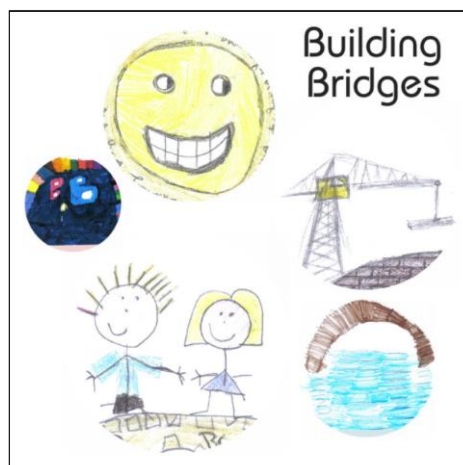




'Building Bridges': end of year 2 evaluation report

Vikki Butler

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Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Section 1: The context and purpose of the evaluation | 3 |
| Section 2: Assessing objective 1- Learning from the project will be used to inform future policy, best practice and services for young people in transition | 5 |
| Section 3: Assessing objective 2- Young disabled people will take part in a broader range of social, leisure and/ or work related activities, leading to reduced social isolation | 6 |
| Section 4: Assessing objective 3- Young disabled people will have increased confidence and skills so they can successfully manage transitions and lead full, active lives | 8 |
| Section 5: Assessing objective 4- The services provided by a range of organisations in Monmouthshire will be widened and augmented by the participation of more young disabled people in their activities. This will improve partnership working to produce more joined up holistic local options | 10 |
| Section 6: Identifying good practice | 12 |
| Section 7: Potential difficulties | 15 |
| Section 8: Conclusions and next steps | 18 |
| Appendix: Assessing evaluation methods and next steps for year 3 | 21 |

SECTION 1: CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

Purpose of the evaluation

This evaluation has four main purposes:

- To evaluate the extent to which the 4 project outcomes and associated change indicators have been met at the end of year 2.
- To comment upon the process of meeting the project targets, specifically identifying good practice and potential causes for concern.
- To suggest ways in which the evaluation should be adapted or support meeting the project outcomes in year 3.
- In line with the Big Lottery Fund guidelines for self-evaluation, to consider issues of effectiveness and impact of the project's work.

Methods undertaken to produce this report

Different methods have been used to create this evaluation report. Specifically they include:

- Project write up and researcher notes from a project feedback event. 28 people attended the event and it included a mix of parents, young people, representatives of partner organisations and a few volunteers. The event included presentations from young people, discussion about the project and an activity to enable continued informal exchanges of ideas.
- Researcher observation and project focus group notes from a steering group review meeting. 24 people attended this event including parents, young people (a ratio of roughly 2/3 parents to 1/3 young people) and two volunteers. The meeting consisted of digital stories and presentations by young people followed by two focus groups discussing 3 questions- what has gone well within the project, what could be improved and what difference the project has made to participants.
- Researcher observation notes and informal conversations from meeting approximately 12 young people at a starter group youth club.
- Analysis of secondary data. This included the end of year 1 and end of year 2 monitoring reports, the end of year 1 evaluation report, the Bright New Futures end of year 1, activity monitoring data from project workers and information requested to the project manager from the evaluator.
- Analysis of 4 digital diaries and a slide film about Duke of Edinburgh experiences.

What is being evaluated?

Before discussing the successes of the project it is useful to summarise the project activities so it is clear what is being evaluated. Year 2's project activities have continued with a model established in year 1; whereby young people can attend one of 3 regional starter groups and this enables them to participate in the project direction regarding developing regular groups and spin-off activities. Regular year 2 group activities have included inclusive youth groups on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Spin-off activities include Golf, Petanque, Swimming, Easyline Gym, DJ sessions, Drama and Dance.

Examples of the range of activities that have been delivered during year 2 are:

- *Socialising*- chill out, starter youth clubs, Big nights out, Friday group, social events, inclusive youth groups
- *Kitchen skills*: cooking, baking
- *Sports*- multi sports, canoeing, sailing, archery, bike bash, bowling, swimming, pool, petanque, football, individual/ group sports, gym, golf
- *Outside and environment activities*: camping, fishing, geo-caching, bat walk, BBQ, Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.
- *Performance/ arts*- drama, performing arts, light painting, dance/ belly dancing, Yam Jams DJ sessions, Fynnon theatre group,
- *Therapies*- drama therapy, sensory sessions
- *Films/ shows*- grease, cinema, theatre
- *Towards employment*- independent travel where needed, volunteering/ work, food coop

In addition to these activities the project has developed a young people volunteer base and provided significant one to one support for young people who wish to join a community activity, volunteer or require more intensive support before feeling able to join in with a group activity. One to one support has also been given to young people to find volunteer work experience. The project has worked in partnership with existing community organisations and other sectors to establish joint working and facilitate disabled young people's inclusion within community facilities, activities and spaces. This evaluation report is assessing the successes of these activities in terms of how they contribute to meeting the 4 project objectives as well as identifying which specific elements are linked to good practice.

Project participant profiles

The project has engaged a low percentage of Welsh speakers and participants from black and minority ethnic communities, but this is consistent with the demographic profile of Monmouthshire. Approximately two thirds of participants are male and one third female. Upon scrutiny of the activities undertaken, it does not appear that there should be any more appeal to males than females regarding the service on offer. Therefore the gender difference could be ascribed to certain disabilities affecting males more than females, but the evaluator would suggest that the gender ratio should be monitored.

The number of young people the project has worked with is consistently above the target of 40 per year. In year 1 the project received 116 referrals and 69 young people became participants; in year 2, 46 young people have become involved. Overall 115 young people have been involved across the two years and in year two alone, 112 young people have been active within the project.

An analysis of those referrals who chose not to become involved in the project is given in section 7 entitled 'Potential Difficulties'.

SECTION 2: ASSESSING OBJECTIVE 1- LEARNING FROM THE PROJECT WILL BE USED TO INFORM FUTURE POLICY, BEST PRACTICE AND SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN TRANSITION

Indicator 1: The project is reviewed annually and an end of project evaluation report is produced and circulated to project partners and other interested parties. 1 review report is written every year, including feedback from young people, families and other partners.

Indicator 2: The project is reviewed annually and an end of project evaluation report is produced and circulated to project partners and other interested parties. 1 final evaluation report due in 4th year.

In addition to fulfilling Big Lottery Fund monitoring requirements, Building Bridges has undertaken evaluations at the end of years one and two. C.A.R.P. Collaborations have been commissioned to undertake the end of year 2 evaluation and to work with the project to disseminate aspects of the evaluation to decision makers and partner organisations. For each of the evaluation reports feedback has been taken from young people, parents and partner organisations. Section 8 of this report suggests next steps that detail potential arenas for disseminating aspects of the project's work.

During year 2, Building Bridges has started to involve young people in dissemination about the project and the impact it has had upon young people's lives. At project events in September and October 2015 four young people had their first experience of giving a presentation, and spoke about the activities and challenges of the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, whilst 3 more young people gave presentations regarding the difference the project has made to their lives. 4 young people have made digital diaries- one shown in the project feedback event and 3 shown in the steering group meeting. One young volunteer has appeared within the local media regarding their involvement in the Best Buddies scheme and an associated trip to America. Not only do these activities meet this objective but they also raise confidence and enable young people to think about which aspects of the project they would like to stress to decision makers. This was summarised by young people, saying:

'It has boosted my confidence – doing my presentation'

Suggested dissemination activities during year 3 could be undertaken in partnership with young people and could aim to fulfil some of the project objectives. In this way, the evaluation process can be used to support the project aims as well as comment upon project targets and objectives. Year 3 plans continue the trajectory of participatory dissemination, which was first raised in the year 1 evaluation report 'Next Steps' section which stated:

'We will work out a way of presenting our findings to a wider audience, and will see whether any of the young people on our project are able to help us with this task.'

SECTION 3: ASSESSING OBJECTIVE 2: YOUNG DISABLED PEOPLE WILL TAKE PART IN A BROADER RANGE OF SOCIAL LEISURE AND/ OR WORK RELATED ACTIVITIES, LEADING TO REDUCED SOCIAL ISOLATION

Indicator: Young disabled people report an increase in social, leisure and/or work-related activities, and an improvement in their 'social support network' (using language that the young person understands).

The list of activities cited in section 1 under the section 'what is being evaluated' highlights the breadth of activities offered by Building Bridges. Secondary data analysis confirms that there is excellent regular attendance at repeated activities such as the social events or petanque. There is also evidence that some of the young people have found hobbies that they have pursued. For example, one young person attended baking 8 times, one young person attending multi sports 5 times, one attended performing arts three times and 8 young people want to be further involved in volunteering and work experience. The data is clear that all of the project participants who have attended more than 2 or 3 activities have taken part in a broader range of activities.

However, the important of providing activities is not solely so that the participants have activities to do. Through providing activities, the project has reduced isolation, enabled friendships to develop and provided an arena for peer support. Each of these outcomes are explored further below.

Activities that have reduced isolation

At the feedback event and at the steering group, parents stressed how socially isolated the young people had been before they joined the project. Parents said:

'The only company before was adult or school friends. This is a different type of friendship.'

'It removes isolation from young person.'

'It got my daughter out of her bedroom.'

'It's given my son something to look forward to every week.'

'Education in special units – the separation causes barriers and isolation; nobody to talk to; nobody listens; difficult to make progress'

'It must continue – these young people have nothing else.'

This was also backed up by young people's digital stories. For example, one young man spoke about how he had increased confidence, developed in himself and broadened his horizons. He described a sense of self confidence, which he compared to his experience of being 'alone and unhealthy' before the project started.

Developing friendships

Parents spoke about the socialising that occurred through attending activities:

‘Being able to get involved in activities with people and being social’

‘Youth Club – sociable. Enjoy making friends.’

‘Opened up social events – we want to do things with other people.’

‘More socially active’

‘Networking – for young people’

‘Makes friend’s’

Young people stated that they had made new friends but also explained that this was different to the friendships that they had within education environments. They stated that within Building Bridges they had connections between each other and were beginning to understand relationships between people. They also have developed a degree of mutual support and seek out each other opinions, for example, through discussing college options. Parents expanded upon this through stating that the project offered a social life which had not been available prior to Building Bridges:

‘[it] has given my daughter a social life and activities to enjoy.’

‘Instead of being ‘written off’ at the end of formal education they have been given a social, exciting world.’

Summary of assessing the criteria for objective 2

Building bridges has exceeded the target of 40 young people taking part in a broader range of social, leisure and/or work-related activities during both the first and second years. Additionally, not only has this had the impact of reducing social isolation but it has also enabled friendships to develop; which include sharing opinions and offering mutual peer support.

SECTION 4: ASSESSING OBJECTIVE 3- YOUNG DISABLED PEOPLE WILL HAVE INCREASED CONFIDENCE AND SKILLS SO THEY CAN SUCESSFULLY MANAGE TRANSITIONS AND LEAD FULL, ACTIVE LIVES

Indicator: Young people report that they have increased confidence and skills to get involved in community life. Young person's views will be supplemented, where appropriate, by trusted supporters such as family members.

There was general consensus that the project has enabled participants to have higher levels of confidence with parents and young people saying things such as:

‘Activities; Confidence – building’

‘More confidence’

‘Mixing with lots of young people leads to increased confidence.’

‘Confidence to go out’

‘Can walk into room with strangers now’

Many young people and parents linked confidence to gaining independence and having higher self-esteem. Conversations with 4 young people at the project feedback event confirmed that the most important aspect of the project for them was gaining independence, which meant they were able to see friends away from the school or college environment, without parents being involved and having skills that enable self-reliance. This was reiterated by parents:

‘It has given them an independent existence, one that does not involve their parents making all the decisions’

‘Lifted self-esteem’

‘Helped self-worth and understanding’

‘My girl is now involved in the community and independent with her peer group. A happy sociable young person.’

‘No doubt in my mind. Confidence and Independence have increased.’

‘More belief in myself; more hope for the future’ (young person)

Activities such as camping and D of E were described as being particularly good for fostering independent skills, as summarised by the following two quotes from young people:

‘Camping – first time overnight away from home.’

‘Camping ... ! Time out from family to learn independence’

In year 2, the project has delivered 3 camping trips involving 60 young people and 5 young people completed their Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Expedition.

The project's model of working is person centred, whereby young people choose what they wish to do and therefore not all participants will become involved in groups. However, for those who do choose to join groups, the model of joining a starter group to enable confidence and skills to grow before progressing onto other activities and mainstream environments appears to be successful for the majority of participants. There is not substantial data to comment further upon this and this assertion is based upon data inference rather than substantial concrete evidence.

Raised confidence, independence and self-esteem contribute to widening social skills that enable young people to engage within community life:

'It's helped my social skills'

'Learning to cope with challenges and different situations'

'... they are in an environment where they can develop skills and abilities to take them forward in life.'

Summary of meeting objective 3

Building Bridges has exceeded the target of 40 young people having increased confidence and skills in both years 1 and 2. In addition it has contributed to enabling young people to lead full and active lives through increasing their independence and supporting the development of other associated social skills.

SECTION 5: ASSESSING OBJECTIVE 4- THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY A RANGE OF ORGANISATIONS IN MONMOUTHSHIRE WILL BE WIDENED AND AUGMENTED BY THE PARTICIPATION OF MORE YOUNG DISABLED PEOPLE IN THEIR ACTIVITIES. THIS WILL IMPROVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING TO PRODUCE MORE JOINED UP, HOLISTIC LOCAL OPTIONS

Indicator 1: Community groups will report increases in the number of young disabled people who are joining in their activities.

In year 2, 12 local groups have included young people from Building Bridges in their activities. These are: Monmouth Angling Club, Abergavenny Origami Group, Llandegfedd Sailing Club, Llangattock Archers, Bethany Baptist Church, Caldicot Choir Hall, Severnvale Equestrian Centre, Danceblast, Abergavenny Food Cooperative, Abergavenny Community Centre and Abergavenny Tea Dance. Additionally, 7 of the 11 community groups from year 1 are still including young people from the Building Bridges project, taking the cumulative total at the end of year 2 to 23 community groups. The project cites 3 reasons for community groups no longer including young disabled people:

- Young people no longer being supported to attend due to group timings
- Group discontinuing
- Young people losing interest in the activity

These reasons in conjunction with the low number of groups who no longer have disabled young people attending their activities suggest that the project's current approach to community connecting is successful.

It should be noted that project workers undertake capacity building prior to a disabled young person joining the group. Firstly, they contact the group organisers and discuss what is involved. Secondly, the project worker attends the first session with one or more young people, offering them support when needed and to see how they get on. Lastly, in some cases, the project worker fades so that the young person continues attending without support. In other instances further support is found or problems arise that require solving. Informal training is given to group leaders if necessary.

In addition to joining existing community groups, the project has also enabled young people to go out in community spaces. The 'staying safe' and 'big nights out' activities have taught young people about personal safety when in community settings in late evening. Targeted at young people aged 18 and over, the aim was to experience a late night out (7.30 – 11.30pm) and be familiar with venues where alcohol is being consumed. Young people were encouraged to act responsibly and look out for each other, particularly when travelling to and from the venues. It has provided a valuable learning experience for those who needed support with transport and for those who had not been out in groups in the late evening. These experiences are vital for young people, not only to stay safe, but to also feel able to go out into community spaces alongside non-disabled people of a similar age. These activities act as a facilitated step on the road to social inclusion at a community level.

The project has also enabled young people to participate in community places. By facilitating voluntary work experience the project has enabled more community spaces to include disabled young people both in their staff teams, and through their increased disability awareness. Some of the project participants who had voluntary work experience have progressed to gain part time paid employment.

Some parents were asking for more of this kind of support to enable participation in community life, not just within groups. The following two quotes exemplify the consensus among parents on this issue:

‘More help with employment, work experience, interview skills, CV building: local companies like ASDA would be interested in meeting young people from Building Bridges.’

‘The biggest difference: life changes a sense of place and in the community – importance of vocational work.’

Indicator 2: 40% of young people, parents and professionals will report improvements in the way that statutory services are working to support young people with their life/transition plans.

This indicator is likely to become more measureable in years 3 and 4. However, currently it is possible to examine existing qualitative data and surmise that parents’ experiences of other statutory services are highly variable; with some parents reporting that the project has created better partnership working and therefore an improvement in transition plans whilst others report that statutory services are ‘still battles’ and ‘a brick wall’. It should also be noted that current economic conditions are resulting in reductions of statutory service staff and projects which could affect meeting the criteria for this indicator.

What families do have in common is that they feel they would be struggling without the input and existence of the Building Bridges project. They describe the experience of their involvement with Building Bridges as:

‘The first thing I haven’t had to fight for’

‘Good to have someone singing from same hymn sheet.’

Whilst current evidence regarding this indicator is inconclusive, there is good evidence of positive partnership working between Building Bridges and parents and evidence of good partnership working between Building Bridges, community services and some statutory services.

Conclusions regarding meeting the criteria for objective 4

The project has exceeded the target for the first indicator under this objective. The aim was for 10 community groups in each year to include disabled young people. In year 1 the achievement was 11 community groups and in year 2 12, with a cumulative total of 23 community groups including disabled young people within their activities. In addition to enabling inclusion in community groups, the project is undertaking capacity building with staff in community groups and businesses to enable disabled young people to have both a presence and to participate within community places and spaces. Whilst parents request more focus upon vocational skills towards employment it should be noted that this is a staff intensive activity and therefore needs to be balanced with other aspects of the project.

It can take some time for partnership working to produce more joined up holistic options and for organisations to work together to create a noticeable improvement in services such as life or transition plans. Therefore conclusive comment cannot be made regarding indicator 2 at this stage.

SECTION 6: IDENTIFYING GOOD PRACTICE

Participation of young people and parents

It is clear that Building Bridges has a good young person centred approach which implements participative practice. The service delivery model has enabled young people to directly input into what they want to do; whether this is a type of activity, one to one support to undertake employment or volunteering, or progressively increase confidence and independence. Additionally, young people are actively encouraged to be involved in decision making about the project via steering group meetings and feedback sessions and they were involved in the selection of the external evaluators.

‘Flexibility in the group – activities are arranged which suit the individual’s preferences’

‘Have similar interests and differences but it’s not forced the young people choose what to join in with.’ [young man’s presentation]

‘Problems and solutions are being identified by the young people therefore they can be part of the steering group.’

Parents are also encouraged to participate within the project via steering group meetings and feedback. There is evidence of very good partnership working with parents to ensure that their concerns can be heard and addressed; and that they can suggest direction to the project. For example, parents were invited to the project feedback event to meet external evaluators from different organisations and are an integral part of the project steering group. Through working with parents, the project enables a holistic approach that can take account of parents’ hopes and concerns for their adolescent children. Parents described the impact of their participation in the project:

‘It’s given me another direction of thought – possibilities and ways forward for my son.’

‘[project workers] experience and ideas have given me more confidence for my son’s future.’

‘Networking – for young people and parents’

It is evident that through implementing participative practice, the Building Bridges project has an ethos of “being of service” rather simply providing a service. This is summed up by project workers stating in focus groups:

‘You should be more of my boss’

It is clear that the participative practice works to empower project participants, which includes parents as well as young people.

Highly skilled staff

It is highly evident that young people and parents acknowledge and appreciate that they have contact with highly skilled staff within the Building Bridges project. Young people described how different project workers are more like friends, but that they still challenge them and support them when they need it. Parents were unanimously agreed that staff were exceptionally skilled in knowing how to support individual young people and encourage new skills and experiences. This is best captured via the quote below:

‘Employing brilliant staff! As ever with young people like ours the quality of the people working with them makes all the difference.’ [parent]

Enabling in depth understanding of disability and acceptance between young people

Parents and young people spoke about how the project enables the young people to develop an understanding of their own, and each other’s, disabilities but how this contributes to tolerance and a positive appreciation of unique attributes within all individuals. Parents said:

‘Accepting and tolerant. Hard to understand and learn, but a big thing.’

‘Understand disability, self-reflection and feeling OK in self. Tolerance and acceptance of each other.’

‘Installs kindness and respect to each other’

Young people tended to be less articulate than parents on this relatively abstract issue, but their experiences are best explained by one young man’s use of words such as ‘weird and wonderful’ ‘crazy and different’ to describe the positive understanding of disability and celebration of people’s unique character traits that he had gained.

Ability to enable vocational skills for employment

The Building Bridges project is delivering multi-faceted activities to advance social cohesion and provide the best circumstances for transition to adulthood. Parents and young people highlighted the vocational skills that had been learnt and how difficult it is for disabled young people to gain employment related skills. They said:

‘Vocational side: Job applications, Interview technique – needs more of this.’

‘The shop was good. It got them out there, got it working. It’s hard to get work experience without Building Bridges.’

‘More employable’ [in response to what difference has the project made]

‘Pop-up shop helped with money and learning about work’

‘I had volunteer work placements leading to a P/t job.’

Positive impact upon family life

Through participative practice with parents, parents are noticing that family life has changed for them and they feel that the project has had a positive impact upon their day to day family life. They have enjoyed the networking opportunities that the project has afforded them but also stated the project had given:

‘Some free time for some parents’

‘More consistency – for families (some things are every week)

‘Gives parents knowledge of young people – safe, time out and socialising for young people, the whole family benefits’

Additionally, some parents described how family life was more talkative and included discussion with and between siblings because the young people had new things to talk about and the confidence to discuss things.

Conclusions regarding good practice

The project is working to a high standard with clear elements of good practice emerging out of the data. There is scope for these areas of good practice to be further investigated during year 3 of the evaluation, for, as one parent commented:

‘It’s really powerful the work that’s started here. But it can be so much more. Shouldn’t be only a youth club.’

SECTION 7: POTENTIAL DIFFICULTIES

This section points to potential difficulties that the project may face over the coming year. It should be stressed that this section is not highlighting current difficulties, but suggests issues that exist within the data which may need extra attention or planning in order to avoid difficulties arising.

Matching the need for safe environments with access to mainstream settings

There is a clear rationale for providing segregated starter groups which evidence suggests is essential for young people to learn together, develop confidence, give peer support and gain further understanding of tolerance, but some parents want segregated activities and feel that their young people are not able to be in mainstream settings, mainly because of safety concerns or feelings that they will not cope:

‘A wonderful safe group’

‘Building Bridges – best thing. Nothing in community for Young People with additional needs.’

‘Opened up outside world. Increased confidence (before lots of things in mainstream and couldn’t cope)’

It is possible that the project will develop tension between the provision of segregated activities and activities in mainstream settings. This tension would not be felt by all parents which could further complicate project direction, particularly as parents are becoming more involved in the steering group. There are a number of ways of avoiding this potential problem, some of which were identified by parents themselves:

- Peer support among parents. Parents want to meet and support each other which is an ideal opportunity for parents to share concerns and positive experiences.
- Build capacity in mainstream settings. To an extent this is already being undertaken through work with community groups. However, parents felt that they would have less concerns if they know that there are properly trained people to meet the support needs that young people may have:

‘Bring training somehow for more mainstream settings’

‘Training for outside teams/ workers/staff (with the involvement of the young people) in working with people with additional needs’

- Use a champion system so that staff in other organisations who are currently delivering segregated activities, for example the golf and gym instructors; train their colleagues, with input from the young people, in disability awareness and facilitating support.

‘Get more staff in leisure centres who can run activities for people with additional needs – X is great but we need more options and more staff who understand: staff need more awareness training; inexperienced staff could be introduced to groups so that they get to

know the young people with additional needs and so the young people can get to know them gradually; this could lead to better use of staff and more income for leisure centres. This also applies to other places: like libraries and other community places.'

- Support young people to meet each other outside of activities, just to meet up and have independent friendships:

'Some young people meet outside of activities – would like to see more of this. Could be more supported in Building Bridges.'

Ever growing casework

There have been far more young people referred to the project than originally anticipated in year 1, and this continued in year 2. The end of year 1 evaluation report raised the question:

'How will the project cope with an increasing number of young people being referred onto the project?'

Within the next steps section of the end of year 1 evaluation report it was identified that there needed to be work with project partners to find the best way of dealing with the increasing number of people involved in the project. The current mechanism for enabling young people to move through the project is holistic and young person focused. However, if the trajectory of referrals continues in year 3 there is a possibility of casework becoming unmanageable. Suggestions for over-coming this potential difficulty were made during the evaluation process:

'Support and facilitate progression through the service.'

'More progression: more young people moving into mainstream groups and activities, and more people getting involved in Building Bridges activities' (parent)

'Facilitate more structured peer support.'

'Peer support – we could do with more of this. E.g. help with travel training, discussions re choices, support.' (project worker)

Managing volunteers and friendship creation

The project has made excellent progress in involving young volunteers with an additional 30 young people becoming involved in year 2 to support the pilot delivery of the 'Best Buddies Monmouthshire' (the local branch of Best Buddies International). The volunteers are mostly young people without disabilities who are interested in becoming 'peer buddies' or helping out with other aspects of the project's activities. The 'Best Buddies' scheme has an evidence base and can provide much needed role model opportunities between older disabled young people and younger disabled people as well as facilitate peer relationships between disabled young people and their non-disabled peers. However, it is possible that volunteers will perceive themselves as 'helping out' rather enabling friendships to grow, summed up by a parent as:

‘[there is a] Difference between volunteers and making real friends’

This can be avoided by careful recruitment, training and facilitation of peer support.

Similar volunteer projects have found it difficult when peer volunteers reach a certain age and move away for study or into full time jobs and drift away from other project participants. The impact of these life course changes upon the young people receiving peer support can be reduced with careful planning.

Reaching young people who are referred but not engaged

The end of year 1 evaluation report identified that young people with more complex needs were less engaged in the project and that certain barriers were stopping other young people from becoming engaged. This trajectory has continued in year 2, with the barriers being identified as: medical/ health conditions, rurality, transport difficulties, low levels of motivation and confidence, those in low income families, work and college schedules, residential college patterns and those who have parents who are not in a position to transport their children or facilitate their involvement. Project activity charts show that project staff are doing their best to engage these young people, often making multiple home and school visits. For example, from analysis of one project worker’s register and work summary in year 2, 5 young people were visited 3 times, 1 young person 4 times and 1 young person 5 times.

Years one and two monitoring reports suggested that ways to engage these young people should be sought. However, this could be a problem given the referral trajectory, and maybe certain characteristics of non-engaged young people should be targeted e.g. those with complex needs, or those in low income households; and specific engagement plans made so that some success is made towards those who are currently non engaged, but ensuring it is manageable.

SECTION 8: CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Conclusions: Assessment of meeting the project outcomes

The Building Bridges project has met all of the 4 project outcomes and exceeded targets in the areas of building social networks, raising confidence and skills to manage transition and lead active lives and in the number of community groups that include disabled young people. However, there are also additional areas of good practice and work, namely, in enabling young people to use and participate within community places and events, recruitment of volunteers, participative practice, and staff skill. Whilst there are potential problems identified, not of the problems have arisen yet and there are clear pathways so they can be avoided or solved.

Next steps 1: Parents network

Parents were appreciative of being able to meet each other and talk about the service provided by Building Bridges for their children. There was support within project events for parents to meet regularly with a view to forming a peer support parents network. Some parents wanted a network that would reflect on issues facing families with disabled young people and offer peer support:

‘1st time we have sat down – be good to have this every 3 - 6 months to reflect

‘Could be of use to have parents meet to advise each other, give group support: ideas, info, tips

‘Dealing with walls so can help support each other.’

‘This has been a good experience, getting round the table to talk.’

‘Although we want our offspring to be independent, some ‘networking’ amongst parents might be useful – maybe the occasional coffee morning whilst an activity for the young people might be good. I think we have found it good to meet each other today.’

Other parents wanted to have more input to the project and offer support to the project so that it can meet its’ aims more easily:

‘Parents meetings – want to know more aims so can help out’

‘Parents can help support the project: share info and self-help’

‘Community benefits: e.g. parents linked’

Next steps 2: Young people’s forum for the project

Building on existing participative practice a young people’s forum would enable young people to have distinct input into the direction of the project and enable a group for discussions with policy makers, citizen voice and speaking out with regard to young people’s rights and disabled people’s rights. Not

only would a forum enable dissemination of aspects of the project (as identified by the young people) but it would also enable learning regarding citizenship and voice and build of confidence. A forum could be a flexible mechanism to support:

‘Young people share their experiences to help other young people to get involved,’

to highlight the most pressing issues they feel they face and to contribute to some of the sustainability ideas for maintaining the project. A project youth forum could also feed into the activities of the national network for disabled young people ‘Together for Rights’ facilitated by Children in Wales.

Next steps 3: Overcoming transport barriers

One of the many barriers faced by project participants was transport. Parents suggested that they could support the project to find solutions to transport barriers including:

‘Lift sharing and parents help drop offs’

‘Transport: more transport options for young people; better awareness training for bus drivers; more availability of concessionary transport so that young people can be more independent when possible.’

Next steps 4: Towards sustainability

Monitoring reports from years 1 and 2 highlight ideas and steps being taken by Building Bridges in order to establish sustainability. It is clear that there has been progress between years 1 and 2 towards meeting identified aims of establishing Best Buddies and assessing social enterprise models for young people to experience business and enterprise.

There is also clear movement towards establishing sustainable approaches for the new groups which have been set up and the participation of disabled young people within community groups. These sustainable approaches include partnership working across various sectors and with parents.

Next steps 5: Reaching those who have not engaged

During years 1 and 2 there is clear consideration within the monitoring systems of how to reach young people who have not engaged with the project. Current intent is to make new attempts to overcome the barriers and reach out to young people who may not have engaged or heard about the project. Evaluator suggestion would be to break this intent down to reaching out to a particular group of young people and make specific plans of how to overcome a particular barrier, in partnership with other organisations if possible.

Next steps 6: Dissemination of evaluation

Project objective 1 requires sharing learning and good practice to decision makers. There is evidence of the positive impact the project has had for participants via the digital diaries and there are various areas of good practice and innovative working. These could be disseminated at a national level in arenas such as the National Assembly for Wales Cross Party Group for Disability or hosting an event within the Senedd milling area. However, national events will need to be arranged before March 2016 because of National Assembly for Wales elections or after the summer recess in Oct. 2016. Within these time periods there could be a focus upon local authority influencing, hosting localised events, or inviting local councillors and officials to meet young people at project activities. It could also be possible to influence national organisations through providing presentations at the national forum for disabled children's policy officers hosted by Children in Wales. The creation of a young people's forum and a parents network could specifically help participatory dissemination to be undertaken.

APPENDIX: ASSESSING EVALUATION METHODS AND IDENTIFYING NEXT STEPS FOR THE EVALUATION DURING YEAR 3

Methodological issues within the evaluation

There are four methodological issues that should be addressed during the evaluation planning for year 3.

1. *Balancing parent voice with young person voice*

This report contains a clearer parent voice, or more input from parents, than from young people. This is for the following reasons:

- Parents spoke more than young people in mixed focus groups.
- Whilst young people gave digital diaries and presentations, there was a small number involved in comparison to the number of young people who have participated in the project overall.
- Evaluators have not had the opportunity to gain rapport or repeated contact with young people.
- There has not been a mechanism for enabling many young people who have not made digital diaries or undertaken presentations to directly input into the evaluation.

This can be overcome for year 3 by evaluators conducting focus groups within each of the three starter groups and supporting the creation of a youth forum.

2. *Methods for measuring increased confidence and skills*

This year the method for measuring confidence was based upon the same research data as that collected for the end of year 1 evaluation report. Whilst this occurred in the same project year and is therefore a completely legitimate way of measuring confidence some thought needs to be given to how to measure confidence for year 3. Evaluators will discuss different options with project staff to ascertain what method would best complement the current way of working to ensure new methods are not intrusive or time consuming. Evaluators would suggest a form of distance travelled personal outcomes; and can show different methods used by other similar projects.

3. *Evidencing improvements in the way statutory services work with families for transition/ life plans*

This is a difficult indicator to meet because:

- It is statistical and therefore every young person or family needs to be asked and each stated improvement needs to be qualified.
- Statutory services are currently facing resource cuts which are directly impacting upon their capacity to deliver services.
- There are numerous 'statutory services' and therefore it needs to be clarified which specific service families may be referring to.

Evaluators would suggest that working with parents, particularly if a network is formed, would be a first step to establishing measurement for this outcome. Short telephone interviews could also be conducted with partner statutory organisations so that both professional/ practitioner and parent viewpoints can be heard.

4. Assessing impact

There is no doubt that the Building Bridges project is having a positive impact upon young people's lives during transition to adulthood years. However, there is currently anecdotal evidence regarding the different aspects of the project that are creating impact and little data regarding which particular ways of working create the most positive impact. To discern these issues the evaluation questions can be honed down from "what is the impact?" to include "What creates that particular impact?" This can be easily achieved through specific phrasing of questions during focus groups and in activities with young people and parents.