**

# What does success look like?

## 8. Independence

Successful projects balance independence and integration.

- Are your mentors, befrienders and mediators seen as independent?
  - How is the impartiality of the mediator preserved?
  - How do befrienders become like friends and role models not authority figures?
  - How do mentors avoid appearing like management spies?
  - How do all of them balance their independent role with ensuring support for the client?
- How will your mentors, befrienders or mediators handle information about “bad” behaviour or illegal activity?
- How will the project as a whole gain and maintain the client’s trust and the trust of their supporters?

*“It’s taken some explaining – to staff, service users and their families - what my role is, where it begins and more importantly where it ends. Sometimes there are grey areas like the communication coaching needed to enable the young person to manage conflict. So far all the referrals have been through the Rock Trust so I know that if a support need is identified during mediation I can speak to the support worker and be sure it will be carried forward. They respect client confidentiality and recognise that while I can share outcomes I cannot share any details unless the parties to the mediation want that.” “One of the first challenges for me then, in starting to work with an external agency, is to reach a good level of trust and understanding about working together to make equally sure that my impartiality is not compromised and that there are no gaps in support for the young person.” Mark Vrionides, Rock Trust Mediation.*

# What does success look like?



## 9. Volunteers' Role, Training and Recruitment

The use of volunteers can be very powerful but, to be successful, quality standards and training need to be in place.

- Would your project and clients benefit from the involvement of volunteers?
- Do your partners and funders agree?
- What quality standards will you work towards to increase the confidence of volunteers as well as clients, staff, funders and partners?
- How will you train your volunteers?
- How will you manage "disclosure" checks?
- How will you ensure the safety of both clients and volunteers?
- Do you have a volunteer recruitment plan?
- What benefits will the volunteer gain?

*"I decided to do voluntary work to enhance my studies in Social Care and my CV. Before I started befriending I completed a training programme which covered child protection, boundaries, values, confidentiality and mental health issues. It was a valuable induction to the role of befriending" "Ultimately, befriending is a two way relationship....I have learned so much from Caroline as she has from me." Kerry, volunteer befriender with INtegr8.*

*"Kerry is like the big sister I never had. I can talk to her about anything." "Befrienders take a more personal approach to our problems (unlike social workers)" two of the many young befriendees who value the service INtegr8 offers.*

## 10. Links to Strategies

Social networks are not just associated with homelessness. The social links mentoring, befriending and mediation can build help support individuals in many circumstances. The lack of strong, positive social networks is particularly damaging to those already socially excluded from society through unemployment, disability, race, experience of being looked after in local authority care, veterans or other institution leavers and can have an adverse affect on any of us. Indeed there is now strong evidence supporting the links not only to mental health and wellbeing but to physical health and reduced morbidity.

Projects are strengthened by making these links across the inclusion agenda explicit.

- How does your project link with other strategies and priorities?
- Have you considered the wide range of links between homelessness and inclusion?

*"Recovery (from problematic use of alcohol or other drugs) involves far more than stabilisation of chaotic lives and minimisation of harm, but includes recovery of hope for the future. We therefore renew our determination to improve outcomes in the key areas of child wellbeing, family support and relationships, housing and employability."* Extract from Aberdeenshire's Strategy for Alcohol and Other Drugs.

# Further Information



## Scottish Social Networks Toolkit

### What makes a successful social networks project happen?

The full, revised edition of this Toolkit is available online at. [www.scottishsocialnetworks.org](http://www.scottishsocialnetworks.org)  
Colour photocopies are available at a cost of £7.50 to cover copying, packaging and postage.

If you would like a copy sent to you, please send your request and details, along with a cheque made payable to The Rock Trust, to:

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# Notes

## Acknowledgement

This toolkit could not have been developed without the support of many organisations, projects, groups and individuals. In the full version of the Toolkit you will find a short summary of each of the main projects interviewed and investigated.

The quotes in this document come from the organisations concerned. The comments and questions from the author's analysis of the information gathered.

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BECAUSE EVERY YOUNG  
PERSON HAS POTENTIAL



The Scottish  
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