



MENTORING AT WORK



East Belfast Community Development Agency
exists to provide resources, support and
capacity building programmes for community groups
that are based on partnership,
equal opportunities and sustainable outcomes



MENTORING AT WORK

EAST BELFAST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
269 ALBERTBRIDGE ROAD, BELFAST, BT5 4PY
T 028 9045 1512, F 028 9073 8039, E info@ebcda.org, www.ebcda.org

East Belfast Community Development Agency is a Company registered in Northern Ireland. Registration Number NI 31089

The Company has Inland Revenue Approved Charitable Status. Registration Number XR18490

The Report was funded by South & East Health & Social Care Group

REPORT ON MENTORING FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKERS 2001 - 2004
By Hugh Campbell and Sam McCready

EAST BELFAST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY



02

MENTORING AT WORK

EBCDA

East Belfast Community Development Agency (EBCDA) services a geographical territory that contains 139,000 people in East Belfast and Castlereagh. This figure is about half of the total for Belfast District Council area. EBCDA thus represents the largest umbrella community organisation in the Belfast area. EBCDA defines its mission as:

East Belfast Community Development Agency exists to provide resources, support and capacity building programmes for community groups that are based on partnership, equal opportunities and sustainable outcomes.

EBCDA strategic aims

- **Community Support**
To assess the needs of the community and voluntary sector and support groups in drawing up plans and strategies that allow them to work effectively within their community.
- **Resource and Financial Services**
To provide administration support to groups and to promote good financial management practice in the sector, through offering financial advice, management and training services.
- **Community Development Education and Training**
To encourage, support and facilitate the provision of quality education and training opportunities for those involved in the community sector in East Belfast.
- **Advocacy**
To seek to influence the policies of government and public agencies, that they might recognise the value of adopting a community development approach.

This is a report of a Mentoring at Work initiative which EBCDA started in 2001. It was aimed at providing additional support to Community Development workers in East Belfast. The story of what happened is presented in three sections.

Section One – The History of Mentoring

Describes the terms of reference, what happened and who was involved

Section Two – The Concept of Mentoring

Reflects on some of the ideas that underpinned mentoring contact, including the 'internal and external' environments of each worker

Section Three – The Benefits of Mentoring

Summarizes what participants in the initiatives (both workers and mentors) got from taking part

This section confirms that the mentoring initiative was successful in supporting local workers as they go about their daily work. I would like to thank Hugh Campbell and Sam Mcready and the workers and mentors named on pages 6 – 7 for their effort and commitment.

Michael Briggs
Director



04

MENTORING AT WORK

EBCDA



HISTORY OF MENTORING

THROUGH EAST BELFAST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

HISTORY OF MENTORING

THROUGH EAST BELFAST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

06

MENTORING AT WORK

EBCDA

OUR OBJECTIVES

In the autumn of 2001 EBCDA approached Hugh Campbell and Sam McCready from the University of Ulster to discuss support and development issues for Community Development workers in East Belfast.

The resulting conversations acknowledged that there were workers who could use additional support to that offered by their own organizations.

A proposal to offer this support by piloting mentoring initiatives was developed.

The key features of this were:

- 6 workers to be in the pilot
- funding secured to offer them 6 meetings with a mentor over a 6 month period
- mentors recruited from outside the East Belfast Community Development Agency network

The starting point for the initiative was to help individual workers, but early discussions identified other beneficiaries. These included the management committees, EBCDA itself and the mentors. The benefits were described as “**projected outcomes**”.

PROJECTED OUTCOMES FOR THE PROGRAMME FOR EACH PARTICIPATING PARTY

For the Worker(s)

- An opportunity to reflect
- Personal and professional support and development
- Improved knowledge and techniques to use in the workplace
- A challenge to their way of thinking
- More effective planning of their work
- Improved communication skills

For the Management Committee(s)

- Experience of someone sharing the role of worker support
- Having a more skilled staff member as a result of the process
- Opportunity to reflect on employment practice
- Establishing good working practices

For the Mentor(s)

- Opportunity to contribute to someone’s personal development
- Contribution to community development processes in East Belfast
- Pass on value of experience and knowledge
- Opportunity to be “earthed” with community practice

For EBCDA

- Offer practical support to community workers under capacity building programme
- Learn from the pilot project in order to establish good practice in the future
- Help develop a culture of learning and reflection in the field
- Make a contribution of sustaining communities

It was clear from the early stages that workers felt the initiative was helpful. An interim evaluation by Campbell and McCready threw up a number of key benefits.

After just three sessions, staff described the value of having the time and space to think about work and themselves as people. The “outsider” role of the mentor seemed to offer a new space for reflection.

This positive feedback generated a momentum that led to the scheme being extended to a further eight workers. The original group from the pilot were offered three further sessions which they all accepted.

Guidelines for the initiative were also drawn up.



HISTORY OF MENTORING

THROUGH EAST BELFAST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

08

MENTORING AT WORK

EBCDA

GUIDELINES FOR ALL PARTICIPATING PARTIES

EBCDA

- Established criteria for selection of workers.
- Workers to be in fulltime employment for the duration of the scheme
- The employer should be affiliated to EBCDA
- The management committee should approve participation in the scheme for their worker
- The management committee agreement to participate in the evaluation
- The participating workers to be spread across inner and greater East Belfast
- Gender balance

Workers

- Agreed to participate in the project for the full period

This meant

- One meeting per month for 6 months
- Ensure the choice of venue allows the worker to participate freely from interruption for the duration of that meeting
- Be prepared for each meeting
- Be a reflective practitioner in this process
- Respect the boundaries of confidentiality within this relationship
- Participate in the evaluation process

The Management Committees

- Agreed to release and support the worker for the duration of the project

This meant

- Agreement in writing with EBCDA to allow worker to participate
- Respect for the boundaries of confidentiality that the worker enters into with the mentor
- Ensure that the worker is given the time to meet with the mentor/supervisor as part of their workload
- Participate in the evaluation of the project

Hugh Campbell & Sam McCready

- The management and evaluation of the overall programme

This meant

- The selection of mentors
- Matching of these to each worker
- Providing support to mentors, e.g. administration, finance, training materials etc
- Ongoing monitoring of the project
- Devising a mentoring model for dissemination
- An interim report to the EBCDA board
- Final report to EBCDA board

The Mentor(s)

Were responsible for

- providing non-managerial support to each worker

This meant

- Confidential meetings
- Challenging and supporting the worker
- Helping the worker learn from their experience
- Helping the worker become more effective
- Being punctual and prepared for meetings
- Participation in the evaluation, and support meetings



DETAILS OF PEOPLE INVOLVED

• The Workers in Phase I (November 2001 – April 2002)

Michael Briggs (Albertbridge Area Community Development Project)
Rachel Davison (Walkway Community Association)
Deborah Devenney (Short Strand Community Forum)
Frankie Gallagher (Gae Lairn)
Christine Hagan (Newtownards Road Women's Group)
Paulene Morton (Ballymac Friendship Centre)

• The Workers in Phase II (November 2002 – November 2003)

Frankie Brennan (Short Strand Community Forum)
Jan Costello (Knocknagoney)
Jim Ferguson (Lord Street Residents' Group)
Mandy Hayes (Bridge Centre)
Anne Lappin (Tullycarnet Community Forum)
Patsy Laverty (Groundwork)
George Newell (East Belfast Historical Project)
Joe Watson (East Belfast Neighbourhood Office)

HISTORY OF MENTORING

THROUGH EAST BELFAST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

10

MENTORING AT WORK

EBCDA

• Mentors in Phase I

Kate Campbell (CFNI)
Tim Chapman (CTC Associates)
Pat Henry (UU Lecturer)
Tony Morgan (UU Lecturer)
Liz McArdle (UU Lecturer)

• Mentors in Phase II

Gillian Gibson (Poleglass Women's Centre)
Alan Grattan (Lecturer UU)
Ken Harland (Lecturer UU)
Michelle Harris (Juvenile Justice Agency)
Isobel Hawthorne (Consultant)
Eleanor Jordan (Windsor Women's Centre)
Richard Loudon (Consultant)

• Arrangements for mentoring

The management team (i.e. Hugh and Sam) followed the same process for each phase of the Programme.

Hugh and Sam prepared the mentors through a series of one-to-one meetings and an Induction Pack consisting of

- List of participants
- Outcomes for each participating member
- Guidelines for the Programme
- Background to the Project
- Key ideas around mentoring
- Guidelines for the first session (see Appendix 1)
- Selection of Articles

We set the framework for the mentoring relation around our key ideas of mentoring

- The relationship exists outside normal parameters of day-to-day life
- It is a one-to-one relationship
- It is not necessary to be working in the same field as the learner
- The mentors' broad experience can make them a valuable sounding board
- The agenda is set by the worker
- The non-managerial aspect of the relationship is important and should be emphasised. This is a regular, safe space. It is confidential. As a mentor you are tied into the policies/ecology of the worker's work environment
- The meetings should be scheduled in advance. You should protect this schedule and ask the worker to do the same
- Establish appropriate meeting space. A venue away from the worker's work site may be best
- The mentor is not the only source of support to the worker, although there is anecdotal evidence that there are community workers who are labouring along with minimal support

The workers were met individually by Hugh and Sam to discuss the Programme. The Guidelines and the Outcomes of the Programme (see above) were explained and discussed. Participating workers were then called to a group meeting to select their mentors and the process of "matching" workers to mentors came about. Each mentor was required to write a brief pen picture of their work background and some personal information. This list was then shared with each participating worker and they selected a mentor based on this information. Hugh and Sam asked workers not to select someone they may have worked with before or knew either in a personal or professional capacity.

"I was looking for someone who would know something about funding"

"I wanted someone with experience in the statutory sector"

"I wanted someone who was from a background completely different from my own and who could bring a new perspective to my situation"

"I was looking for someone from academia who might bring a discipline and rigour to my work"

The Practical Arrangements

- Workers should meet once a month for 6 months
- The contents of those meetings would be confidential to both parties
- If either party had any problems during the Programme they should contact Hugh or Sam
- An evaluation of the Programme would occur every 6 months
- This would consist of a questionnaire and group meeting facilitated by Hugh and Sam. One for mentors and one for workers
- A report from the evaluation process would be forwarded to funder and the Board of EBCDA



12

MENTORING AT WORK

EBCDA



CONCEPT OF MENTORING

THROUGH EAST BELFAST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

CONCEPT OF MENTORING

THROUGH EAST BELFAST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

14

MENTORING AT WORK

EBCDA

There seems to be as many definitions of mentoring as there are of the community.

These quotes connect to key themes in the EBCDA mentoring experience:

In 1989 the Government Training Agency reported that

“There are many views and definitions of the role of mentor, but all include verbs like support, guide and facilitate”.

In 1991 David Clutterbuck wrote

“Mentoring includes coaching, facilitating, counselling and networking. It is not necessary to dazzle the protégé with knowledge and experience. The mentor just has to provide encouragement by sharing enthusiasm for the job”

(EVERYONE NEEDS A MENTOR, 1991, D Clutterbuck)

“In the modern context mentoring is always at least one stage removed from direct line management”

(COACHING, MENTORING AND ASSESSING, 1992, E Parsloe)

John Whitmore reflected

“Whether we call it coaching, advising, counselling or mentoring, if done well it’s effectiveness will depend in large measure on the manager’s belief about human potential”.

(COACHING FOR PERFORMANCE, 1997, John Whitmore)

The EBCDA mentoring experience was based on belief in the capability and intelligence and experience of each neighbourhood worker. The mentors were not recruited because they had more experience than the worker necessarily, more because they may have had a different range of experience to draw on. Mentors themselves were encouraged to see the experience as a learning opportunity for themselves.

Learning and development were the central themes in EBCDA mentoring.

Here are 4 key elements of that.

MENTAL MODELS • these are deeply ingrained assumptions by which people make sense of the world. In the mentoring relationship these models can be challenged to explore whether they are the best representations of what is happening.

PERSONAL MASTERY • is a concern with continually clarifying and deepening personal vision. In the mentoring relationship this is reflected in having time and space to look at what gives the work meaning and purpose.

TEAM LEARNING • in mentoring this was translated into a focus on relationships in the agency, community and beyond.

SYSTEMS THINKING • in mentoring this was about contact and exploration which helps the worker see beyond an event or occurrence into deeper patterns and connections.

• The contact between mentor and worker could also be characterised by separating internal and external factors and working to understand what is going on in 4 key areas.

EXTERNAL

(Relationships, networks intra and inter agency, the neighbourhood itself)

Influence of others’ perceptions and stereotypes

The opportunities and restrictions created by context, policies, politics and events

INTERNAL

(Workers sense of self)

Influence of workers’ own perceptions and stereotypes (Mental Models)

The workers’ capability and intelligence

Mentoring became one response to this.

The EBCDA initiative was based on the idea that mentoring could

- Offer support
- Practical help
- Foster learning

In neighbourhood work it is possible to be surrounded by and engaged with people and their lives and yet to feel alone with responsibilities and pressures. Some workers are one person teams.

Mentoring was one way of providing support and helping regain and develop a focus on personal learning. Organisations with limited or weak infrastructure around staffing levels, training, budgets, support and supervision may consequently be limited in their capacity to manage the learning potential of the neighbourhood worker.

It was understood to be a process underpinned by

TRUST
CHOICE
CONFIDENTIALITY
COMPETENCE
CHARACTER
CONTRAST

Halfway through phase 1 a growing understanding of the content of the sessions identified three strands to the meetings.

- Exploration of personal vision, meaning and purpose of work, learning and development
- Problem solving and knowledge acquisition
- Discussion of personal problems, feelings, issues

CONCEPT OF MENTORING

THROUGH EAST BELFAST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

16

MENTORING AT WORK

EBCDA

TYPICAL MEETING PROCESS

STAGE ONE

Check-in – greetings
Review any agreed activity to be undertaken for today's meeting
Confirm 'agenda'
What is most helpful to talk about



STAGE TWO

Exploration of key issues material
Mentee leads discussion
Mentor listens
A 70% - 30% split in terms of talking



STAGE ONE

Confirm main points covered
Should agree any tasks to be undertaken before next meeting affirmations.

EBCDA MENTORING

The mentoring relationship is based on conversation.

Key characteristics of mentoring conversations:

- Mentee sets agenda
- This may embrace personal and job performance issues
- The conversation is not one-sided. There is listening, questioning and exploring from both parties
- Recognition that improvement or change in performance focuses on concrete issues
- Has consistency – in terms of time, length, intervals
- Is conducted in climate of safety

THREE KEY MENTOR SKILLS

- **Paying Attention**
 - Verbally and non-verbally
 - Eliminating distractions
 - Appropriate time set aside
 - Suspend personal judgement
 - Reflecting back what mentor believes is being said and felt
- **Discovering**
 - Asking questions to help mentee understand and explore their own mental models
- **Affirming**
 - Reinforcing mentees' abilities and competencies





18

MENTORING AT WORK

EBCDA



THE BENIFITS OF MENTORING

THROUGH EAST BELFAST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

THE BENIFITS OF MENTORING

THROUGH EAST BELFAST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

20

MENTORING AT WORK

EBCDA

Once the pilot scheme was established, the mentees indicated that the experience was positive. This led to the extension of their contact with mentors and the widening of the scheme itself to include more workers.

In this section, the benefits the workers claimed are outlined. We have categorised them and then support this with a range of quotations.

These represent the views of the vast majority of those who were interviewed.



CATEGORISATION OF BENEFITS

- Creation of a safe space for reflection
- Improved handling of job related stress
- Encouragement and appreciation
- Challenges to thinking and behaviour enabled personal growth
- Skills delvelopment
- Problem solving

CREATION OF A SAFE SPACE FOR REFLECTION

This connects to:

- Perceived neutrality of the mentor – someone from outside the community networks of East Belfast
- The venue – frequently (but not always) away from the work environment.
- The agenda determined by the mentee – you talk about what you need to talk about
- Confidential nature of the encounter
- The feeling of safety was the basis from which challenge emerged as sessions progressed
- Sense of not being judged

“This has been a very positive experience overall, to be able to talk to someone who does not have a direct link to the project was enlightening. It has been too easy to become insular and just accept the workload in front of you. It was good to have someone ask ‘Why are you doing this?’ It was good to have a neutral advisor who was confident enough to give constructive criticisms which were not obtrusive. The level of trust was important, not knowing or working with the mentor before was excellent.”

THE BENIFITS OF MENTORING

THROUGH EAST BELFAST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

22

MENTORING AT WORK

EBCDA

IMPROVED HANDLING OF JOB RELATED STRESS

This connects to:

- Opportunity to talk about frustrations, worries, concerns
- The weakness of support structures for some workers within their own agency
- Developing personal perspective on work and on work life balance
- Enhanced sense of personal coping and control

“Techniques – I learnt about ‘taking charge’ of situations and letting go of things. I began to understand that I wanted everything to go through me. I needed to know what everybody was doing and it was meaning that I was working all hours and being all things to everybody. I learnt how to handle the difficult things in the workplace and how some of these techniques could be useful in my own domestic situation. I learnt a ‘way of thinking’ about my work and my home life. It also made me think ‘of where I wanted to be’. I got a new sense of direction through this. I realised the demands being made on me were unreasonable and some of this was down to the way I managed within the organisation. I knew I should be ‘doing all this’ and I was able to look at this in a systematic way.”

ENCOURAGEMENT AND APPRECIATION

This connects to:

- Being listened to
- The consistency of being listened to
- Having qualities and actions recognised and validated
- Feeling of not being judged
- Being given feedback

“The thing about doing a job like this is that nobody ever tells you that you are doing a good job. You just work away until you are exhausted or collapse. Now I feel I know more about how good a job I am doing. My mentor has helped me appreciate myself and the work I am doing. I am more at ease now. I can prioritise my work, I can plan ahead, I can think ahead. By being better organised it gives me the chance and the time to catch up on all the things that used to be pushed to the side e.g. administration and funding. The whole process has allowed me to look from the outside in. I used to look forward to our meetings especially when they were outside the Centre. It was just so good to get outside. It freed me to look back.”

CHALLENGES TO THINKING AND BEHAVIOUR

This connects to:

- Helping mentee develop fresh ways of looking at an issue or difficulty
- Belief in the mentee’s potential to grow
- Avoidance of a position that the mentor was always ‘right’ or ‘correct’

“Personally I feel more confident and more able. I have time for my home and time for my work. I feel more able as a manager and co-ordinator (which is actually my job title). On the professional level I, feel better at strategic thinking. I have a limit to the responsibility I will accept on behalf of the project. Before, it was work all the time and it was all mine. I have a better perspective now. I can step back and look at what I am doing now. I give staff more responsibility and I don’t take things personally anymore when there is criticism. There are things the organisation and board are responsible for. We have worked this through. This is not about me sorting myself out at their expense. We have worked through this together. I have started to manage my work and myself.”

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

This connects to:

- Mentees developing self awareness
- Being able to focus on aspects of their leadership
- Developing interpersonal communication skills
- Managing time more effectively
- Need for personal development plans which extend beyond the mentoring experience’

“Probably one of the biggest things that has come out of this is the improvement in my planning of my work. Last year at this time I was in the middle of running a summer scheme. This was after I had spent months planning it, all by myself, getting the funding for it and planning it all. This meant my own work regarding the young women was not prepared. By the time I reached September I was really stressed out and I had to start planning my own programme for the autumn. This year it is so different. I have been able to delegate responsibility to others to plan the summer scheme. I have said NO to things that I should not be doing and have not the time to do. This has meant that I am sitting here now with most of my girls’ work programme planned for September. Basically I do things differently now. I have learned to say NO and prioritise my work.”