

# Moving Forward

## Project Report & Evaluation

February 2012

**'We aim to design programmes that will become part of the practitioner's general toolkit, ensuring that we leave a legacy of learning. We share and disseminate the knowledge to help encourage new approaches to become part of the mainstream'**

Thames Valley Partnership – Moving Forward Project Bid 2010



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**Our thanks go to the Lankelly Chase Foundation for supporting this project and to all those involved with the work, both professionals and young people who have contributed greatly.**

## Introduction

**Moving Forward** was a project based in the Thames Valley which aimed to provide an innovative approach to supporting young people who had suffered domestic abuse, through a series of creative approaches and interventions. The essence of the work was for partnerships of local agencies to collaborate in service delivery within diverse settings, alongside support from the Thames Valley Partnership and additional professional, creative, artistic input. The project was developed in 2010, funded by the LankellyChase Foundation and has run over the last two years concluding in March 2012.

This project report provides a summary of the work to date, details of the approaches undertaken, some initial feedback and thoughts in relation to evaluation and brief reflections on the future of this kind of intervention.



**'Has kick-started a multi-agency approach to working with young people who may be at risk of being abusive – much needed'**

**Training Participant**

## Project Overview

Funding for **Moving Forward** was originally secured in the summer of 2010, with a stated aim to engage with young people in a protective capacity.

Research shows the long term impact that living with domestic abuse can have on young people and the implications this may have for their current and future relationships. However recent practice has revealed the positive impact that support programmes and proactive interventions can have in building resilience and re-directing attitudes and behaviours. Arts based approaches are especially effective in not only engaging with young people, but also providing a means of expression and allowing a forum for both discussion and reflective learning.



The focus of this initiative was to provide this more proactive supportive intervention via artistic activities which complemented the work already being undertaken with the young people. Outcomes were set not only for the young people, but also to increase confidence and skill sets amongst practitioners, alongside benefits for the involved agencies in terms of assessment and resourcing. The intention was to not only provide additional options and approaches but also to build capacity within the sector for longer term benefits.

### Aim

'Our aim is to pilot a project with young people who have been victims of domestic abuse and who have issues of abusive behaviour in their personal relationships. We aim to show that preventative work with this group can strengthen factors which promote resilience. The project will use expertise drawn from arts practitioners in order to engage effectively with the young people

### Time- Line

#### 2010

Summer – Funding Secured  
October – Launch Event  
November – Pilots Sites Agreed  
December – Training Event

60 Practitioners engaged  
5 Pilot Agencies Secured

#### 2011

February – Training Event  
Project Delivery Phase - Pilots  
Evaluation Initiated

9 Intensive Training Events  
50 Practitioners Trained  
Engagement Young People &  
Parents

#### 2012

Project Delivery – Completed  
Evaluation Completed  
Project Report Compiled  
March – Dissemination Event

### Agencies Involved

Women's Aid  
Schools  
Youth Offending Teams  
Housing Associations  
Educational Psychology  
Local Councils  
Children Social Care  
Health Care Foundation  
Domestic Violence Services  
Mental Health Teams  
Police  
Family Resource Services  
Health Service  
Reintegration Service  
Local Charities  
Solicitors  
Community Safety Teams

### Activities

An initial planning and implementation phase was undertaken by The Thames Valley Partnership where detailed objectives were set, artistic and consultancy services appointed and pilot site recruitment was considered. An initial launch event took place in October 2010 designed to recruit a diverse selection of pilot site. Practitioners from across the sector attended the event reflecting the interest and need for this work within the region.

Once the pilot sites had been selected (refer to Projects below) two large scale training events took place. The first in December 2010 addressed expectations for the work; skills and capacity building in relation to resistance,

engagement and challenging perceptions; alongside an opportunity to increase understanding of the client groups and to start to plan the diverse individual activities. The second event in February 2011, provided information on structuring interventions, resolving practical issues and further practical and creative activities for engagement. At this time much work was undertaken to share the ethos of the work and to ensure that full advantage of the creative input was undertaken.

During the rest of 2011 the pilot sites planned and developed their own unique interventions and were fully supported in this process by the Thames Valley Partnership's project manager Judy Munday and the artist in residence for the project Christine Wilkinson. A number of further individual training sessions were undertaken with groups of practitioners, each tailored to the specific requirements of the pilot agency to further develop understanding and build capacity.

During the delivery phase all the pilot sites bar one were able to deliver a variety of creative sessions with the assistance of the artist in residence to diverse groups of young people with a range of successful outcomes. Each area undertook a session that was also evaluated to inform future practice development.

The final stage of the project was to create an exit strategy for each of the projects to discuss onward development of the work and provide a forum to share experience. A celebration event for the work was held in March 2012 to both launch the project report and provide an opportunity for reflection and discussions in relation to the future of this work across the region.

## **Pilot Sites**

The selection of the pilot sites required careful consideration and was based initially on the enthusiasm and capacity of the agencies involved. However efforts were also made to provide for a geographical spread across the region, to have a differential range of agencies and operating environments and for there to be sufficient numbers of young people to engage with the work.

### **West Berkshire**

A partnership of Youth Offending Team and teachers from the Reintegration Service within Educational Services, with support from other associated agencies including Mental Health and Connexions. Their clients were young males aged 11 to 19 who either had some involvement with offending behaviour or were under exclusion from school and who had experienced domestic abuse.

### **Milton Keynes**

Partnership led by InterAction MK in association with the Platform project a prevention service associated with MK Youth Offending Team. The work formed part of the Milton Keynes 'Opening Doors from Hurt to Hope' project. Their clients included young people, aged 8 to 13 and their parents who had experienced domestic abuse.

### **Oxfordshire**

Partnership working between Meadowbrook PRU, MAP and artistic and development work within educational services. The young people were from Years 9 and 10, in mixed gendered groups.

### **Slough**

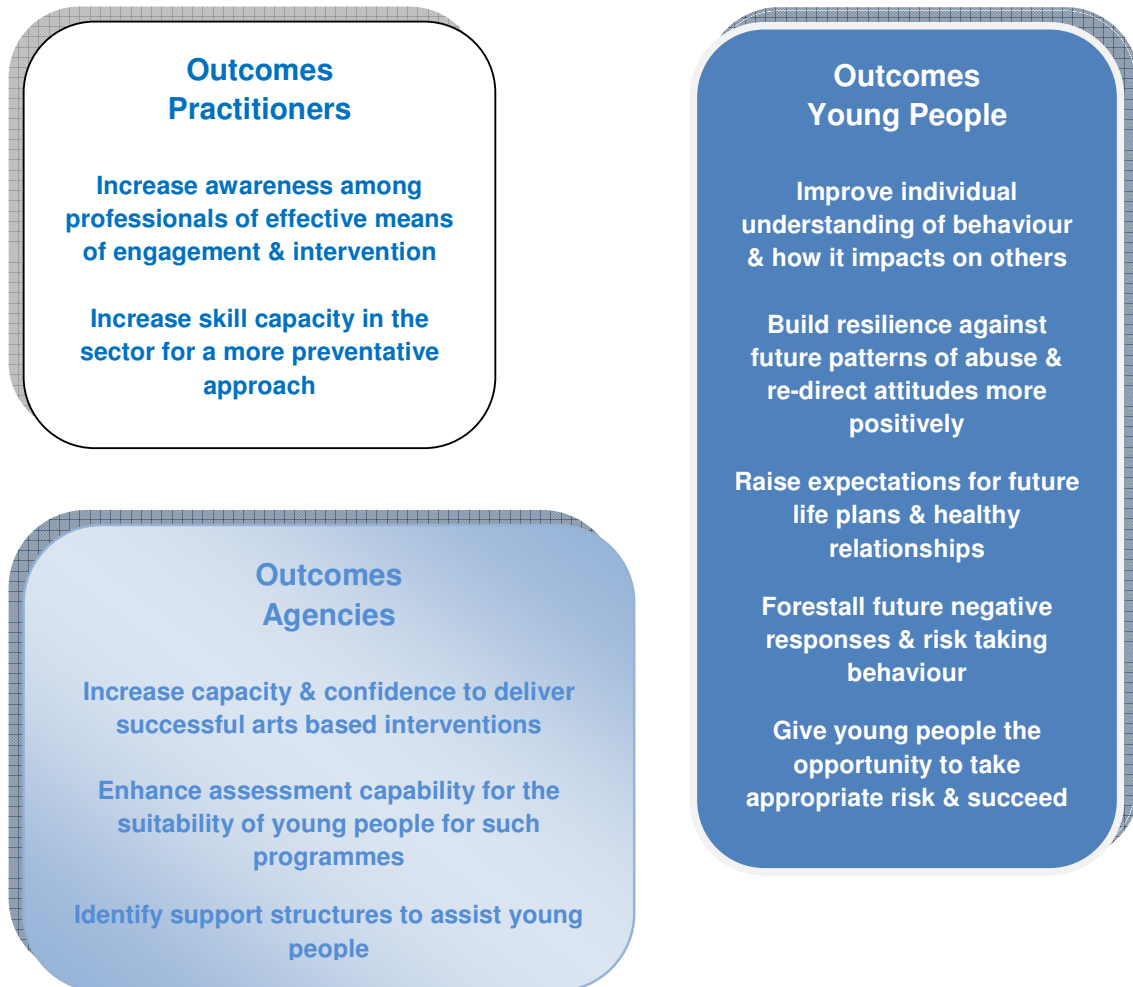
The focus of the work was a housing service for vulnerable young people provided by Homegroup. Young people are referred to this service through social services, youth offending teams, probation and local authority homeless services.

### **Windsor & Maidenhead**

Partnership between Youth Offending Service and East Berkshire Women's Aid. The focus of the work were young women aged 15 to 18 who had experienced domestic abuse and were at risk of entering abusive relationships themselves.

## Outcomes

The original outcomes for **Moving Forward** were not only focused on those young people who engaged with the pilot projects, but also to address practitioners and agencies, as an original aim was to build capacity in the sector for future development.



A consultancy, Sherwood Associates, was engaged at an early stage so that a process analysis could be undertaken, alongside efforts to assess both effectiveness and recommendations for future development. Evaluation of these types of approaches is elusive, as it is difficult to measure softer outcomes and limited resources preclude larger scale follow up assessments. The impact of any one intervention has to be set alongside a plethora of other influences and circumstances, making it complex to assess enhanced protectivity, which usually results from the interplay of several factors. This analysis merely attempts to

illustrate good practice, provide an overview of how the process worked and identify a few considerations moving forward.

## Evaluation

An evaluation framework was created at the start of the programmes of work and informed the collation of information. The initial project aim was consolidated into three main tasks/ outcomes and associated indicators were identified:-

- To pilot a project with young people who have been victims of domestic abuse
- To enhance skill capacity with professionals
- To increase capacity for agencies to deliver in a creative way

**N.B.** (Refer to [www.thamesvalleypartnership.org.uk/somethingbrilliant/evaluation](http://www.thamesvalleypartnership.org.uk/somethingbrilliant/evaluation) for evaluation outline template)

This framework provided the evaluation structure, but for practical reasons it was not always possible to collect the mass of data as prescribed. Where possible adjustments were made and alternative sources of information sought, but in some cases the full data set was not available. The difficulties of engaging with young people around this issue, for example, made it impossible to complete the questionnaires with them that had been originally planned and they were often inappropriate for the sessions that took place. In most cases individual agencies had alternative means of assessing the impact of interventions alongside the work that they were already undertaking and including the feedback from these was beyond the time and financial resources of this report.

The resultant information collected was summarised by the researcher for the purposes of this report and analysed under five main categories, as outlined below:-

1. Original engagement and interest
2. Implementation and training
3. Interventions and delivery
4. Young people and participation
5. Future considerations

### Evaluation Methods

Artwork created  
Standardised questionnaires  
Session observations  
Interviews with staff  
Informal observations & conversations  
Evaluation forms – training days  
Focus groups  
Feedback practitioners & participants  
Activity lists



## Original Engagement & Interest

Many young people experience or live with domestic abuse and for some the impact can be long term and profound. Research and work in relation to protective behaviours and resilience have identified avenues for engaging with young people to boost these factors and ameliorate some of these effects. The **Moving Forward** project originally identified that there was a need for this work and agencies shared gaps in service provision in relation to addressing issues for ongoing abusive behaviour amongst young people.

As a result the original interest and engagement with the **Moving Forward** project was across the region from a wide range of agencies in the sector both statutory and voluntary. The original planning meeting was well attended and the majority expressed an interest in participating. Constraints included the challenges of successfully delivering a multi-agency approach, financial resources within services and management buy-in to this type of approach. The funding for the project did not extend to financial resources for participating agencies and they were being asked to donate their worker time and include delivery within their current work streams.

Following the planning meeting six partnership areas were identified with lead agencies for each partnership. Almost immediately one pilot area withdrew, partly because of conflicting agendas with projects they were already engaged with, but also due to their constraints on contributing resources. The project proceeded with the other five areas of which four participated right through to the conclusion of delivery to young people. One area Windsor & Maidenhead withdrew just prior to the start of delivery to the young people, mainly due to the complexity of the task they had undertaken, but also the resources for their contribution were withdrawn by the host agencies involved.



The Thames Valley Partnership was very successful in engaging with diverse agencies and brokering partnerships to address issues in this complex area of work. They were able to instil enthusiasm for the work as well as belief in adopting a more innovative approach. Original engagement was as planned and any withdrawals were in relation to external rather than internal factors.

## Implementation & Training

**Moving Forward** was originally devised with four implementation phases and all of these have been delivered to time and as per the original milestones for the project.

Original planning and the appointment of expertise went according to schedule and pilot sites were recruited as above. Adjustments were made in the preparation phase to try to address any issues in relation to delivery that agencies and individuals faced as well as practically adapting the training and suggested material delivery. The two whole project training sessions were broadly well received and the second session was altered in response to feedback from the first session. Practitioners did feel that they required more assistance in planning their interventions and more input in relation to the creative activity required. One of the major hurdles to overcome at this stage was the

the expectations that they formalised programme creative tools that they current activity. In **Forward** is an formalised plan of adaptable to the range environments in which Another issue was the the contribution of all caused by the range of set within partner

The implementation delayed initially, partly extended period partnership working,

training input was required. Four of the five pilots were able to deliver sessions directly to young people although the timings and style of sessions varied across the projects. One project also successfully engaged with mothers of the young people too, an important consideration when one of the significant protective factors for young people is a positive relationship with a non-abusing parent. Domestic abuse impacts on parental/child relationships and work repairing these relationships can boost protectivity in terms of both the implications for young people's longer term adult relationships and also to guard against possible adolescent to parent violence.

**Moving Forward** reached completion in March 2012 and all documentation and project events were delivered as originally targeted.

A blue rounded rectangular box containing the text 'Project Milestones' at the top. Below it are four lines of text, each representing a phase: 'August 2010 – October 2010 Planning, Negotiation & Pilot Recruitment', 'October 2010 – March 2011 Preparation, Training, Programme Development & Monitoring', 'April 2011 – December 2011 Implementation & Programme Delivery', and 'December 2011 – March 2012 Dissemination & Exit Strategy'.

**Project Milestones**

August 2010 – October 2010  
Planning, Negotiation & Pilot  
Recruitment

October 2010 – March 2011  
Preparation, Training,  
Programme Development &  
Monitoring

April 2011 – December 2011  
Implementation & Programme  
Delivery

December 2011 – March 2012  
Dissemination & Exit Strategy

practitioner's would receive a more of activity, rather than could adapt to their essence **Moving** approach rather than a work, designed to be of clients and it can be used. lack of clarity around those involved, partially operational constraints agencies.

phase was a little because of the required for negotiating but also as further

## Interventions & Delivery

Across the scope of the project a wide range of creative activity was undertaken from decorating doors as part of a domestic abuse awareness campaign to young people creating pictures and decorations for their own spaces. In total over twenty creative group sessions were undertaken with young people in addition to some twelve creative sessions for practitioners. The illustrations throughout this report reflect the quality and range of this activity.

It had been planned that the majority of the creative sessions would be delivered by practitioners, but in reality there were resourcing issues and the need for further skill development to be addressed in this pilot phase. Most of the creative work was ultimately delivered by the artist in conjunction with practitioners. This approach not only provided more in-depth training for the workers, but also yielded higher quality input for the young people. All the practitioners identified that this was beneficial, not only in terms of the quality of the work, but also the young people were able to respond differently to someone who was seen as external to the agency with whom they were already engaged. This often allowed for a more relaxed atmosphere and facilitated discussions between the young people themselves, the artist and the workers.



Some of the agencies held the creative sessions as purely standalone interventions as a means of encouraging communication and discussion of difficult issues. One area endeavoured to incorporate the sessions into an already existing programme of work done individually, which proved challenging because of problems with the chosen complementary programme, but this did not diminish from the artistic input. The area that withdrew tried to adapt a current programme of work in a creative way, which was time-consuming and complicated and contributed to their resultant withdrawal.

## Practitioner's thoughts.....

'Brilliant – would like to have this all the time...'

'Provided an opportunity to talk...'

'Tool for explaining healthy relationships...'

'Gave young people and parents the ok to talk about domestic violence...'

'Helped workers to identify issues within the family relationships...'

'Very successful and enjoyable project for all involved...'

'Art gave the feeling of achievement and worth...'

'Environment and interaction was very therapeutic and calming...'

All the practitioners involved with delivery were universally supportive of the approach and highlighted the benefits. Through focus groups a lot of detailed feedback was compiled. All thought that **Moving Forward** had achieved its original objectives and had been very successful in engaging with the young people. Their agencies had contributed worker time, line-management, advice, planning, strategic direction and time to share good practice with colleagues.

Being involved had provided them with:-

- \* An appreciation of the value of **creative inputs**
- \* Increased awareness of the dynamics of **domestic abuse**
- \* **Techniques** to structure a programme of work
- \* More knowledge of the **impact** of domestic abuse on young people
- \* Wider knowledge of appropriate **support options**
- \* **Group work** skills
- \* Better **engagement** with young people

Challenges included:-

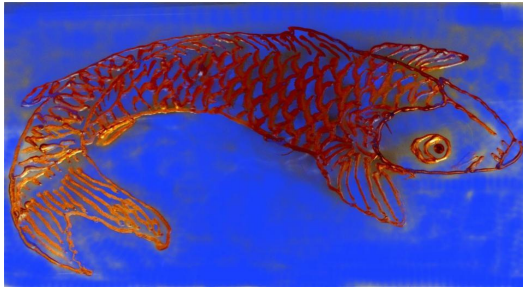
- \* Constraints of **multi-agency working**
- \* Lack of **training** in the field of domestic abuse
- \* Additional **resourcing**
- \* The **engagement** of a challenging client group
- \* Proactive **support** from other agencies

One of the significant benefits for the practitioners involved, which was identified in feedback interviews, was that **Moving Forward** had not only provided them with a framework for this issue to be discussed within their agencies, but was also an opportunity for the creation of a supportive environment for themselves as frontline workers in often stressful conditions. It was a safe forum to explore and reflect on their working practice and to share experiences, which was beneficial to their own individual approaches to the work. This was an unexpected, but significant outcome in terms of the original aims of the project.

## Young People & Participation

All the practitioners involved with the delivery of **Moving Forward** felt that the young people involved had benefitted hugely from the experience, with the outcomes varying for individuals. Less young people ultimately engaged with the sessions than had originally been envisaged, partly due to the withdrawal of two projects, but for those that did, the benefits were clear.

A difficulty in this sector will always be motivation and engagement, but this type of creative input was seen as a successful approach with the majority of young people and most participated consistently, responded positively and returned for future sessions.



One of the significant outcomes was providing a forum for a facilitated discussion eased by participation in a joint activity. In the observed sessions the young people were keen to focus on the tasks and applied themselves with concentration and application. There was little or no disruption of the groups. The communal involvement helped improve their relationship with practitioners and many felt that the young people had been more forthcoming about their situation and experiences as a result, not only during the sessions but on other occasions with their key workers.

The sense of achievement and valuing one's own contribution was clearly evidenced and role modelling of positive relationships and respectful interaction a clear outcome. The young people's own feedback expressed in the groups was wholly positive to the opportunity they had been given and most wished to participate in such activities in the future.

### Benefits - Young People

**Participated better in groups**

**Shared their experiences**

**Committed to the tasks**

**Were more reflective**

**Applied themselves**

**Enjoyed the experience**

**Engaged co-operatively**

**Asked for extra support**

**Achieved immediate goals**

**Tried something new**

**Took ownership and pride in their work**

**Accepted praise**

**Raised confidence**

**Reflected on their own experiences**

**Had a sense of achievement**

**Raised empathy levels and showed interest in others**

**Provided them with a distraction activity**

## Future Considerations

Whilst **Moving Forward** sought to address a range of complex issues within a sensitive operating framework, it also raised some questions and identified areas of good practice. The following list of considerations is not comprehensive but some thoughts to guide future interventions

### Young People:

- Young people involved were keen to see the continuation of these activities
- Increased focus on assessment suitability and group dynamics during referral stage would be beneficial
- Increased length of the creative intervention in a more structured programme of activity would be more impactful
- Activities should be designed to complement other work with young people
- Such activities are effective in engaging young people and can be used motivationally
- Consideration of the influence of peer mentoring and peer education

### Practitioners:

- Need to address the tensions between the creative approaches and current work – the most successful were where they were incorporated within or tailored to current activity
- Once demonstrated the benefits of this type of approach was evident to practitioners
- Increased allocation of lead time and preparation required to ensure successful group activity and interaction
- Increased allocation of worker time and resources to incorporate this approach in their current interventions
- Requirement for increased awareness and training of the impact of domestic abuse on young people and the implications this has for successful approaches
- Requirement for supportive structures and self-reflection opportunities amongst workers engaged with this client group to counter front-line fatigue and de-motivation

### Multi-Agency:

- Buy-in from management within a broader range of agencies to the benefits of this type of approach
- Appreciation of the cost effective benefits for both practitioners and young people

## Conclusion

The **Moving Forward** project was very successful in meeting the main aims of the original proposal. An innovative creative approach was used with a diverse range of young people and there was a subsequent increase in capacity and confidence across the region for practitioners to engage in this approach. All the projects were involved in partnership working to achieve session delivery with subsidiary benefits of enhanced contacts, networking, multi-agency case management and familiarity with inter-agency operating requirements.

The young people involved clearly benefitted in the short term and were positively responsive. Constraints on the work included lack of worker time to more fully devote to these interventions and the complexities of including this approach within current service delivery. Protectivity and resilience are fostered in a variety of ways and **Moving Forward** was directly able to address some of these including an opportunity to discuss experiences in a safe environment; involvement in community activities; collaboration and social activities; support of a trusted adult; role-modelling and visibility of family dynamics and experiences of young people in relation to domestic abuse.

The challenge moving forward will be to more fully incorporate this type of approach within mainstream provision and also to make the case for the benefits of this work within a competitive, target driven operating environment. There is no doubt that this small scale pilot successfully demonstrated benefits to both young people and practitioners and made an important start in building some capacity in the sector for future development.



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