

unsung heroes

The Queen's Award for
Voluntary Service 2008

January 2010

The Beacon Friends Newsletter

Happy New Year to Everyone



**Our first Newsletter of 2010 focuses on our
B2 Service**

(formally known as Beacon 2 Counselling for Young People)

**We tell you how it was established, how it works today, and our
plans for its future.**

What is B2 and why is it needed?

It's a specialised counselling service for vulnerable young people living in Stockport, aged 11-18 years. We offer it at locations away from school premises, and also outside of normal school hours.

School counsellors had noticed that some pupils attending counselling at school were either being suspended or excluded from school and thus missing out on support when they needed it most. So there was a real and unmet need to provide counselling for young people in community locations and not during school hours. We also found that it could help some young people who needed counselling but who were too embarrassed to attend sessions in school.



When did B2 start and how is it funded?

As there is no income from the young B2 service users, we had to energetically seek funding and with a small grant we started operating in 2006. A year later, we received a grant from the Children's and Young People's Network Fund in Manchester. We were then fortunate to be awarded a substantial grant from "**BBC Children in Need**" which reactivated the service in September 2008 and we now have secure funding to run the B2 service until July 2011.

What are its aims?

- To improve the mental health of vulnerable young people aged 11-18
- To improve service user confidence
- To improve their coping skills
- To work with approximately 200 young Stockport people during the 3 years of funding from BBC Children in Need

Performance to date

43 young people have been counselled to November 2009 and referrals are slowly increasing to 3 per month which is enough to keep both the B2 counsellors busy without building up a waiting list.

Results from the service

Our evaluation of the B2 Monitoring Form that clients complete at the end of their counselling shows us that on average young people rated their well-being and confidence as significantly improved - an excellent indicator that the counselling is having a positive impact.

Who are the counsellors?

Yvonne Shelmerdine (B2 Lead Counsellor and one of our school counsellors) originally had the vision and energy to organise and start the B2 service. She has seen many highs and lows during the years but has determinedly led the service into the success it now enjoys. A recent rise in referrals means that volunteer counsellor Clodhna McPhillips has been working with her for the last few months. It's their profound dedication and enthusiasm for the B2 project that helps to make it work so well.

What are B2's ambitions for the future?

- To increase the promotion of the service to Schools, Stockport Educational Psychologists and Health Trainers
- To distribute the newly designed B2 information leaflets to Stockport GP's and schools, etc.
- To generate more clients through Connexions and Secondary Jigsaw (a mental health service for young people)

Some anonymous comments from B2 clients.....

- "I am happier at home and I have stopped self-harming"
- "Anger at steady level. Now in a relationship. Able to talk to people more. Getting on with my family more"
- "I would definitely recommend counselling because it helps you to see how to get round things a different way"
- **"Yvonne has been brilliant and has helped me so much. I would not have been able to be in this state of mind without her"**

In summary – there was a real need in Stockport for the B2 service but it proved difficult to start. However, Yvonne's determination and vision is now paying its rewards and we can be justly proud of this valuable service to the young people of Stockport.

NEWS OF BEACON'S PEOPLE AND PLACES

Elizabeth Zonca and Esther Maxwell - After working 19 years for Beacon, Elizabeth and Esther retired from their work as our receptionists at the Cheadle Hulme Health Centre at the end of last year. Our sincere thanks go to both ladies for all your years of support to Beacon - we shall certainly miss you both - however, we really hope we shall continue to see you at our social occasions.

And our extra thanks to ***Maureen Jones*** who has given many years of valuable service volunteering at Cheadle Hulme; we are hoping to welcome her to Bramhall.

Our Cheadle Hulme venue closes - After 20 years of Beacon working from the Cheadle Hulme GP practice we have had to close down this service. We send our sincere and grateful thanks to everyone who has worked there on our behalf over the years.

Margaret Smith (Evening Appointments Administrator) - Unfortunately broke her wrist just before Christmas. However, she is mending nicely and only missed one day from the office, and she is pleased to know that typing is good physiotherapy!

Manager James Harper - has recently completed 2 funding applications for us to continue our Wythenshawe project. Our current funding lasts until March 31st - so keep your fingers crossed!

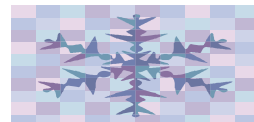
Greta Mikaelson (Beacon Supervisor) - is delivering training to 5 of our schools counsellors so that we can implement our TAMHS Confidence Programme in February. This is a brand new project to help improve confidence, communication skills and well-being to vulnerable 5-11 year olds.

8 counsellors from Beacon and Relate are being trained at the moment in 1-1 counselling for 5-11 year olds and the Beacon/Relate TAMHS programme will start soon.

Sandra Bailey - is now back working in the office and in "fighting form" after her hip replacement surgery.

The Snow & Ice Report!

Debby Bridge writes..... For the first time “since records began” Beacon had to declare the office closed for the day on Tuesday 5th January. The doors remained locked but some sterling work was done by Sandra and Mike Bailey to get phone numbers and appointments details remotely, with James working from home managing to contact all counsellors and clients.



The big freeze and its impact tested all my options for public transport from the hills where I live, James has learnt some new driving skills, Sam has become chauffeur and Margaret has learnt to work one handed with Sandra tackling the system updates from home. On our return to the office on the Wednesday we found 34 phone messages to deal with and over 60 phone calls were made.

The impact on our finances has been marked with the client donations only just beginning to pick up. The weather man is now forecasting floods at the weekend as the predicted torrential rain melts the snow – deep joy! Many thanks to all who did struggle into the office and counselling venues to keep the Beacon wheels going.

We were busy!!

October and November 2009 were the busiest months in Beacon's entire history. This helped to make the whole year the busiest ever by some way.

Trustee Kathryn McGuire has acquired 25 places for us at the Great Manchester Run in May. Come and join our Beacon Team in this 10K fundraiser which is the largest in the UK. We already have 17 runners ready to represent us so if you want to join in the fun then contact the office via email or telephone.



Make a note —

Our AGM this year will be on 16th March at St. Michael's Church Hall starting at 7.15 pm. Invitations will be sent out in early February.

BEACON FRIENDS SUBSCRIPTIONS

January is our renewal month so please don't forget to renew your subs! £10 minimum please, with cheques made payable to Beacon Counselling. All monies go towards the running of our services and helps to support vulnerable people who can't afford to pay very much towards their counselling.

If you know of anyone who would like to become a Beacon Friend please let the office know and they will send them our joining form.

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