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<tr>
<td>Thursday, 8 January</td>
<td>9.30am to 3.30pm</td>
<td>Managing time off work and flexible working</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, 13 January</td>
<td>9.00am to 1.00pm</td>
<td>Executive coaching for leaders: Effective productivity and leadership in third sector</td>
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<td>Financial Management Workshop: BVSC training in partnership with KPMG</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, 20 January</td>
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<td>Intensive HR Management and Employment Law Skills (two day course)</td>
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<td>Thursday, 12 February</td>
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<td>Restructuring, Making Dismissals, and Reducing Employment Costs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, 24 February</td>
<td>9.00am to 3.00pm</td>
<td>Complying with Equality Law: Refresh your knowledge of Equality Act obligations</td>
<td>£97</td>
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FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THESE AND OTHER BVSC COURSES AND TO BOOK YOUR PLACE:

www.bvsc.org/bvsc-training-courses

0121 678 8878
Congratulations!

Celebrations all round this month, as we acknowledge a number of local organisations who have received prestigious awards and accolades in recognition of their achievements.

So, (drum roll...) congratulations to: Unity Trust for winning the Living Wage Champion Awards, Sarehole Mill on winning the Volunteers for Museum Learning Award 2014; New Heights Community Project for the Standing up for Birmingham category at the Chamberlain Awards; and to Biddigey Power for being nominated in the Trailblazing Newcomer category of the 2014 RBS SE100 Awards.

Turning to our Spotlight features, on page 14 The West Midlands Fire Service describes one aspect of their prevention work, tackling health inequalities in Birmingham.

Norton Hall Children & Family Centre in Saltley, recently acquired a building through community asset transfer. Read on page 12 how the project is flourishing.

And finally, on page 10 the newly established Forward Carers consortium explains how it is connecting carers services in Birmingham.

Best wishes to all our readers for the Christmas season. Update returns in February! 

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Update is available in PDF format at www.bvsc.org/update-magazine

If you would like a large type version call 0121 643 4343 or email update@bvsc.org
**The state of the sector**

BVSC has commissioned MEL Research – an independent social research organisation based in Birmingham – to carry out a research study on ‘The State of the Sector 2014’. BVSC is keen to capture the nature and changes affecting Birmingham’s voluntary and community sector, along with the impact the sector has in the wider community.

In addition to generating insights into the size and the shape of the sector, MEL’s researchers will be particularly keen to hear about any involvement your organisation might have with Birmingham’s three Clinical Commissioning Groups – by way of commissioning activity, partnerships or relationships.

Whilst the study will enable BVSC to update their membership database, the survey will be entirely confidential – no organisation or individual will be identifiable. Fieldwork for the study is planned to take place in December.

Please feel free to talk to the senior consultants at MEL Research if you have any queries about the State of the Sector study.

Jaye Francis or David Chong Ping, MEL: jayne.francis@m-e-l.co.uk / david.chong-ping@m-e-l.co.uk / 0121 604 4664

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**Study on ageing, nutrition and physical activity in migrant women**

Researchers from the School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences at the University of Birmingham are looking for migrant women aged 60 years and older to participate in a study on ageing, nutrition and physical activity.

Study participants will be asked to commit to two visits and to complete questionnaires and interviews. There will also be a physical test including: measurements of blood pressure, weight, height, hip and waist circumference, walking speed (only 15ft) and hand strength.

To participate you must have been born outside the UK and living in Birmingham or surrounding area and not have been told by a doctor that you have a health condition that affects your memory or how you process information (such as Alzheimer’s disease or dementia) or need assistance to walk 15ft.

Casar de la, University of Birmingham School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences: dx2242@bham.ac.uk / 0779 861 0460 / 0121 414 8745

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**Living Wage award**

Unity Trust Bank has been chosen as the winner of the Living Wage Champion Awards 2014 for the West Midlands region.

The awards, co-ordinated by the Living Wage Foundation, recognise Living Wage Employers that have made great contributions to communities and industries by implementing and celebrating the Living Wage.

Unity Trust Bank, the specialist bank for the social economy, was the first Living Wage accredited bank and joined the accreditation in April 2013.

Living Wage Foundation Director, Rhys Moore said: “Congratulations to Unity Trust Bank on being named the Champion Award winner for the region. With 1,000 employers now accredited, it is wonderful to have Unity leading the way in the West Midlands. The leadership of responsible employers is making a real difference to families and communities across the UK. Thank you very much for celebrating the Living Wage.”

Unity Trust Bank Chief Executive Officer Richard Wilcox said: “We are extremely proud to be recognised for promoting the Living Wage across our sector and community, and encourage other employers across the West Midlands to show responsibility and commitment to their staff by ensuring they receive a fair wage.”

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**Managing flexible working**

Need help and advice to manage flexible working arrangements? Staff have a variety of statutory rights to take time off, and often work flexibly, not nine to five. Time off can be difficult for an employer to manage, particularly unplanned sick leave.

The right to request flexible working has recently been extended – this can work successfully for both employees who want a better work/life balance, and also for employers, particularly when trying to cut costs, for example by reducing hours. These rights are a fast moving area of employment law and it can be hard to keep up with the rules.

As part of a broader programme of HR and employment law training, the Managing Time off and Flexible Working course will cover maternity, paternity and adoption rights, additional rights such as parental leave and time off to care for dependents; new law on sickness absence and holidays; sick leave, including dealing with long term sick leave; time off for medical appointments; and rights to work flexibly.

The session, which takes place on 8 January 2015, will include practical case studies, and an opportunity to ask the trainer about your employment and HR issues of concern.

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**TRAINING**

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Volunteer millers celebrate award

A group of volunteer millers from Sarehole Mill in Hall Green have been named Midland winners of the Volunteers for Museum Learning Award 2014. The British Museum and the Marsh Christian Trust announced the winners of the awards, which celebrate the work and achievements of museum volunteers, at a special event in London.

The British Museum and the Marsh Christian Trust have been working in partnership for the sixth year for the ‘Volunteers for Museum Learning’ award which recognises the hugely valuable contribution that volunteers make in helping museums engage with their visitors.

The Milling team at Sarehole Mill demonstrate the mill in action to visitors, showing how flour is produced and teaching the history of the heritage site. The group of millers have made a marked difference to the visitor experience, allowing the site to regularly produce its own, highly popular stone-ground flour. Also, they have built a clay bread oven at the Mill, allowing the team to demonstrate the production of bread from grain to loaf.

Allan Long, from Hall Green, has been volunteering at the mill for the past year. He commented: “Sarehole Mill is such a magical place to work, and makes you feel privileged to be part of a team that brings so much pleasure to the local community, as well as to the visitors who travel from afar.”

Ellen McAdam, director for Birmingham Museums Trust said: “Our millers have brought such energy and enthusiasm to Sarehole Mill. They have gone above and beyond to make the site as engaging as possible and their commitment to creating a welcoming environment is outstanding. They are truly deserving of recognition for their efforts in building the bread oven – our visitors love to see bread being baked on site and it would simply not have been possible without our volunteering team.”

Birmingham Museums volunteering: www.bmag.org.uk/support-us/volunteer

New Heights is turning lives around

When New Heights Community Project was set up in Kingstanding in 2003, no one realised what dizzying heights it would reach.

The Erdington District and The New Heights Partnership has won the ‘Standing up for Birmingham’ category at this year’s Chamberlain Awards. The award which was introduced for the first time this year, is awarded to recognise teams or individuals who are working with Birmingham citizens to build a positive future for the city of Birmingham.

What began as a small volunteer group responding to anti-social behaviour in the area, New Heights has gone on to be an award-winning hub that has attracted more than £2.5 million in funding to carry out work that improves the lives of people in the area.

The hub is a lifeline for many in Kingstanding, with youth clubs, training and employment help, health and wellbeing services, domestic abuse counselling, bereavement support, free legal advice, lunch clubs for older people, as well as support for parents and playgroups.

Nominator, Mike Davis, said: “Originally a dream by the local priest, Father Michael White, and Karen Spence, to transform the local church into a community centre, it now has more than 500 people a week going through its doors,

“The work it undertakes is exceptional and it is a real beacon of excellence. It has been hard work but the results speak for themselves.”

Elyn Marie Hunt has credited New Heights with turning her life around after the sudden death of her husband, who was killed in a road accident. Still in her 20s, with a baby to care for, Elyn also found herself homeless soon after his death.

Staff at New Heights helped find Elyn and her child accommodation and she was encouraged to start volunteering for the organisation. Since she began working with New Heights, she has attained qualifications in administration and has been taken on in a part-time, paid role.

“New Heights is not just an office or a project,” said Elyn. “It is a home to many people where love, tolerance and kindness flow. From someone who lost everything, including confidence and trust, I have acquired skills ready to take on the life challenges ahead.”

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DSEQ celebrates anniversary

It’s nearly a year since Sir Albert Bore, Leader of Birmingham City Council, launched Digbeth as Birmingham’s Social Enterprise Quarter (DSEQ) and to mark the occasion iSE will be hosting a Social Enterprise Trade Fair, from 12 noon to 2pm on Tuesday 16 December, to which everyone interested in finding out more about the Quarter is invited. Much has been achieved during the first year:

- Social enterprise activity in the Quarter has been mapped as a baseline against which to measure growth
- A strategic plan for supporting a social, environmental and economic revival of Digbeth, has been produced, linked to the wider strategic aims for Birmingham and Greater Birmingham
- Social Enterprise Markets – open to all social enterprises – have been introduced and Social Enterprise Walks continued

- The Digbeth, Highgate and Cheapside Social Enterprise Network has enabled members to build closer working relationships both with each other and with partners based outside of Digbeth
- Opportunities for work experience, internships, volunteering and jobs have been opened up to students and the long term unemployed

Sarah Crawley, chief executive of iSE and initiator of DSEQ, said: “As so often in our sector, we are working with limited financial resources but a lot of goodwill and volunteer support. We have ambitious plans and are keen to connect with everyone interested in social enterprise and in what a special Quarter can achieve. We are hoping that many who have not been involved so far will come to our first anniversary event to network, do business and have some festive fun!”

DSEQ celebrates anniversary

BIDGLEY POWER NOMINATED FOR RBS SE100

Bidgley Power, based in the Aston, Lozells and Handsworth areas, has a 35 year history of working with young and disabled people through mediums such as sport and educational mentoring, working to empower communities by developing innovative, low cost, volunteer led solutions. In 2011 it incorporated and now raises funds through provision of services and contracts rather than relying on donations. It engages with more than 300 people a week from some of the most deprived districts of Birmingham, through sports programmes or youth club and community events and has an active base of over 35 volunteers, working with partners such as West Midlands Police, Youth offending teams, Aston Villa FC and Midland Heart Housing Association.

Bidgley Power has a social impact score of 10/10, a score that puts the organisation in the top 3.3% of organisations in this year’s RBS SE100 index.

Pritesh Pattrni, chairperson of Bidgley Power, said: “We run the organisation on the basis that people are the solution. We empower them to help themselves, supporting and developing civic volunteering in the community.”

A Birmingham community charity run entirely by volunteers has been recognised as a leading social enterprise by being shortlisted in a national awards scheme.

Bidgley Power Foundation has been nominated for the second time in the Trailblazing Newcomer category of the 2014 RBS SE100 awards.

The RBS SE100 Index is an online listing of social ventures, ranked and scored according to their growth and social impact. The Trailblazing Newcomer Award is given to a new social enterprise that has made great strides to stand out from the crowd and become a leader amongst their peers. The winners of this award are truly cutting-edge, combining solid growth with a commitment to proving the positive impact of their business, through the measurement and reporting of social impact.

The workshops will commence in January and take place on Tuesday evenings at Carrs Lane Church Centre.

All training is free of charge, participants will be expected to attend all workshops. Some additional time to produce the stories (interview people, take photos, videos, write, etc.) will be required. There are a limited number of bursaries for those who are unwaged for travel expenses.

Please register your interest by 10 December.

David Hirst or Anne Stoltenberg, Migrant Voice: david@migrantvoice.org / anne@migrantvoice.org / 0207 221 6708

Celebrating migrants’ contribution

Are you interested in celebrating the contribution of migrants to Birmingham? Would you like to learn new skills in writing, photography, video, and social media?

Migrant Voice’s Many Faces, One City project involves practical creative workshops on writing articles and conducting interviews, taking photos, shooting videos and using social media.

Participants will produce stories that capture the contributions migrants have made to the city and launch them at a public event. This project is open to all – migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and those from the host and established communities.

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The Armed Forces Community Healthcare team at Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Trust (BCHC) held a staff engagement event on 11 November 2014 to commemorate the sacrifices made by our armed forces in conflicts past and present.

The event marked the official launch of the Armed Forces Community Healthcare project. Ex-servicemen working at the trust and staff with a close relative in the armed forces were invited to this day of reflection. Following the two-minute silence the project team outlined their planned work to support the armed forces community, now and into the future. The project overview was followed by a table top exercise to explore the expectations and challenges in transition and further, what the community healthcare trust can do to support the armed forces community.

On this historic and poignant day of reflection BCHC chief executive, Tracy Taylor, signed the Armed Forces Corporate Covenant – a pledge from businesses and charitable organisations who wish to demonstrate their concrete support for the armed forces community.

Armed Forces Community Healthcare project manager, Scott Thornton, commented: “I could not think of a more appropriate day to officially launch our project, to share two minutes of silence with ex-servicemen in the trust and to put in writing our commitment to the armed forces community in Birmingham.”

Birmingham. It was a great day and I am grateful to all those who shared their views and experiences.”

The signed covenant and full list of commitments can also be found on Armed Forces Community Healthcare’s new website.

In support of The Royal British Legion, staff were invited to enter a Poppy Appeal ‘bake-off’ which saw BCHC staff produce some outstanding cakes and tarts in aid of The Poppy Appeal. After being judged by an expert panel of ex-servicemen, the cakes were wheeled around the Trust Headquarters for donations and the talented bakers raised an amazing £180.

Birmingham City Council has appointed a new executive director of Children’s Services. Alastair Gibbons will take up his new post on 2 February 2015.

This appointment came less than two weeks after the Council announced that Bernadette McNally, from Belfast, turned away from the children’s services job just days before she was set to start. She had been appointed in August, but resigned during a trial period.

Birmingham’s Children’s Services Department has been through difficult times in recent years, with several high-profile disasters, and damning criticism from official reports.

Alastair Gibbons has thirty years’ experience in local authority social services since completing his social work qualification at Birmingham University. He has worked in a number of different roles in both children’s and adult services, mainly in Leicestershire, Milton Keynes, and latterly in Essex. Alastair was Assistant Director for Children’s Social Care in Milton Keynes for five years before moving to Essex in January 2012 to be part of a new senior management team that helped Essex move from ‘inadequate’ to ‘good’ through a focus on relationship-based social work with families.
Active Neighbourhoods is a new programme from Groundwork West Midlands in partnership with Birmingham City Council, The National Housing Federation, Birmingham Open Spaces Forum, Affinity Sutton, Family Housing Birmingham, Midland Heart and Sanctuary Housing.

The programme is examining how residents, especially housing association tenants, use their local open green spaces and how access can be increased to improve physical and mental wellbeing.

Active Neighbourhoods, which was launched this month and running until August 2016, wants to work with local groups, residents and volunteers to shape a programme of activity that reflects local demand. Activity could be anything from sports activity such as Zumba, Pilates, walking groups, basketball to conservation activity such as planting projects, orchards and grow sites.

Groundwork and partners are looking for local volunteers to be part of steering groups to feed into the activity, support the delivery and evaluation, to become part of ‘friends of’ groups and support participation in the RHS Britain in Bloom campaign. We want to offer those volunteers a menu of training opportunities including disclosure and barring service checks, first aid, walk leader, fundraising, green gym activity (including learning the basics of conservation), health champion training and more to help boost participants’ CVs and improve job prospects.

We want to look at why local green space is not being used or how it could be used better. Is there an area that is run down that needs a little love and attention? Is there a perfect patch of disused land that could become a community allotment? Is there some equipment that needs replacing? Would some benches and raised planting beds make a difference for people living in flats to grow plants?

We are also keen to work with local providers. Do you run a local sports club but would be interested in expanding your delivery to cover a new area or more sessions and need support to do that? Would you like to become accredited to teach in a sport you’re already participating in?

We are also on the lookout for businesses who are keen to support the development of these projects, either with tools, materials, equipment or expertise; it may be that you are able to sponsor an event or a local site.

Funded by Big Lottery Fund Reaching Communities, Active Neighbourhoods is based in five areas in Birmingham: Alum Rock, Berryfields (Sutton Coldfield), Lozells and East Handsworth, Shard End & Summerfield (Ladywood). However you think you can be involved please get in touch we’d love to hear from you.

Lucy Kenny, Active Neighbourhoods co-ordinator: lucy.kenny@groundwork.org.uk / 0121 530 5520 / 07463 247 326

Launch events

- 13 December 2014, 12 noon to 2pm: Berryfields Green, Berryfields Road, Sutton Coldfield
- 14 December 2014, 12 noon to 2pm: George’s Park, Wills Road, Lozells
- January 2015: Alum Rock and Shard End – dates to be confirmed
MEET THE EXPERTS

The past few months have been both challenging and exciting for the Birmingham Changing Futures Together programme. We have successfully recruited a new team of staff including a programme manager, a learning and evaluation manager, a finance and monitoring officer, a learning and evaluation co-ordinator and two programme co-ordinators, each with responsibility for different areas of the programme.

We have also recruited some new experts (experts by experience) to support the programme and contribute to various aspects of its delivery, including help with evaluating tenders, developing the induction procedure for new experts and helping to guide us in the right direction for the benefit of service users with complex needs.

In October we ran two training days for our experts. The first day was recruitment and selection training. Those who had not previously received this training were invited to participate so that they could gain the right knowledge and skills to become actively involved with the BVSC and BCFT recruitment process for programme vacancies such as the Network Facilitator.

Feedback from the participants was very positive. They felt that the training would not only help them to recruit the right person in the right way, but that it would also help them to prepare for job applications themselves, as it gave them a real opportunity to experience recruitment and selection as the interviewer not just the interviewee.

The second training day in October was more focused on supporting the experts themselves and to support them, when ready, on their journeys to find suitable employment based on their individual skills, experience and qualifications, in addition to the skills and experience gained through their time with the BCFT programme.

The second day of training was open to all experts and was our most attended training to date. The experts learnt about all aspects of finding employment and they were given the opportunity to practice scenarios which involved applying for jobs, building their CVs and live interview situations in order to hone their skills in a safe and supportive environment where they could receive immediate feedback and advice on their interview techniques.

The training was supported by actors from Nelson Training who gave the experts the opportunity to see the best and the worst of interviewing situations, after which they would stop, rewind and offer advice to the actors about how they should conduct themselves to achieve success in their interview situations.

Overall it was a very informative and enjoyable day which gave all participants the opportunity to develop their interview skills and improve their chances of finding future employment.

Another group of experts participated in the procurement training developed between BVSC and Fircroft College, which will contribute towards their level 1 and 2 Communication in the Workplace qualifications.

Six experts attended the training and they all took a great deal of confidence from what they learnt. Furthermore, they are now eligible to participate in the evaluation of tender proposals for the Every Step of the Way Contract, in addition to getting involved with up and coming tender evaluations in the future.

If you would like to learn more about how you can get involved as an Expert by Experience please get in touch.

Birmingham Changing Futures Together enables people with complex and multiple needs to achieve their aspirations and make their own vision of a ‘fulfilling life’ a reality. A person with complex and multiple needs is someone who experiences two or more of the following: homelessness; addiction and problematic substance misuse; risk of reoffending; mental ill health.
The voice of the carer

There has been a steady rise in the number of unpaid carers in the UK. One in eight adults are now looking after family and friends in an informal caring role and it is likely in our lifetime there will be nine million UK carers. The Children’s Society also commissioned research and their findings suggested there is equally a rise in the number of unpaid child carers.

An ageing population and more people living with an illness or disability from advances in health care will only exacerbate the need for us to care for a loved one at some point in our life. Caring for someone can have a huge effect on us, on our lives and upheave any plans we have. Equally, carers will tell you there is a high level of satisfaction when taking care of someone. Caring is an important aspect of life and carers help to keep families together and enable a loved one to live a normal life. They also make a huge contribution to society and save the economy billions of pounds.

Forward Carers consortium

Forward Carers consortium was set up to make a difference to the life of carers and their families. Through specific and individual need assessments, we want to find ways to help them.

In April 2014, Forward Carers was officially launched, after successfully being awarded a contract by Birmingham City Council to provide a wide range of services to unpaid carers and parents of disabled children in Birmingham. The consortium is a group of community and voluntary organisations, schools and social enterprises in Birmingham.

Many of the consortium members already provided services to carers in Birmingham but with new organisations on board, Forward Carers is well placed to deliver support of the highest quality in order to meet the growing needs and expectations of our city. It will reach into the diverse local communities to identify new carers, and will focus on positive carer wellbeing as well as the four themes identified in the National Carers Strategy of health, education, social-care and employment.

Successive governments’ policy has been to encourage voluntary and community sector organisations to collaborate in order to compete by open and competitive tendering for public services. As a result government contracts have grown, due to government departments combining budgets and tendering through ‘accumulated purchasing’ measures and procurement cost-saving measures; which have led to more larger and complex tendering processes.

To harness the opportunity amidst the changing economic environment, Forward Carers was set up. The organisation has now successfully appointed a chief executive, Simon Fenton. Simon has worked in a joint commissioning role for Birmingham City Council for over a decade. He has set up and operated businesses in the commercial and not-for-profit sector and has many years’ experience as a trustee of a major local charity. This wealth of experience is being put to good use as he now has the task of setting up the carer services, introducing new IT systems and pathways whilst keeping the diverse range of partners happy, not to mention the commissioners!

Simon’s vision for the Forward Carers is to become a leading service provider, recognised nationally as best practice in partnership working for carers. Simon said: “With shrinking public sector budgets and developing technologies opening up new ways of communicating, health and social care services cannot be delivered in the traditional ways we’ve become accustomed to. These are exciting times, set to open up new possibilities for unpaid carers to connect with services. With some creative thinking, and the involvement of carers in the co-design of services, we will improve outcomes for everyone.”

Simon has been instrumental in helping to develop, design and shape services, having worked as a lead commissioner. He is now embracing the challenge of developing a new model of delivery, as a provider of services which will redefine the care sector. As a lead and with a strategic and operational perspective, Simon is well suited to drive forward the organisation with a focus on carer wellbeing at its heart and the vision of them to a life outside caring which is often isolating and stressful.

The lead provider of the Forward Carers is Midland Mencap. Dave Rogers, chief executive, said: “As the lead organisation, working with a wide range of consortium partners and stakeholders has been both a challenging but exciting experience. Our journey so far has seen us undertake a considerable amount of ‘behind the scenes’ preparatory work, as we move to a new model of service delivery. Our focus throughout has been to ensure better outcomes for carers in Birmingham and we are now looking to the future and working with a range of providers in offering customer focussed choices and outcomes to carers that support them in their caring role.”

Birmingham Carers Hub

As part of the Forward Carers’ commitment to make the services widely available, it has recently launched the Birmingham Carers Hub as the new accessible point to register and get support. The Hub acts as a gateway for...
The Carers Hub provided by Forward Carers is not only ambitious, creative and innovative but also breaking new ground. This service is unique to Birmingham and the success of this program is likely to encourage other councils to follow suit.

Breaking new ground

The Carers Hub provided by Forward Carers is not only ambitious, creative and innovative but also breaking new ground. This service is unique to Birmingham and the success of this program is likely to encourage other councils to follow suit.

Forward Carers believe the success of this programme lies within the strength of the sector in networking with one another. The Hub combined with CERS will benefit and support unpaid carers, making best use of new technologies that previously weren’t available to the sector, for accessing and delivering support where appropriate. Birmingham is also likely to be known as a leading council in the delivery and provision of services supporting unpaid carers as well as for parents of disabled children.

If you know someone who can benefit from the services provided, please get in touch.

- Forward Carers
  www.forwardcarers.org.uk / 0121 442 2944
- Birmingham Carers Hub
  0844 225 0680 (weekdays 9am to 5pm and Saturdays 9am to 1.30pm) / www.birminghamcarershub.org.uk
- Carers Emergency Response Service
  0121 442 2960

The Carers Emergency Response Service: the fourth emergency service!

The Hub has been set up to complement existing services including the Carers Emergency Response Service (CERS).

CERS provides an invaluable service to support carers in Birmingham. The service is regarded by many of its 1800 registered users as the fourth emergency service offering free back-up support for up to 48 hours in the event of someone not being able to fulfil their caring duties.

CERS is widely accepted as a major part of delivery of care in Birmingham, working closely with other agencies to ensure that in the event of an emergency, a complete support service is available to support the carer and the person they are looking after.

Carers need to register to access the service and once registered support is only a phone call away in an emergency.

One carer who used the service in an emergency said, “I found the service excellent from start to finish. I wouldn’t have known who to turn to if CERS hadn’t been there. The support we received was caring, professional and very respectful. They made a stressful situation a lot less fraught and I can’t thank you all enough.” Another carer summed up how CERS should be viewed: “It’s like an insurance policy, you hope you’ll never need it but it’s there if you do.”

The voice of the carer

Forward Carers wants to be the voice for carers by becoming a lead provider in supporting and helping all carers in the city. They want to work with carers to empower them and to build their resilience, taking a life course approach to the impact of caring. Forward Carers also wants to support the city to deliver its emerging legal obligations to carers under the new Care Act. This will mean focusing on carer wellbeing and putting in measures to prevent family situations deteriorating to breaking point. They want to identify and support the full range of carers, and empower those carers and parents that want to design and create their own networks of support by having a say in how the resources are spent.

Carers and parents of disabled children, where they can discuss their needs and raise issues they are experiencing during their caring responsibilities within their home, family, work or school environment. Carers will be able to access the latest information about local training, events and how they can access a short break, as well get information on welfare benefits, etc. They can also sign up to receive regular e-bulletins. Carers can also benefit from specialist help from the carers contact team. They will come out and visit you to offer you emotional and practical support to discuss individual needs.

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Norton Hall Children & Family Centre is a multi-cultural, multi-faith community hub located in Saltley, a densely populated residential area two miles east of Birmingham’s city centre. It began its life as a working man’s institute and reading room, built in 1906 by public subscription on land donated by the Norton Estate.

In 1972 a group of local residents recognised the need for somewhere within the community for children to play and Norton Hall seemed an ideal site. Whilst the building itself was semi-derelict, the grounds were in a good condition. A range of outdoor activities were organised, an adventure playground was built and a sense of community spirit began to evolve.

Norton Hall has grown organically and responds to local need. The focus of the activities, services and social impact falls into five main areas:

- Work with and care for pre-school children
- Activities and care for school age children
- A range of education, training, enterprise and social activities for local women
- Activities for teenagers and young people
- Community and sports facilities for local people.

Recent developments
In October 2009 the process was successfully concluded to transfer the building as an asset (via a 99 year lease), to NHFCC by Birmingham City Council. The council and the regional development agency funded the partial refurbishment of the Norton Hall building on the basis that it would form part of the Birmingham Asset Transfer Pilot (with Perry Common Community Hall). This would inform its community assets policy development and act as a Regional Demonstration Project.

The capital funding was for a new entrance, foyer and reception desk, lift and staff room. This would transform both the external image of the Centre and the working conditions and disability access internally - really opening the building up to its local community.

Since then Norton Hall has tapped into £75,000 social finance from the Social Investment Business to create office and meeting space in a part of the building which had been unused for many years - the disused Attic. The hall space was refurbished for rental (Zumba, martial arts, adult education and youth activities) and an IT suite was created in an unused cellar space.

The nursery increased from 30 to 40 places and it has moved from loss making to making a substantial surplus, thereby expanding early years developmental support to local families, enhancing life chances of children, enabling local women to participate in training activities and parents to work.

Speaking about the investment, trustee Iftikar Karim said: “Due to the reality of taking out social finance and having to repay a loan every month, we have become more business-like and entrepreneurial. We have sought out enterprise opportunities and generated more income from enterprises. Since 2011, when we received an investment from SIB, we have moved from 75% to 50% grant dependency in 3 years. The 2014/15 projection is 24% to 33% grant i.e. £100,000 is grant out of a turnover of half a million (£458,000). So 66% will be self-generated through trading income and contracts.”

In 2012 NHFCC took on a new asset from Birmingham City Council – the Dolphin Centre in Ward End Park. This will include social and educational activities for local, mainly BME, women as well as supporting local women to establish the Tulip Café – a lakeside café run as a social enterprise. We have successfully accessed a Community Rights feasibility Grant from SIB to develop this project further and make it more sustainable.

Our plans for the future include increasing trading activity to enable us to become more sustainable and to reinvest in achieving our social objectives. Our highly regarded Starfish young people mentoring programme will be expanded and offered to more schools.
What services do we provide?
We run a variety of services for a whole range of ages: from the nursery for young children to activities for young people aged between 6 and 16, to supporting young people between 17-24 into training and employment.

Activities for young people include: sport, martial arts, music, film, drama, painting, DJing/Music. Also provide a range of intervention services for local schools authorities helping to deliver a safe environment for young people to build positive relationships and personal development.

Norton Hall provides a range of opportunities for family members of all ages to get involved in learning activities. We believe the combination of adults and children learning together can help families to benefit in terms of safeguarding, health and economic prosperity.

Finally, we run a wide range of courses for women as well as a range of health and fitness activities for young people and women.

Current projects
Saltley Stories is a Heritage Lottery Funded Project that has conducted over 50 interviews with local people, young, old and from a range of backgrounds with an aim to bring individual and personal stories about Saltley life to the fore.

The idea stemmed from the chance discovery of a postcard during the Connecting Histories Project in 2009. The intriguing image of a group of young children in front of the Continental Groceries store in Saltley prompted further enquiries. The family in the postcard was traced and the shop owner in the doorway still lives in Saltley and has grandchildren who have attended the nursery at Norton Hall.

The project will culminate with a website and an interactive exhibition in early 2015 that will be on tour throughout Birmingham in local libraries: www.saltleystories.org.uk

Working with women
The Dolphin Women’s Centre provides a range of services and activities for women living in the Washwood Heath ward of Birmingham.

Working with partners including WEA (workers Education Association) Birmingham MIND and Birmingham Adult Education Service we deliver a wide ranging programme of education including Health and Wellbeing Workshops for women suffering with long-term physical and health conditions, and workshops to support mental health and wellbeing to build confidence and resilience.

We also provide a range of basic education courses including ESOL, literacy and numeracy classes and pre-GCSE English class – with a focus on using English skills, writing and reading, comprehension and more practical courses such as sewing classes, hairdressing for beginners, make up & facials and mendhi.

The Dolphin Centre also supports local women to participate in volunteering opportunities within our Tulip Café, a social enterprise run and managed by local volunteers and part of a broader programme of support for women who are looking for work to enhance their skills and improve their employability.

Work with children and young people
Norton Hall provides after school care, including playcare for school aged children aged four to 14 years.

We offer a collection service from five local schools and operate from 3-6pm, Monday to Friday.

In addition, play-care for children aged four to 14 years runs during school holidays and on specific teacher training days. We are open from 8am to 6pm and provide breakfast and an evening snack as part of the package.

Our Starfish Project supports children and young people to increase their confidence, develop stronger social skills, increase their ability to manage feelings and raise their aspirations for the future.

Norton Hall’s play scheme takes place within our after school club and includes a range of stimulating play opportunities which support children and young people’s personal, social and emotional development.

As part of our services for children and young people with additional support needs, Norton Hall has a number of evening activities for them to access once they have completed their 12 week Starfish programme. We currently offer martial arts, creative arts, targeted girls group and Girl Guiding to the children we work with.
West Midlands Fire Service tackles health inequalities

A world-renowned public health expert has endorsed the work of West Midlands Fire Service in tackling health inequalities, which touches the lives of thousands of vulnerable people living in the West Midlands.

The brigade is the first and only organisation to be endorsed by Professor Sir Michael Marmot, Director of the Institute of Health Equity at University College London.

Sir Michael specialises in the social determinants of health – the factors which affect whether someone lives a long and healthy life. At a conference hosted by WMFS at its headquarters in Birmingham, attended by leading health figures from across the country, he praised the brigade for “clearly recognising” the links between people’s risk from fire and the conditions in which they live.

West Midlands Fire Service now incorporates the so-called ‘Marmot Principles’ into its wide-ranging work making the West Midlands safer – with a focus on vulnerable residents and communities.

In its report ‘Improving Lives to Save Lives’, WMFS highlights its commitment to prevention and well-being, recognising their key role in reducing the number of house fires and fire-related deaths.

Sir Michael said: “I am delighted to endorse the work of West Midlands Fire Service in tackling health inequalities, and privileged to have them as a partner. The brigade clearly recognises the link between the need to keep local people safe and the impact of poverty, deprivation and health inequalities.

“They use their trusted brand to work across the whole community, delivering a wide range of programmes, from inspiring young people experiencing difficulties to engaging with frail elderly and disabled high-risk householders. “Fires and ill health occur in the more deprived areas, involving people at the bottom of the socio-economic gradient – the homeless, or those living in poor quality housing, whose circumstances have led them to take up unhealthy life styles.

“WMFS deliver home fire safety checks to the most deprived and high-risk householders. They engage with members of the public of all ages and from all cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. They not only attempt to prevent fires and keep people safe, but are also involved in leading on prevention programmes from home safety to road safety.

“‘Their firefighters’ special and trusted role in society places them in the perfect position to deliver interventions that are designed to encourage the development of confident, healthy and resilient communities.”

WMFS keeps safe a population of 2.7 million people across seven local authority areas. The brigade’s prevention work is primarily targeted at high-risk and vulnerable communities. Evidence shows they are more likely to suffer the greatest number of house fires, fire deaths and arson.

The West Midlands Fire Service website has been updated with several new magazine-style pages, where visitors can learn more about ‘Improving Lives to Save Lives’. The pages include a YouTube link to the brigade’s new video, which highlights some of its work with the elderly, homeless and otherwise vulnerable residents.

Phil Loach, Chief Fire Officer of the West Midlands, said: “We do so much more than putting out fires and rescuing people from car crashes, and our prevention work is about much more than simply fitting smoke alarms. Sir Michael recognises this, and we are extremely proud of his endorsement.”

“...They use their trusted brand to work across the whole community, delivering a wide range of programmes, from inspiring young people experiencing difficulties to engaging with frail elderly and disabled high-risk householders.”
Safety at home: making every contact count

West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) is committed to making the West Midlands safer, and recognise that safety at home is closely linked to a person’s health and wellbeing.

The brigade’s Home Safety Checks (HSCs) play a key role in helping firefighters identify and support those at risk of fire and other dangers.

HSCs are targeted at the West Midlands’ most vulnerable residents. If firefighters spot anything that concerns them, they’ll return and work with the occupier to help make their home as safe as possible.

It’s all the more important with the elderly, like Sheila (pictured). WMFS and colleagues at Age UK worked with Sheila over time to help her sort out a number of fire safety and health issues.

Fire crews are trained to ‘make every contact count’. They refer more complicated cases to the brigade’s Vulnerable Persons Officers (VPOs). The people they support suffer from a range of illnesses and conditions, including dementia and mental health issues, problems moving around, or drugs and alcohol misuse.

Working with the most vulnerable

Every day, West Midlands firefighters work with many of the area’s most vulnerable residents. The brigade sees clear links between people’s health and how they live, and the risk they face from fire and other emergencies.

Firefighters are trusted by communities, are welcomed into people’s homes, and often change people’s behaviours for the better.

Pam and Colin had been living in dangerously cramped and cluttered conditions when WMFS and Age UK started to work with them. The couple are hoarders and Colin has dementia. Fire can rip even more rapidly through hoarders’ homes; rooms crammed to the ceiling pose a far greater risk to firefighters if there’s a fire.

WMFS’s Vulnerable Persons Officers build up trust and work over time with clients. There are usually lots of issues to sort out at the same time: fire safety, physical and mental health, environmental risks, social isolation. It’s where the brigade’s tried and tested approach of working with partner organisations and groups comes into its own.
This article looks at coaching for line managers as a way of developing staff and ultimately ‘buying back’ management time as your staff develop. Managers in the third sector are being squeezed. As funding gets tighter they have greater staff and technical responsibilities, therefore the old ways are no longer fit for purpose.

Coaching is a way to resolve the management time trap problem and aids the sector to develop its staff, as well as their beneficiaries.

What is coaching?
Coaching is time spent supporting an individual to develop their confidence and ability to deliver excellence. It is different to training or mentoring in that it starts with the belief that the person has the ability to deliver a superb performance through their capacity of self learning. Coaches believe staff can think for themselves and provide their own creative solutions. If you don’t think that, coaching is not for you and I recommend you stop reading now!

Most third sector managers that we speak to recognise their teams are both their greatest asset and have the ability to develop further.

Inner game
Non-directive coaching developed out of the ‘inner game’ made famous by Tim Gallwey with his first book, The Inner Game of Tennis. He wrote about the gap for individuals between their potential and their performance. Gallwey explained that the gap is often created by what he called interference. This is often caused by such things as fear, lack of self confidence, trying to be perfect, office politics, anger, frustration, etc. Through (non-directive) coaching Gallwey showed how we as managers and coaches can help team members to focus their attention and developed a relaxed concentration enabling them to narrow the gap between performance and potential.

What are the skills required?
As a manager, when coaching you have to temporarily put away your technical expertise to concentrate on helping the coachee to think through their challenge, build their confidence and help them to explore their options.

Where does it fit into management?
Sometimes you have to instruct or brief or train and transfer knowledge and skills but, particularly for experienced team members, it is more about helping them to develop themselves. Coaching is a powerful way to do this.

How do you coach?
We recommend you use a simple but effective model for coaching your staff. It is called T/ GROW. The initials stand for:

- Topic
- Goal
- Reality
- Options
- Wrap Up.

The manager should approach the coaching session with total concentration and ensure she or he can listen actively to the staff member. I will talk more about active listening in a future article.

So, for example, you might agree to a coaching session with one of your staff around their ‘biggest challenge’.

**Topic:** This allows the staff member to explore what this might be and what it feels like to them. Your role as coach is to ask helpful but neutral (non-leading) questions that allow the team member to explore and consider what they are thinking. Sometimes just repeating back to them a phrase they have used such as ‘you are struggling with this’ or keeping silent can help the staff member to unlock the problem area.

**Goal:** Using open questions and quality listening (not giving solutions or advice) can help the person to focus and provide their own answer to a question like, “What do you want to achieve from this session?”

**Reality:** This explores the topic and achieves an accurate picture of the issues. The coach should concentrate on understanding from the team member’s perspective: what it feels like, as well as the difficulties, concerns and opportunities. It is often in this section, if the manager can keep her wisdom under wraps, that the team member starts to have greater awareness of the issue and insights into the solutions.

**Options:** Allows the person to develop a range of solutions with the manager acting as a mirror to reflect back what they are saying and thinking. Again, through the manager’s restraint often comes the magic of the staff member’s own revelation of the best solution.

**Wrap up:** is the time to agree what the next step is and when the staff member is going to do what they have decided to do.

When do you coach?
As long time senior managers we have found that coaching can happen in both informal and formal settings. It could be 10 minutes on the phone or on a shared journey, through to a formal one-to-one.

We find the time coaching is never wasted and staff feedback
indicates that this method helps to solve not only the current issue, but helps them to reflect better on other challenges for themselves and their teams.

What are the benefits of coaching? Coaching results in great solutions that are owned and implemented by the person being coached. If they have been coached well they are more committed to the solution than if directed by their manager.

This in turn increases the quality and reduces hands on management time required. This is the holy grail for time-pressed leaders in our charities.

Next steps Coaching is a simple philosophy that can take a life time to master.

We recommend you read up on coaching. We also suggest you get a coach to work with you. This is not only a great way to develop and understand the coaching skills needed but, at the same time, give a strategic boost to your own performance.

Recommended reading
- *Inner Game of Work*, Tim Gallwey
- *Effective Coaching*, Myles Downey
- *Brilliant Coaching*, Julie Starr.

Recommended training
- *Coaching for line managers – a better way of working*: a 4 hour course for managers. BVSC, Tuesday 13 January. www.bvsc.org/bvsc-training-courses

For a no obligation discussion about leadership coaching please contact Rob Legge. Rob Legge, Rob Legge Consulting: rjlegge@hotmail.co.uk / 07592 565 833

Rob Legge is an experienced senior manager in the third sector having lead the Oxfam shops national network, been fundraising director at RNIB, community services director at Sense and CEO of Focus Birmingham. Rob specialises in providing strategic advice and coaching to leaders of small to medium third sector organisations.
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