



People Helping People: Five Case Studies

Prepared for the Urbact Change! Action Planning Network

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Volunteering, social action, people helping people, whatever you wish to call it, it isn't new. People have long been helping each other: from neighbours informally looking out for one another to large scale charitable organisations providing support and services to those in need. Such activities can be completely distinct from public services, they can be an integral part of them, or they can sit somewhere in-between, providing support to people before public services are needed or complementing the work of public services.

The role of people helping people is usually something additional to, rather than a central part of, the way in which public services are planned and delivered. But, at a time when public services confront increased demand, rethinking the way in which the resources and energies of the public can be utilised provides an opportunity to reconsider the very way in which public services are configured. This is not about small changes, but something far more innovative that brings the public back into public services.

But before considering *how* that could be done, it is important to consider *why* public services should make greater use of people helping people.

Why?

Involving people more in the delivery of public services is not about budget cuts and austerity, although it has been used in that way. Rather, it is about acknowledging that standardised, top-down approaches to public service delivery are no longer effective in meeting people's needs, nor their desire for more individualised and responsive public services. It is about recognising that public services, and the professionals within them, cannot meet the evident and growing demand and that, in some circumstances, people outside of public services may be better placed to provide certain activities for, and support to, others. By mobilising people alongside public service professionals there is the opportunity to improve the outcomes experienced by users, and indeed by those providing the public services themselves.

Nor should we overlook the knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm that exist within communities. Actively seeking to harness these in ways that complement public services can help to contribute to a reduction in demand for public services, such as by matching

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families who have been through difficult times to those that need support to stop a problem becoming a crisis that demands state intervention. Drawing on such skills can help to create positive outcomes in a non-judgmental, peer supported setting. And it can enable professionals to provide more support to those who need it most by reducing the demand they confront and providing a variety of different opportunities for intervening.

At the same time, history has many examples whereby people's desire to find different ways of helping each other led to new approaches to social problems being identified—from child fostering to the hospice movement. Engaging people has the potential for innovative approaches to emerge within public services; approaches that will help to address needs and demands in more effective ways. There is also the potential for more citizen involvement in public services to create greater understanding of the challenges and limitations each confront, and for increased mutual learning, leading to improved public services and a greater level of satisfaction with them.

But if the potential benefits of people helping people are to be realised, public services will need to be open to re-thinking not only the way they work, but also their very role within society. They will need to be willing to shift from delivering public services to a role that incorporates mobilising and facilitating resources over which they have little direct control.

How?

People helping people is not an easy option for public services, nor is it always a solution. There are areas where the state should act. However, it is important to critically interrogate where the boundaries are on such action and not just continue to accept long-standing ideas. There are many examples where the boundaries between the role of public services and the contribution the public can make are more blurred than might be first anticipated. For example, peer support, accompanied by professional medical treatment, has been shown to help those with health problems, such as mental illness and diabetes, to manage their condition more effectively. By thinking about the skills and knowledge people have, and how they might complement professional knowledge, or help to reduce the need for professional intervention through preventative action, new opportunities can be identified.

In short, people helping people is about the benefits of mobilising people in ways that support each other, within and alongside public services. To do it right – and to do it well – demands a fundamental rethinking of the way public services are designed and delivered. It means:

- relinquishing the ideas that public services know what people need.
- recognising that public services need to facilitate as well as deliver.
- acknowledging that public services cannot simply direct and control the way in which people help people, but must seek to align motivations and energies, particularly around less formal activities.

- developing new ways of identifying what works, and what doesn't, when people helping people activities are part of the suite of services supported by public services.
- acknowledging that front-line staff are usually best placed to understand where people helping people might be most effective, and empowering them to ask for such support.
- finding ways, such as through formal agreements with organisations, unions, etc., to ensure that people helping people is not about replacing staff who have core roles, but about complementing their work.
- involving people in ways that can feel risky and alien for public services.
- recognising that people have strengths and assets that can be harnessed, not problems and needs.
- thinking creatively about the way in which people can be involved in service delivery.

There is already a significant amount of people helping people working in and alongside public services. But there is undoubtedly the potential for more – and for it to be done in more innovative and effective ways. This is not easy; indeed it poses real challenges for public services. Before rejecting the ideas because they are too hard, there are too many interests to be negotiated, or too many ways of working entrenched in the system to be overcome, we need to think critically about the way in which public services are currently delivered and how effective they are at meeting people's needs. Rethinking the relationship between public services, the professionals who work in them, and people generally, has the potential to create public services that are more open, have more resources on which to draw, and are more responsive to people's needs.

The question that must then be answered becomes 'is this an opportunity that public services can ill-afford to ignore?, 'not ' is this too hard for public services to try and do?'

The Case Studies

Five case studies are presented in this document. These five case studies present different approaches to people helping people, with varying levels of integration into, and impact on, public services. The first two are in the education sector. **City Year** places teams of student volunteers into schools to support their work and help students who are showing early warning signs of potential longer-term problems. **The Access Project** helps able students from disadvantaged areas fulfil their aspirations to go to top universities through one to one tutoring. Two more case studies, **Home-Start** and **Family by Family**, focus on how families can be supported to thrive through the provision of peer support, backed by professional guidance. And the final case study, **GoodGym**, brings fitness and volunteering together as people combine running with visits to older and isolated individuals or to provide assistance to community based organisations.

City Year: supporting schools through service

Introduction

City Year recruits 18-25 year olds to volunteer in schools in deprived areas with the aim of reducing educational inequality. Their role is to act as near-peer role models, mentors and tutors, supporting the work of the school in three key areas: improving punctuality and attendance; behaviour; and, curriculum support. City Year focuses on enhancing educational attainment by supporting students identified by the school as needing to improve their participation or who would benefit from some focused support in the classroom. By intervening early, the ambition is that students will be able to fulfil their potential. Alongside these targeted activities, volunteers also take part in school-wide activities with a focus on making the learning environment a positive one.

How does City Year work?

City Year volunteers are recruited for a period of eleven months. It is a full-time activity with volunteers based in schools four days a week. The fifth day is spent on professional development and leadership training. Private sector City Year supporters contribute to the training and development opportunities for volunteers, such as through the provision of mentoring. Although not paid, volunteers receive a small stipend (£4,400 in London and £3,690 outside of London for their contract period) and their travel expenses during their time at City Year, as well as a distinctive uniform.

In each class, there will be targeted students who City Year volunteers will work closely with, such as through one to one and small group study support. These targeted students are identified by the school and can include pupils with behavioural problems, those with special needs or students who would benefit from some individual attention. City Year volunteers also undertake school-wide activities, including helping at after school clubs, on excursions and trips, as well as during breaks within the school day. Each team of volunteers is managed and overseen by a City Year member of staff based in the school who can provide guidance to volunteers and support their activities, and who also acts a liaison point between City Year and the school. The school is responsible for overseeing all elements of the teaching and learning work undertaken.

In order to ensure that City Year volunteers cannot displace non-teaching staff, schools must agree that all of their activities will be focused on the pupils within the school. As a result, there has been, and is, little concern as to the potential for City Year volunteers to replace paid staff within the school. Rather, the activities undertaken by City Year volunteers are seen as complementing the work of teachers and teaching assistants.

For the 2016/7 school year, City Year has nearly 200 volunteers based in 24 schools across London, Greater Manchester and the West Midlands, supporting some 15,000 students.

How is City Year supported?

City Year works in schools where at least half of the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium payment. This government provided payment is designed to raise educational attainment amongst disadvantaged pupils. Teams of between six and seventeen volunteers are sent into participating schools, depending on their size. The cost of City Year to schools is based on the size of the team. Given the costs, estimated by City Year as being between ten and thirty per cent of a school's pupil premium grant, City Year generally works in schools where there are more than 300 pupils.

City Year also receives support from the corporate and philanthropic sectors.

What is the Future of City Year?

By 2020, City Year hopes to have some 500 volunteers in schools in five cities, supporting around 40,000 pupils.

Organisational Information

City Year was formally launched in the UK in 2010. It is based on the successful US City Year initiative, established in 1988, which now works in 27 cities across the US. City Year operates as a charity in the UK.

The Access Project: helping students to achieve their aspirations

Introduction

In the UK there has been a strong focus on tackling underperformance amongst disadvantaged students. More able students from such backgrounds who require a little support to flourish have not, however, received the same attention. The aim of The Access Project is to help disadvantaged but talented students to attend top universities, including Oxford and Cambridge universities and the 'Russell Group' of universities – a grouping of 24 leading universities in the UK.

The positive impact of one to one/small group tutoring support on raising educational attainment has been widely acknowledged. However, the provision of such tutoring is far beyond the resources of the public sector, and also for many parents. The Access Project seeks to fill that gap.

How does The Access Project work?

Working with students from schools where 30 per cent are eligible for free school meals², The Access Project provides one to one tutoring at key points in a student's study, specifically GCSE and A levels³. Alongside this, students receive support in the preparation of their applications to universities. Such workshops also help students to select appropriate subject combinations, and provide guidance on destinations and outcomes that will enable them to fulfil their aspirations. The Access Project leverages resources, including tutor time, money and pro bono activities from the private sector, to provide the tutoring and wider support students need to succeed.

There are currently 900 volunteers supporting students from 21 schools in London and Birmingham and the Black Country. Each volunteer agrees to provide an hour of tutoring for around 30 weeks a year. The volunteers come from a wide-range of fields across both the private and public sectors and provide tuition in specific subject areas including: maths, economics, geography, biology, chemistry, physics, English literature, history, French and Spanish. Students usually visit the offices of their tutors, exposing them to a professional working environment, and contributing to increasing their confidence and raising their aspirations.

The Access Project works closely with schools, with a member of staff playing an important liaison role between teachers and tutors to ensure that students receive the maximum benefit from their participation. Complementing, not competing with schools, The Access Project sees itself as part of the wider educational ecosystem, offering targeted one to one support to students in ways that the public sector cannot. For schools, The Access Project provides an opportunity for its talented pupils to receive extra support, with clear improvements in educational attainment and outcomes.

² In the UK, eligibility for free school meals is an indicator of poverty/deprivation, and correlates to lower educational attainment

³ GCSEs – General Certificate of Secondary Education - and A levels are key exams taken by students in England and Wales. GCSEs are a prerequisite for going on to A levels and are sat by students usually at the age of 16. A levels are required to attend university and are taken usually two years later.

Approximately 63 per cent of students who are supported by The Access Project are successful in their applications to top universities identified.

How is The Access Project supported?

Schools make a financial contribution to have The Access Project support its students. At the same time, The Access Project has a strong relationship with the private sector, both in the provision of tutors and wider student support activities, such as work experience. Private sector partners also make financial contributions to The Access Project. In 2014, nine partners match funded the £15,000 contributions of nine of the participating schools.

An important dimension of The Access Project's involvement with the private sector is highlighting the mutual benefits that accord to those who participate. Companies are increasingly looking at how their corporate social responsibility activities can have real impact within society. The Access Project provides an opportunity for companies, and their staff, to make an impact – benefitting not only the students who are supported, but also enabling the companies and their staff to meet their own aims of utilising their skills and resources in ways that benefit society.

What is the future of The Access Project?

In 2014 The Access Project expanded from London to Birmingham and the Black Country, and there are plans to expand to another city in the near future. By 2020 the ambition is to work in 70 schools. From its experience, The Access Project has identified that its model works most effectively in cities, as they provide the number and mix of skilled volunteers that are required for success. Nevertheless, they have not ruled out looking at ways to make the programme work in other settings in the future.

Organisational Information

The Access Project was founded in 2008 by a school teacher who, recognising that able pupils needed academic support in order to get into the top universities, convinced friends working outside of the education sector to provide one to one tutoring support. It operates as a charity.

Home-Start: Supporting Young Families at Home

Introduction

The aim of Home-Start is to enable families to flourish, providing support to help them cope with the day to day demands of family life or to meet specific needs, such as multiple births and the challenges associated with them, through to isolation, post-natal depression, disability and the effects of addiction and violence. Intervening early, through the provision of non-judgmental peer support, can stop tough times for families becoming a crisis, and improve the well-being of families, giving children the positive early start they need.

How does Home-Start work?

Across the UK, some 16,000 volunteers support 33,000 families through a network of 280 independent, locally based Home-Start organisations. There is also a national body, Home-Start UK, which provides support to the local organisations. Of the 16,000 volunteers, 14,000 provide home-based support. Volunteers also run support groups, act as trustees and undertake fundraising work. Each Home-Start organisation recruits its own volunteers. There are also volunteers with specialist skills, such as health care workers, who help families with specific health related issues. Volunteers who work directly with families receive significant training and on-going support from professional Home-Start staff. Volunteers have their expenses paid.

The scope of activities undertaken by Home-Start is extremely broad, including practical help with parenting, help with nutritional information and budgeting, emotional support, support with legal issues, including court attendance, and play sessions for families. There are also group activities, from local support networks through to informal gatherings, such as Christmas parties. Home-Start has found that its volunteers also play a crucial role in directing families to local services and helping them to access those services.

Alongside these broad support activities, Home-Start and its volunteers have also developed programmes to meet specific needs. For example, *Big Hope Big Future* is targeted at parents with children aged 2 to 4 to help them prepare their children for school. Volunteers receive training on the programme and are then able to work with families using the resources made available. After a successful pilot in 2014, the programme was extended with government financial support. Local organisations are also involved in developing projects, and seeking funding for them, on identified needs within their areas.

Families can access their local Home-Start either through self-referral or by referral from a health, social or child care professional, or people within the education and probation services. For general Home-Start services, families should have at least one child under five. Local authority, government or philanthropic funding to local Home-Start organisations may also enable them to provide support to families with older

children.

Home-Start is not a replacement for statutory services. Rather it operates in between those services and the support offered by family and friends. Focusing on the provision of independent, non-judgmental support, Home-Start volunteers model good parenting skills and are somebody families can turn to for advice, help or just a 'friendly ear'.

A 2014 evaluation of Home-Start's activities highlighted that Home-Start volunteers were having a positive impact on the well-being and health of both parents and children, on parenting skills, and on family and household management. Those receiving support reported greater confidence at being able to cope with the day-to-day demands of their family and that the emotional and physical health, and wider well-being of all family members had improved. A 2015 report noted that volunteers also benefited from their involvement, such as through improved skills, a wider social network and increased confidence.

How is Home-Start supported?

Funding for Home-Start activities come from a range of sources, including both central and local government direct grants and contracts, philanthropic organisations, corporate support, fundraising and donations.

Government grants and contracts to local Home-Start organisations may enable them to provide support activities with a broader remit. These could include extending the target group to families with older children, or focusing on families with particular needs or circumstances.

What is the future of Home-Start?

In light of the changing government funding environment, local Home-Start organisations, with the support of Home-Start UK, have increasingly started to work together in consortia. In the 2014/15 Annual Report, Home-Start UK reported that 25 Home-Start consortia were now in place, bringing together 126 local Home-Start organisations. Working in consortia is helping local Home-Start organisations to access further funding opportunities, and contributing to increasing their sustainability.

Organisational Form

Home-Start was founded in Leicester in 1973 by an individual who believed that family support was best done where families lived: at home. Since then it has expanded, and currently operates in over 20 countries. In the UK Home-Start operates as a charity.

Family by Family: Supporting and Empowering

Introduction

The Australian Centre for Social Innovation, based in Adelaide (South Australia) was tasked by the South Australian state government to develop new approaches that would reduce the number of children being taken into the child protection system and help families before they reached crisis point. What emerged from a year long co-design process was the Family by Family programme. Rooted in a peer support approach, Family by Family provides support to families as they seek to make the changes they have identified as needed, and to sustain those changes.

How does Family by Family work?

Sharing Families are those who have come through difficult times successfully and are prepared to share their experience. Seeking Families are those looking for support to change some aspect of their family relationships. Family by Family brings Sharing Families and Seeking Families together, with a focus on helping families to stay together and flourish. The Family by Family approach seeks to intervene before the state must. By having professional support in the background, and families at the forefront, Family by Family uses peer support and mentoring to empower families to change.

Family By Family prefers families to self refer to their service and they offer a range of family events to raise awareness of what they do. Families can be referred to Family By Family by professionals, although before doing so it is suggested that the professional and the family discuss the services provided and the potential benefits. Families must always opt-in to the programme and cannot be mandated to participate. Families must have a child under 18 year at home to take part in the programme.

After the initial contact, the Sharing Family works with a Family by Family coach who helps them to understand the process and, once they have agreed to participate, to prepare a profile. To aid the process of empowering families, Seeking Families actually select the Sharing Family that will work with them. Families then work together to set goals and ambitions and are supported to meet those. The changes can be significant or small – but the key thing is that the family identifies the change themselves, rather than it being imposed.

Families meet once a week for between ten and thirty weeks, with the time spent together agreed by the Sharing and Seeking Families. Broadly there are three elements to the families' relationship over the weeks. The first is an early focus on building trust. The second involves the two families spending time together and doing things that will help to strengthen the Seeking Family's internal relationship and also the relationship between the two families. The final element is providing support to the Seeking Family as they build community connections that will enable them to sustain the changes they have made.

Sharing Families receive intensive training, including a two and a half day training camp and weekly coaching support from a Family Coach. Sharing Families are offered a small grant that they can either use for their own family, invest in Sharing and Seeking Families link-ups, or give back to Family by Family, as a way of recognising the demands that are placed upon them as a result of the support process.

There is one professional coach who works with fifteen Sharing Families and forty Seeking Families, with up to 100 children. The cost-effectiveness of the model has been well documented: it is estimated that for the cost of putting three children into care, Family by Family can help nearly 100 families in the community, and this is before the reduction in demand for crisis and protection services, as well as state care, is taken into account.

Family By Family is not a replacement for the professional services that already exist. Some families have such complex needs that they will require multiple interventions. Nevertheless, evaluation has shown that Family By Family is helping families to change and stay together. At the same time, anecdotal evidence has highlighted the way in which participants feel part of their wider community, and the network of support available within it.

How is Family by Family supported?

Family by Family is a programme within The Australian Centre for Social Innovation and receives funding from government agencies, charities and other philanthropic bodies to support its work.

The future of Family by Family?

Family by Family was first piloted in 2010 in Adelaide, South Australia. It now operates in two areas in Adelaide, and a third area, in a suburb of Sydney, New South Wales started in 2013. The Australian Centre for Social Innovation believes that there is significant potential to scale the Family by Family programme to all parts of Australia.

Organisational Form

The Australian Centre for Social Innovation was established in 2009 with seed funding from the South Australian government. It operates as a non-governmental organisation.

GoodGym: motivating runners, increasing volunteering

Introduction

GoodGym has two aims: to increase volunteering and to help people stay motivated when they exercise. The aims are not separate, but are fundamentally intertwined. GoodGym offers runners the opportunity to help in three ways: running as a group to a community organisation and undertaking manual labour, a weekly commitment to visit an older or isolated person, and, one off runs to visit somebody who needs a bit of help with a specific task, such as clearing a garden or doing odd-jobs.

How does GoodGym work?

Runners who sign up to GoodGym decide which type of activity, or activities, they wish to undertake. For those visiting an older and isolated local resident, they will be required to undertake a formal Disclosure and Barring Service (in effect a criminal record check), and receive training before they are allocated to a 'coach' (the person they are visiting). With a minimum commitment of once a week, the runner will visit their coach, spending a little time with them and taking something such as a newspaper to leave behind.

Older and isolated local residents are referred by local organisations, including local general practitioners, community centres, and organisations, such as local Age UK branches⁴. For these people GoodGym does not replace visits and supports from professionals, it supplements them, providing a brief, regular visit and helping to improve health and well-being.

Those undertaking tasks within community organisation meet weekly. They run to the organisation they are helping, and spend some time doing the agreed task before returning home. The type of manual labour support community based organisations receive varies, but includes such things as clearing gardens, painting a room, etc.

A trainer, who organises and participates in the weekly group run, supports GoodGym volunteers. Trainers must have a personal training or 'Coach in Running' qualification.

Currently there are some 2000 registered GoodGym members.

How is GoodGym supported?

GoodGym is commissioned predominantly by local authorities, and has also received support from the National Health Service. It generally looks for 'pump priming' funding as it seeks to establish itself in an area. The focus is on becoming self-sufficient within an area, rather than being dependent on continuing funding.

⁴ Age UK is a national charity focused on supporting the over 60s have a positive ageing experience. It operates through a network of local organisations.

Runners make small, regular donations to GoodGym and GoodGym also receives support from corporate donors and philanthropic organisations.

What is the Future of GoodGym?

Established in 2010, in 2012 GoodGym received support from the London Legacy Development Corporation (tasked with ensuring a positive legacy from the London 2012 Olympics) to work in the boroughs around the Olympic Park in east London. In 2013 GoodGym expanded to other parts of London and also to Bristol, and since then has been slowly expanding across London and into other towns and cities across the UK. GoodGym welcomes contact from people looking to set up a GoodGym in their local area.

The focus is on ensuring that there is both the interest and capacity in an area to support the establishment and development of a GoodGym, rather than being driven by the availability of funding.

Organisational Form

Good Gym was set up as a result of frustration at the waste embodied in normal gyms and the potential of combining exercise with doing good. The idea of GoodGym emerged when its founder was running to visit a family friend who was house-bound. It operates as a not for profit company.