

# **Pathway Review**

## **15 years on.....**



## **PATHWAY REVIEW**

It seemed like a good time to stop and take stock, after fifteen years of hard work, so this piece of work has been undertaken to coincide with our fifteenth anniversary. This has been in preparation for over a year, and gives a clear picture of where we are now, a snapshot of the organisation as it is now, as it was and a few thoughts of where we want to develop and who we want to be in the future.

I have split the review into a number of categories and each contains some work done in evaluating our current position.

STRATEGY

PROCESSES AND PROJECTS

LEADERSHIP

PEOPLE

PHYSICAL RESOURCES

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE

## **STRATEGY**

### **Mission and Values**

Our primary mission and vision has remained unchanged throughout our history. There have been many changes in the way that we meet the mission statement and ensure that the vision of the organisation is carried out.

In order to ensure that we are following a meaningful mission we regularly consult with our stakeholders, including agencies we work with and service users. This is done through Away Days, Service Reviews and Service User Forums, as well as by using questionnaires. We also consult regularly with staff during team meetings.

### **Recommendations:**

- *That all major decisions are consulted on, with relevant stakeholders*
- *That the service user forum will eventually evolve into a team of service user volunteers who will be trained for various tasks such as recruitment panels, quality assurance assessors etc.*
- *That we continue to find new and innovative ways of consulting with service users, including children, and other agencies, staff and of course Trustees*
- *That we remain open to critical reviews and endeavor to see them as tools for improvement*

### **Policies**

Policies underpin all of our working practices and provide the framework within which we operate. They ensure consistency across the organisation. We are continually reviewing all of our policies to ensure that they are up to date, comply with current legislation and reflect our working practices.

### **Recommendations:**

- *That our review process involves our stakeholders including service users, staff, volunteers and Trustees.*

### **Outcomes**

As a Management Team we looked at the outcomes that we would anticipate from our work and decided that these would fall into Primary Outcomes and Secondary Outcomes. The Primary Outcomes are the targets that we would be working towards and the Secondary Outcomes are the impact that we have which may not have been our prime purpose but which are also very important indirect outcomes which need to be recognised in their wider context. A table below shows both:

PRIMARY OUTCOMES	SECONDARY OUTCOMES
Women finding safety	Safer communities
Families being found permanent accommodation	Jobs created
Women gaining increased confidence	Better trained staff
Children being safeguarded	Development of volunteers
Every child matters outcomes being met	Benefit economy by using local suppliers and services
Qualifications being gained	Support given to other organizations
Employability increasing	Benefit environment by encouraging service users to recycle
Women gaining skills which help in retaining tenancies	Trustees getting training and experience
Less risk of future abuse	
Better parenting skills	
Lifeskills being gained	
Social skills increasing	
More positive outlook for service users	
Less reliance on drugs / alcohol / self harm etc as coping mechanisms	

## PEST ANALYSIS

We have undertaken a PEST analysis to assess the impact of Political, Economic, Sociocultural and Technological Factors on the work that we do. These are the results.

### Political Factors

The current political environment is globally unstable with an economic downturn, and global recession looking ever more possible. In the UK we have a coalition government and the future prospects for funding are becoming bleaker as there is a focus on cutting public spending fairly dramatically.

The economic climate for the third sector has changed enormously over the last five years. Instead of applying for grants we now have to compete with other organisations and tender for grants. This has affected the spirit of sharing good practice which has always prevailed in this sector, as sharing too much information could make you vulnerable when tendering.

Government policy could change and we could face tougher regulation and legislation in the sector. We could also find that our taxation system changes and this could affect our income levels.

Central government has a funding policy which encourages short term pilot projects, but does not supply continuation funding for those which work well. This means that many new ways of working are developed only to be lost again when a project's funding runs out. There is rarely any contingency for funding to be replaced.

In terms of culture, many people feel that we have become overly politically correct more recently. This can lead to mistrust and discomfort between people of different cultures, backgrounds and religions. If you ask minority groups for their views on this they would mirror our own. That this over emphasis on our differences prevents us from focusing on the many things that we have in common.

We hope that Supporting People will continue to be protected in some way when the ring fencing is fully removed and the LAA becomes the lead in deciding spending. We need to see projects continue to thrive and even grow and to support that the SP funding needs to be safeguarded.

There is a likelihood that the credit crunch will affect the number of women seeking help from Pathway. There is likely to be an increase in domestic abuse, as financial abuse increases, and the lack of money and possibly employment adds to the difficulties in already strained relationships. We are also possibly going to see more women trying to get into refuges who are homeless because of eviction for failing to pay rent. This could pose problems in the next year or so.

### **Economic Factors**

Changes in interest rates will have an impact on our funding sources. We are already seeing funding levels falling as Charitable Trusts, many of whom rely on investments, are getting a smaller return on their investments. We are very fortunate that our own investment in Burntwood Refuge is with an interest free loan, or we could potentially have faced an unaffordable increase in mortgage repayments.

Levels of inflation affect everyone, and increase costs across the board. Running three buildings requires us to provide heating, lighting, and other services and all of these are likely to increase over the next year.

There are likely to be more people needing social housing, which will affect the availability of move on accommodation for women staying in our refuges. This will mean that women will be with us for substantially longer, and we will be able to provide fewer women with the safety that is so vital to their well being.

### **Sociocultural Factors**

The dominant religion in the UK is Christianity but more immigration means that there are a diversity of religions and cultures in the country. This can affect our service users,

as we have limited worship opportunities in our areas. This may make it difficult for women who are living in our refuges to reach appropriate places of worship.

Language barriers can also be a problem. Although we have a commitment to use language lines where needed, this can impose a huge cost which we cannot recoup from anywhere. It also means that women can be isolated and distressed in a system where they cannot make their needs clear.

Men are still dominant in our society and hold many of the top jobs, including those within the police and criminal justice system. This can mean that women are discriminated against in our systems which can inherently favour men.

People are living longer and we are increasingly seeing older women entering our services. This may mean that in the future our training needs will have to be considered to fully support the needs of older women. Together with the current economic state this can mean that women are in a more vulnerable position. Mortgages being offered long after retirement age is reached may mean that people lose housing because they are no longer able to work and sustain their mortgage repayments.

Environmentally we are all being retrained to be 'greener'. This is becoming an important focus in funding bids and we are finding that some application forms for funding now include questions about our policy on these issues.

### **Technological Factors**

Technology affects everyone these days. There have been some very helpful leaps forward – Refuges online and e-mails save us a lot of money in phone calls and letters. They also speed up our processes and we are able to find women safe accommodation much more quickly than we used to.

Some advances have also caused us headaches – internet banking is great and has a lot of advantages but unfortunately opens up the market for hackers to defraud you in seconds. Mobile phones are a great help and a really good safety device but can also be used to trace women, intimidate them and can be used inappropriately with children. Of course another factor is affordability. There are systems for ensuring staff can be quickly traced when they are in danger but there is an on-going cost to providing the equipment and the system and this prevents agencies that need them from using them.

Having a website is an excellent way to address the need for women to find information quickly, easily and anonymously and we are looking at ways to utilise our website to raise funding.

## **PATHWAY PARTNERSHIPS**

There are various levels of partnership working in place within Pathway. These could be classified as:

- Formal partnerships – working with a service level agreement or contract. We have a number of partners at this level:
  - HomeZone Living
  - Tamworth Borough Council
  - Lichfield District Council
  - Supporting People
  - Children’s Fund
  
- Working partnerships – where we have no formal agreement but have entered into a project or piece of work:
  - Staffordshire Women’s Aid for ACTION delivery
  - IDVA hosting
  
- Informal partnerships – mainly discussion groups, inter-agency fora etc:
  - Lichfield and District Domestic Abuse Forum
  - Tamworth Inter-Personal Abuse Forum
  - Chase PAIRS
  - County DV Strategy Group
  - Chief Officers Group – Lichfield
  - Voluntary Voice

We have entered into partnerships where they have offered opportunities to increase and enhance the work that we do. In general we have sought partnerships that provide advantages for our service users, but sometimes we have entered into partnerships where there has been mutual benefit for both organizations. In all cases we have ensured that partnerships bring added value to our work. We have always sought to limit risks to Pathway. In entering into a partnership we would establish the mutual benefits, and the actions and responsibilities of each party. Processes for feedback and information sharing are agreed in advance.

A word that means a lot to us at Pathway is integrity – ‘it does what it says on the can’. We will always do our utmost to take agreed actions within the agreed timescale. If for any reason that is not possible we will inform the other party as soon as possible of the delay and the reason for it.

We evaluate our partnerships regularly and assess the direction for future planning in light of our evaluations.

### **Recommendations**

- *We need a more formal annual evaluation process that would ask the following questions:*

- *What actions were agreed, and why if there have been any deviations, have these occurred*
- *If there have been any failures or mistakes, the reasons for them and actions that will resolve these in future*
- *Costs to each party of partnership working, and how the costs might be reduced*
- *Benefits to each party and how they can be increased*
- *Extent to which expectations have been met*
- *Ways in which actions and protocols might change to make the partnership more effective*

## **PROCESSES AND PROJECTS**

### **Quality Assessment Framework**

As we are funded from the public purse through Supporting People contracts, we need to demonstrate that we are providing a high quality service which is also value for money. There is a process of auditing and evaluating this, which every contract holder is required to comply with.

Part of this process is that we submit quarterly returns for each service, with evidence of the outcomes that we meet. These are taken from Every Child Matters and are the five outcomes which were devised to measure the safety and well-being of children.

Alongside this we have to annually self assess against a document called the Quality Assessment Framework. This sets out the standards which we are expected to achieve and assists us in planning for continuous improvement. In April 2010 this document will be changing and we now have to aim higher to reach a good standard. We are working on aiming for that new higher level and hope that we will be able to reach at least a score of B, in the A, B and C standards. We will be working towards an A and we are putting new procedures and processes in place to help us to improve further.

### **Recommendations**

- *That the ISA process is introduced and all staff are CRB checked on a regular basis*
- *All staff to be trained on SMART outcomes*
- *Team meetings to regularly include agenda item on safeguarding adults and children and training to be regularly updated on code of conduct and boundaries*
- *To continue Service User Forum and explore ways for service users to feed into Trustee Board*
- *To maintain a QAF file at each building and to ensure that all staff are fully aware of the QAF and understand the importance of it*
- *To use appropriate media for service users with different needs – pictorially or audio etc*

## **LEADERSHIP**

Pathway is governed by a Trustee Board, which meets bi-monthly. There is currently only one permanent sub-group and a number of task to finish groups either planned or in operation.

The Director is directly responsible to the Trustee Board and much of the Board's work is delegated to her. She has a Management Team of staff members who are responsible for the work and each has their own area of responsibility.

There are three refuge teams, a floating support team and IDVA team, a children's team and the senior management team. There is also a team of volunteers. A member of the Management Team has responsibility for line managing each of the teams.

Governance is a serious issue and we have been looking at ways in which we can improve our practices and increase accountability and effectiveness. As a result of this we are planning to make some changes to the way that the Board operates over the coming year.

### **Recommendations**

- *A task to finish group is going to be set up to consider recruitment and retention of Trustees*
- *A mentoring scheme for new Trustees will be introduced*
- *An appraisal system for Trustees will be part of the process, to ensure that Trustees are not overloaded, have adequate support and are able to make their contribution in the areas where they feel their skills are most effective*

## **PEOPLE**

We employ approximately 30 staff at Pathway, including some sessional staff. We are keen to ensure that our staff are treated with fairness, honesty and integrity. We operate to Investors in People standards and all staff get regular supervision, support and training.

All staff training is recorded and we monitor and evaluate different training programmes for their effectiveness and value for money. We aim to ensure that all staff receive a basic training which is consistent and then we offer training in specialist areas as appropriate to the job role.

We recruit staff by using a process which involves a staff panel, a service user panel and where appropriate skills testing or psychometric tests. Once appointed staff have an induction period and will follow a training plan to give them all the skills necessary for their new role.

We are working on improving the way that this is undertaken.

### **Recommendations:**

- *All staff are going to be required to work towards competencies for their role*
- *Consideration is going to be given to a pay award scheme where skills and training are part of the appraisal*
- *Staff recruitment is going to be subject to ISA as well as CRB checks and the cost of this needs to be discussed as the ISA stays with the member of staff for life and is a one off cost*

## **VOLUNTEERS**

We have always been active recruiters of volunteers although in the early days of Pathway they played a very different role than the one that they play today. Pathway began working with only one member of staff and a number of volunteers were working virtually full time for some years.

As Pathway has grown and the working standards have changed, funding was introduced which allowed us to employ staff in a number of roles. This meant that the opportunities for volunteering became very different and in some senses less onerous.

Pathway is now established as a Learning Centre with Open College Network and we train our volunteers in-house in basic domestic abuse awareness. We treat volunteers in very much the same way that we treat staff, in terms of offering supervision when needed, training being available and paying expenses.

We are now looking at ways in which we can make our volunteering programme a better experience for the volunteer, a more consistent use of resources and more inclusive.

**Recommendations:**

- *To investigate ways in which service users can be involved in volunteering at an earlier stage, without compromising confidentiality*
- *To maintain better information on the hours that volunteers work and the added value that they give*
- *To have a basic training, and then additional training for the particular role that can be undertaken*

## **PHYSICAL RESOURCES**

### **Safety Audit of Refuges**

Ensuring a safe and comfortable environment, in which people can feel confidence, is the primary purpose of the refuges. This audit looked at the safety design of our structures and procedures to ensure that we meet our own very high standards, those of our service users, and of course that we comply with all relevant legislation.

#### **Access:**

Access to all refuges is controlled by door fob or door entry systems, CCTV, intercom systems and of staff being in control of door entry. Only Lichfield has 24 hour staffing so this is limited in the other two refuges to office hours. Staff monitor visitors through a signing in procedure, and where appropriate visitors are asked to produce ID, and will be accompanied whilst in the refuge by a member of staff. The CCTV ensures that visitors are not allowed into the refuges until they have been properly identified.

For fire safety there is an in/out board which records which residents are in the building. This also applies to outreach staff.

In the event of an unauthorised person gaining access to the refuge, the office would alert residents to the danger, lock the office door and ring 999 for assistance. Tamworth refuge is linked to the TBC Homelink system by use of a mobile alarm.

The main problems that have been identified are residents inviting perpetrators or boyfriends to stay when staff are not present. This situation would always lead to service users being asked to leave the refuge.

#### **Recommendations:**

- *That all refuges have a system similar to Tamworth, which is linked into an alarm system*
- *That a formal procedure for dealing with perpetrators entering the building is developed and staff training is given*

## **FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

Having sufficient resources, not just to maintain levels of service but to develop new and more effective services is vital. Reviewing the methods for obtaining and managing our income is important if we are not to stagnate.

### **Systems:**

We have very tight procedures for controlling our finances and our financial regulations help us to ensure the safety of our finances and information.

### **Benchmarking:**

In order to compete in a culture of contracting and tendering it is important that we know how we compare with similar organisations. We have been benchmarking our services for some time and continue to do so. We currently have unit costs which are roughly comparable with other Staffordshire services, but are lower than regional costs.

### **Diversity of funding:**

We are investigating other means of raising money and this is an area of development for us.

### **Risk assessments:**

We review risks to the organisation and respond quickly to safeguard our financial position.

### **Recommendations:**

- *That we see benchmarking as an on-going process*
- *That key staff are trained in competitive tendering*
- *That we continue to monitor and review our fundraising strategy and develop a diversity of funding*

## **Fundraising**

A review of our fundraising processes has been undertaken and two teams have been developed to undertake this:

- Director, Deputy Director, and Finance Officer to undertake trust / corporate fundraising
- Fundraising group to undertake direct fundraising

In the first team we have reviewed the following:

- basic procedures for dealing with funding
- reporting processes to funders
- tools for fundraising
- corporate fundraising opportunities
- community fundraising

We have identified a number of ways that we could engage with the corporate sector in order to gain financial support as well as support in kind.

We are very keen to ensure that our fundraising programme is as efficient and effective as possible. To this end we have now got three smaller groups which are all accountable to the Finance Sub Committee:

Fundraising team – Director, Deputy and Finance Officer who do all applications, bids and tendering documents

Fundraising group – who manage the small events, stands and campaigns

Friends of Pathway – who organise the larger events.

It is vital that we are able to report back to funders with the correct information and providing evidence of any outcomes that they have requested. Building relationships with funders is key to future applications being successful. We have looked at the tools that we use in our fundraising work and at the records that we keep and who maintains them. We now have a database system which should make our work more straightforward and easier to organise and audit.

All incoming payments are recorded on arrival and there are procedures in place for storing information regarding the amounts and purpose of donations. A data base is kept of all donors and is regularly updated.

## **INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE**

In line with Data Protection and the need for confidentiality we have reviewed the storage of documents and the way that we handle confidential information.

### **Information and Finance**

We hold the following data on service users:

- Database held centrally and in each refuge
- Helpline database held centrally
- Card index of current and former residents
- Room occupancy records
- Service user files and support plans

We also retain information about other agencies, which is largely their own leaflets, posters and generic directories.

Data is recorded both manually and electronically. Confidential information is maintained in locked cabinets or stored on a database which is password protected. All computers are also password protected.

Information is shared internally on a need to know basis, and externally with the consent of the service user, or without consent when necessary to protect the service user or her child / children.

Information which needs to be shared with staff regarding changes in legislation etc are fed down from management meetings and shared at staff meetings. Keeping staff updated is vital and will be done through supervisions, memos and the daybook. For specific and sensitive information, such as MARAC files, the use of a secure e-mail system is in place for key staff.

Should service users have any comments or complaints we have a policy which is explained to them on admission, and in more detail in the Residents' Handbook. We welcome the use of this process to help us to improve our services.

### **Recommendations:**

- *That monitoring of security of information is on-going and regularly reviewed*
- *That communication systems between sites are enhanced and IT is used to better effect, i.e. networking of computers*
- *To introduce a server which backs up all information, and allows safe sharing of documents*

### **Staff Information**

All staff have work plans and keep a record of their appointments in their personal and office diaries. Staff all have regular supervision sessions and appraisals. We are

committed to ensuring that our staff are trained, supported and empowered to reach their potential as part of our Investors in People quality standard.

Staff completed an Employee Satisfaction Survey early in 2008 but felt that the results would have been different if done later, when the news that a pay rise was on hold was announced. Fortunately this has now been resolved and the pay rise was backdated.

A new Well Being Monitoring Form has been introduced and Managers are being asked to monitor their workforce, and to plot absences and stress levels in staff.

### **Finance Information**

All budget holders receive monthly updates on their actuals and budgets to check for variances and to be able to manage their finances.

### **Physical Resources**

Spending is monitored in terms of the success of projects but there is still work to be done to improve this.

### **Service Users**

We have a number of ways to capture information regarding customer satisfaction. We use house meetings and exit interviews. We also encourage complaints and comments from service users. We are developing a Service User Forum so that service users have a real voice. In addition we are working on providing ways to consult with children.

### **Quality**

We are currently undertaking an accommodation review and service users have been involved in this. Quality Standards are a key focus and we are aiming to work harder in this area by developing new ways of capturing this information. Any resident dissatisfaction is treated as a complaint. Staff competencies are being developed which will look at the quality levels of staff performance.

### **Senior Management**

Trustees receive reports from Managers, but these are being restructured and developed. Staff appraisal records are maintained but generally treated as confidential.

### **Process**

Staff work plans are being redesigned to develop personal competencies assessments which will lead to training programmes focusing on areas where there are skills gaps.

### **Caseloads**

Caseloads are monitored during supervision sessions in order to avoid overloads.

### **Recruitment**

We do not keep a log of staff vacancies but will be monitoring staff turnover as part of our Health and Well Being Monitoring in future.

### **Outreach Visits**

Staff keep records of all outreach visits. Mileage is monitored through staff expense sheets.

### **Problems**

Not all staff have the same skill level or skill set. The competencies that we are developing will highlight training needs and skills gaps. Communication can be difficult between different sites, and staff do not always work as a big team, but remain loyal to their own individual teams. Equipment needs to be regularly upgraded and financially this can be difficult.

## **FINANCIAL FRAMEWORKS**

### **Internal controls**

We have an approval process for setting new staff salaries. We also have written procedures for petty cash. We may need to develop a system of approving purchase requisitions. Outputs are recorded so that value for money can be established, although this is in need of further development.

Currently volunteer time is not logged, and this is added value which should be counted and assessed against our investment into the volunteer programme. We have cash flow forecasts and monthly finance reports to the Trustees. We also have a depreciation policy. Fundraising costs are evaluated for the break even point.

We are working on Full Cost Recovery. We are also selling some of our training and resources but there is a great deal of scope to develop this further.

### **Recommendations:**

- *Staff development plans need to be redesigned and structured to develop individual skills*
- *Value for money systems need to be developed – not purely financial but in terms of social investment*

- *A Service User Forum is being developed and needs to be maintained and consultation processes for children also need to be developed.*
- *Employee Satisfaction Surveys need to be carried out at least bi-annually*
- *Reports for Trustee Meetings need to be further developed and regularly evaluated*
- *Financial systems to be regularly reviewed and revised when necessary*
- *Full cost recovery to be included in all potential funding bids*