



**Kensington and Chelsea Befriending Scheme**

**A report of the**

**K&C LINK Mental Health Sub-group**

**December 2010**

## **Introduction**

The Kensington and Chelsea Local Involvement Network (K&C LINK) is made up of over 680 members of the local community who share a passion for improving health and social care services.

In the K&C LINK, there is an independent mental health group that works to improve mental health services in the borough.

Current day services are going through a process of change – often referred to as a reconfiguration or modernisation. This is taking place under what is known as the personalisation agenda which hopes to transform the way in which care is delivered. This will further enable people to take care of their own support and lives, giving service users control and choice in regard to services they receive.

As part of this process, day and outreach services in the borough are facing significant changes to the way they currently operate. One suggestion discussed at the Health, Environmental Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee in late November was to close the borough's Befriending Scheme. There are currently 18 befriending relationships, twenty on the waiting list to be matched for the first time and a further eight waiting to be re-matched.

This caused concern amongst K&C LINK and the membership decided to carry out a small research piece with 15 service users on their experience of and outcomes achieved from the service. This research was limited by the time available to us and should not be seen as a full review of the service. However, we did speak to 15 of a potential 26 service users and the responses were consistent. A full copy of the questionnaire used is available at Appendix A.

## **Approach**

K&C LINK met with a total of six service users face to face at a RBKC consultation meeting in the Befriending Scheme offices in early December. Two volunteer befrienders were also in attendance. K&C LINK followed up with a further nine users via telephone interviews in the two week timeframe available to us. Access to and the consent of these respondents was kindly facilitated by the K&C Befriending Scheme. Eight respondents were male and seven were female. Ages ranged from a category of '26-45' to 'over 65' and from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds, religious beliefs and sexual preferences. All participants have/will receive a £5.00 voucher in recognition of their time and contribution to this project.

## **Acknowledgements**

The K&C LINK would like to thank the staff of the K&C Befriending Scheme, RBKC, Mr Ivan Moore (K&C LINK Mental Health Sub-group) and most of all the volunteers and people using the Befriending Service who gave their time so willingly and efficiently to help us complete this research in time. Thank you!

## Findings

### 1) Length of Time with Scheme

Of the fifteen Befriending Scheme service users we spoke to, the length of time with the service varied from one month to two years, with the average being approximately 13 months.

### 2) Mental Health Support Services

Just less than half (7) of the service users questioned currently use another mental health day or floating support service in the borough. Six of those surveyed mentioned SMART, although Hestia, MIND, Oremi and the Grove were all mentioned by at least one respondent. Three individuals use more than one other service currently.

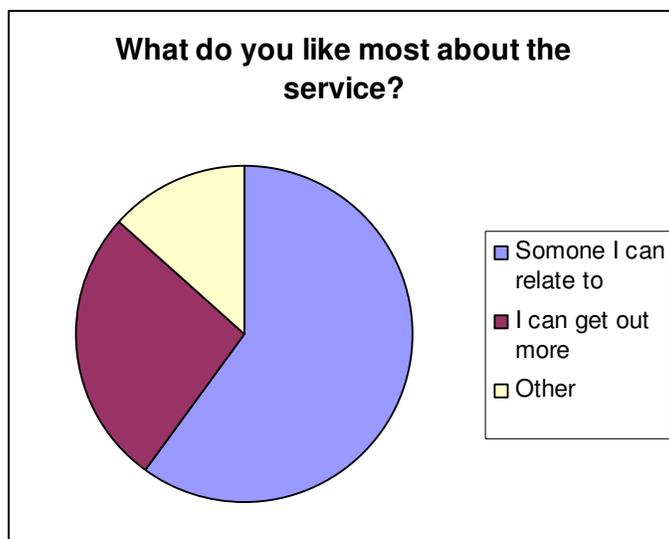
### 3) Reasons for taking up the Befriending Scheme

Two thirds of respondents (10 people) identified the need to combat 'social isolation' as their main reason for taking up the service. Other reasons listed include:

- Referrals by a Care Coordinator, Social Workers and a GP.
- Wanting to be listened to
- Assistance in managing their relationship with a medical professional and
- The independence of the service.

### 4) What do you like most about the service?

K&C LINK was struck by the overwhelmingly positive attitude (14 of 15) that respondents had to this question.

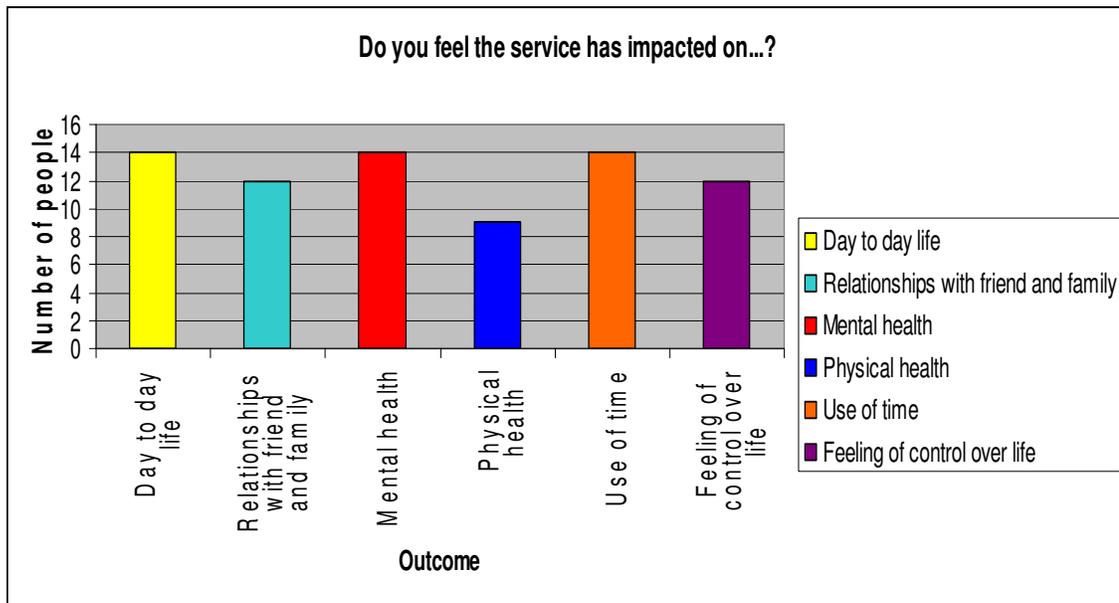


With the exception of one individual who did not feel he was in the service long enough to comment, everyone we spoke to mentioned how friendly,

interesting and trustworthy their befriender was or how having the service empowered them to go out more.

### 5) How do you feel the service has impacted on you?

This question sought to group the expected outcomes of a befriending service across six generic themes – living skills, social networks, mental health, physical health, use of time and personal responsibility. The 15 responses showed that:



Respondents felt the service positively impacted on a number of areas of their life with 'day to day life', 'mental health/recovery' and their 'use of time' eliciting the highest positive response rates.

Reasons for the perceived impact included having 'structure' in their week due to the weekly appointments, having 'responsibility', having 'confidence to find my way in the world,' being more 'lively,' better 'able to communicate' improved 'mobility' and 'English language skills.'

Other positives include:

- 'Helps me to get up in the morning'
- 'It's given me more confidence'
- 'I see more of my family'
- 'It's definitely helped with my recovery from schizophrenia'
- 'I'm now planning ahead'
- 'I have a friend.'

One individual did not feel the service had impacted on her. She is not currently using the service. She had found the service provided 'great companionship' and she 'could relate' to her befriender but felt her disability and related accessibility issues prevented her from having goals and achieving outcomes. She felt these mobility issues were causing her mental health to deteriorate further.

## 6) What do you feel has been your main achievement through the Befriending Service?

To fully portray the responses to this key question, K&C LINK is including the actual (*anonymised*) responses received in to this report:

| Respondent | Response to question   |
|------------|--|
| 1          | More confidence – to talk to other people apart from my befriender   |
| 2          | Well it's given me hope ....   |
| 3          | My outlook on life has broadened – I'm less anxious. I'm better organised. It's provided me with reassurance that I have someone to talk to about my life and that I have a friend.  |
| 4          | It was very pleasant companionship   |
| 5          | It's been good support. Helped with me depression and my language skills. I get out more.  |
| 6          | I can unburden myself with a lot of the thoughts I have in my head ...   |
| 7          | I am not getting my life back together...  |
| 8          | Companionship - someone to talk to   |
| 9          | Finding confidence   |
| 10         | <i>Did not answer (new to service)</i>   |
| 11         | Effective punctuality for meetings at different places   |
| 12         | Beginning to believe in myself   |
| 13         | Keeping all my appointments  |
| 14         | Social life has improved   |
| 15         | One-to-one support means it is good and private. I function better that way. Talking to someone helps a lot. People can intimidate me. The be-friender is very supportive and benefits me greatly. I look forward to the visit all week. Having that time gives my week structure. |

With the exception of the one individual who has been with the service for a couple of months, the service appears to have helped all those questioned significantly with social skills, creating a positive attitude and with companionship.

## 7) Are there any areas of the service you think could have been better?

This was the final question we asked of the respondents. Only five felt they had any suggestion(s) to make. Three of the five suggested more frequent befriending sessions – more than once a week would be helpful. One suggested more meetings at the 'training centre' and one wrote 'communication' but did not expand on what this might mean for the service.

## Conclusions

K&C LINK was very encouraged by the overwhelming positivity of the respondents that took part in this research. Although, we were not aiming to include the volunteer befrienders in this research we did speak to two who were keen to ensure the service remained open and wanted to continue their befriending relationships. The 'great loss to the community and the service bearing a 'proportionate burden of the cuts' were key concerns.

As the respondents mentioned three different sources of referrals, this seems to indicate that the service has built up strong links with strategic partners and local service providers. It is important the skills and knowledge of current staff are considered and included in the design and delivery of an amended service.

The listening skills and pleasant attitude of the volunteer befrienders were highlighted by many respondents as their favoured aspect of the service. This would indicate that the service has done well in matching and training volunteers for their befriending relationships.

The feedback strongly suggests that it is the volunteers themselves – their commitment, approach and independent support that play a hugely significant role in the strength of the scheme.

As the satisfaction levels appear to be very high and as the main improvement sought by service users was increased access to a befriender, K&C LINK concludes that any delay in offering the service would be detrimental. Those service users who we spoke to who had completed one year with a befriender were keen to move to a second befriending relationship as soon as possible as the structure and companionship offered was missed. K&C LINK suggests that action should be taken in the interim to address the waiting list. This service has considerable preventative value and should be a key component of new service contract.

K&C LINK is happy to help promote the service to potential befrienders and befriendees alike and will follow up with the Scheme Coordinator as appropriate.

## **Follow-up**

This report will be shared with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea on December 10<sup>th</sup>. A copy will also be sent to the K&C Befriending Scheme for the information of all the participants, staff and service users.

The report will also be made available via the K&C LINK office, the website ([www.rbkclink@hestia.org](mailto:www.rbkclink@hestia.org)) and at the next Mental Health Sub-group meeting on January 18<sup>th</sup> from 3-5pm in Kensington United Reform Church, W8 6BL. All welcome!

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## Appendix 1

The Kensington & Chelsea Local Involvement Network (K&C LINK) is made up of members of the local community who share a passion for improving health and social care services. In the K&C LINK, we have an independent mental health group that works to improve mental health services in the borough. Local people who use or have an interest in mental health in Kensington & Chelsea have designed this survey to find out what people like/dislike about the Befriending Service.

By taking the time to complete this survey (only 8 questions), you can help us to tell the Council what kind of services you would like to see in Kensington and Chelsea to help your (or that of someone for whom you are a carer) mental health and well-being.

If you do not want to answer a question, please leave it blank and move on to the next question. Thank you for helping us and we appreciate your honesty!

*K&C LINK*

1) When did you join the Befriending Service?

2) Do you use any other services to support your mental health needs? (The Grove, Oremi, Hestia, Notting Hill, SMART, MIND, ORBBS)

Yes  No  Don't know

2a) **If yes**, please name the service(s):

3) Why did you decide to take up the Befriending Service?

4) What do you like most about the service?

5) Do you feel the service has impacted on...? (tick all that apply)

Your day to day life  Your relationships with friends/family

Your mental health/recovery  Your physical health

Your use of your time  Your feeling of control over your life

5a) If it has had an impact, can you describe in what way?

5b) If it has not, do you have any idea's why it hasn't?

6) What do you feel has been your main achievement through using the Befriending Service?

7) Are there any areas of the service that you think could have been better?

### **Equality & Diversity**

We ask you these questions to make sure we are receiving responses from all the different communities that use services in K&C. If you do not wish to fill in any question in this section, please leave it blank and then return the form to us.

**Gender:**

**Age:**

**Do you consider yourself to have a disability?**

**Please tick the box that describes your faith or religion:**

**Please tick the box that describes your ethnicity:**