

Foreword

The City Parochial Foundation was formally established in 1891 as the means of channelling the benefits of the many scattered endowments of the City parishes to the poor of Greater London.

By the 1870s, parishes within the City of London had significant endowments intended to benefit their inhabitants, but a resident population no longer existed, as over the years the City changed into a financial and business centre. Concern, stimulated by some scandals, was expressed; a Royal Commission was established; an Act of Parliament was passed in 1883 – and eventually the Foundation was created. In effect, the secular and ecclesiastical endowments of almost all the City churches were seized and passed in trust to the Foundation.

Over the years the trustees have developed the original endowments to provide an invaluable source of continuing and increasing support for charitable bodies working to assist the poor in London. Recent initiatives have included the London Voluntary Sector Resource Centre, which provides accommodation, library, training and conference facilities for voluntary organisations, the London Prisons Community Links initiative, which works to improve facilities for visitors in London prisons, and the Evelyn Oldfield Unit, which provides advice, training and support for refugee community organisations in the London area.

This report documents the City Parochial Foundation's Mental Health Programme 1993-97. The thinking behind the programme and the context in which it was launched are set out at the beginning. Reports of the individual projects funded by the programme then detail their operation, achievements and frustrations, together with personal testimony from the clients and managers involved. Finally, the lessons learnt through the projects - individually and collectively, by both funders and project leaders, are discussed in the hope that these will be useful to others treading a similar path in future.

Executive Summary

- The 1980s and early 1990s saw substantial changes in the climate of mental health service provision, with progressive closure of the large psychiatric hospitals and the implementation of community care policies in their place. An increasing emphasis on needs-led health and social services provision was accompanied by a rise in the strength and influence of mental health user groups in service planning and development.
- Concerned with the potential effects of these changes on those using mental health services, and because few applications addressing mental health issues were received, the City Parochial Foundation determined to fund a broad-spectrum Mental Health Programme.
- The programme was established to provide three-year funding to mental health projects in four priority areas of concern: women with mental health problems, young people with mental health problems, particularly those from black and ethnic minority communities, accommodation projects concerned with providing help for the homeless mentally distressed, and self-advocacy schemes and groups.
- Eight projects were funded for three years under the programme. These included two women's projects, three projects targeted at young people from ethnic minorities, and three self-advocacy schemes.
- ◆ The Manic Depression Fellowship was funded to develop and expand its Greater London network of self-help groups
- ◆ Nafsiyat Intercultural Therapy Centre received a grant to develop a counselling service for young refugees
- ◆ Peter Bedford Housing Association was funded to set up training and employment schemes for women in office administration skills and soft furnishings' production
- ◆ Mental Health Media received funds to improve media coverage of mental health issues and promote the user view in the press and broadcast media
- ◆ Croydon Mental Health User Group was given a grant to develop its user consultation, information, support and campaigning work in promoting mental health and improving mental health services in Croydon
- ◆ Mind in Tower Hamlets was funded to set up a Somali mental health project in Tower Hamlets, targeting younger refugees.
- ◆ Brixton Community Sanctuary received a grant to employ a women's community outreach worker
- ◆ The Islington Women's Counselling Project received funding to work with young women refugees.

- Another organisation, The Horn of Africa Counselling and Social Support Centre, received a grant for a research study to assess the extent of mental health and social care needs of Horn of Africa refugees, and the appropriateness of existing provisions for this group.
- Objectives agreed with the City Parochial Foundation at the start of each project were generally achieved and usually exceeded over the term of funding. Two exceptions were The Brixton Community Sanctuary Project and The Refugee Project of Islington Women's Counselling Centre, which closed prematurely due to staffing difficulties.
- Over the course of the programme, many valuable lessons were learned. Amongst them that user-led groups work very differently from the statutory sector, but this can be regarded as one of their strengths in moving mental health services forward.
- Intercultural and operational differences were a particular challenge for management and funders in the case of refugee and self-advocacy projects, and required considerable flexibility and willingness on all sides to promote understanding and co-operation.
- Building connections with black and ethnic minority service users was consistently problematic for white organisations, but involving leaders from the ethnic minority groups they were trying to reach was invariably a good solution.
- The outcomes of the Programme and its projects strongly endorse the principle that the most effective mental health services are those built around the needs of the people using them - as defined by those people.