

## **Phoenix Development Fund: Themed Report Summary**

### **Themed Report Title: Mental Health & Enterprise**

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#### Context

Thirteen organisations selected to carry out projects developing initiatives to encourage and facilitate self-employment, social enterprise and employment prospects generally, for people with experience of mental health conditions. Under this overarching Mental Health theme all thirteen projects co-operated in developing the Lessons Learned [LL] report. Analysis carried out using documentary evidence and dialogue with all thirteen projects.

#### Lessons Learned

##### *Role of PDF and SBS*

PDF funding identified as crucial to the success of all 13 projects. None would have been able to proceed at this time without it. Emphasis on development, allowing a previously neglected area to be given the focus it warrants to mitigate both personal cost and the cost to the NHS was seen as innovative and of real value. Also valued was the accommodation of realistic outputs - given that clients experiencing mental health problems generally require more intensive support to enable them to achieve their ambitions.

Responses indicate a high level of support and praise for the role of PDF and the SBS team involved. Specifically, the flexible framework allowing for skills and experiences to be harnessed to maximum effect and lessons learned throughout the project to shape forward thinking. PDF approach and SBS personnel attracted considerable positive comment. Solid relationships between SBS/PDF personnel and delivery staff enabling outcome-led rather than statistical-led projects, genuinely conveying a feeling of working in partnership and trust.

However, reservations expressed about time frame - limiting outputs and outcomes and preventing further promotion of the project, with the cessation of funding after March 2006 placing the long-term success of the projects at risk. Also felt that requirement for project delivery organisations to carry the cash-flow for over three months at a time (payments in arrears), although countered by an initial 10% up-front payment, was issue for future reconsideration.

PDF's overarching attitude has been partnership approach with delivery organisations, aim being to maximise outcomes rather than having a 'fixed in concrete' approach (such as that by the European Social Fund [ESF] - regularly quoted as almost requiring continuity down a particular route even though better alternatives might have been discovered during the projects). This lesson from PDF needs to be adopted by more funders as it not only increases effectiveness but also increases self-value among delivery staff and clients.

#### Outcomes/Findings

The Report identifies two critical issues to be addressed:

- The urgent need for extended funding of these individual projects to enable participants and society to reap the benefits of the effort and expenditure already made.
- The urgent need to address the economic barriers to social and economic independence.

The Report also finds lack of clear, secure and enduring bridge from benefits to earning a self-supporting income a major barrier to positive progress. The Report identifies a solution: the national introduction of a 'New Deal for Self-Employment' with eligibility for clients on incapacity benefit.

#### Useful points for the Project

The Report argues that addressing combined need of participants for continuing project support alongside appropriate funding and a supported transition from benefits to financial independence will enable sound progress to be made. Recommendation that mainstream business support organisation (RDAs; Business Links; organisations with government funded delivery programmes etc.) are required (as part of their

contractual terms) to establish working links with organisations that offer business support to those who lack emotional well-being.

### Future Developments

Several projects indicate provision will continue, for example through funding obtained by a local organisation, and also through a social enterprise being set up and continued as part of a portfolio of support to people with disability offered by the host organisation. In some areas there is funding through programmes for 2 year projects of business support for disadvantaged communities generally.

The PDF programme has set in motion a series of initiatives that have continuing requirements e.g the ongoing support for start-ups that have demonstrated considerable promise but are not yet self-sufficient. Partnership working identified as an appropriate and available *exit strategy* in some instances but only because partners possess something participating projects lack - ongoing funding. This is an area for concern and consideration when structuring future initiatives. Determining realistic relationship between project goals and expectations and funding period will ensure that clients' experiences of the process are positive throughout.

### Policy and Service Delivery Implications

-What is SBS's role in relation to mainstream business support in the context of the Report's recommendation?

- How could the impact of PDF be embedded, given that the role of SBS has moved further away from delivery and given that funds are limited?

- In the context of people thinking of setting up in business, there is an underlying danger that unless proper enterprise support provision is made for people with, or with links to, mental health issues, between 3% and 6% of the population may well feel that their special needs are not being adequately addressed.