**INTRODUCTION**

*Together For You* is a Partnership Project funded by the Big Lottery Fund involving nine leading mental health charities delivering a range of mental health and wellbeing services across Northern Ireland through a coordinated approach. These aim to educate people and their communities; raise awareness of mental health and encourage help seeking; promote good mental health; prevent mental illness and promote early intervention; and provide intensive support for those already experiencing mental ill health.

PACEC (formerly RSM McClure Watters (Consulting) Ltd) were appointed by Action Mental Health (AMH) to undertake an evaluation of the Together For You Contract for the period August 2013 – April 2016 and this summary highlights the key findings of the full evaluation report.

The Together For You Project is based on a Stepped Care Model, as recommended by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE). Services include befriending, bereavement support, counselling including trauma counselling, support for carers, education, training and awareness raising, support for LGBT communities and volunteering.

Led by Action Mental Health, the Partnership includes Aware; CAUSE; Cruse Bereavement Care; MindWise; Nexus NI; Praxis Care; The Rainbow Project; and Relate NI. The Project was awarded funding of £2.93 million in August 2013 following a competitive tendering process. It was launched on World Mental Health Day, October 2013.

**THE EVALUATION PROCESS**

The aim of the evaluation is to critically evaluate the Project’s success in the delivery of quality assured effective and efficient community based early intervention and preventative approaches for the promotion of positive mental wellbeing and provide recommendations to inform the delivery of future mental health policy, practice and commissioning in Northern Ireland.

The methodology for the final report uses information gathered from primary and secondary data collected across the evaluation period and includes desk research, survey data collected from project beneficiaries, focus groups, interviews with staff, past participant follow-up survey data, interviews with key stakeholders, and case studies.

* The Together for You partners are Action Mental Health; Aware; CAUSE; Cruse Bereavement Care; MindWise; Nexus NI; Praxis Care; The Rainbow Project and Relate NI.
In total **52,587** individuals have accessed Together For You services during August 2013 to April 2016 which exceeds the original target of **37,725** by **14,862** (39%). The cost per beneficiary equates to **£52.39**, which is significantly less than originally anticipated (£77.67), indicating that the Project was delivered cost-efficiently. In addition to the 52,587 direct beneficiaries the Project has also supported **114,618** indirect beneficiaries to the end of April 2016.

**Notable achievements include:**

- **CAUSE** has delivered mental health training programmes for 1010 beneficiaries
- **AMH MensSana** has provided Provoking Thought and MHFA training to 1,719 key contacts of young people
- **MindWise** have supported 182 volunteers to provide 25,249 volunteer hours across the project partners
- **MindWise** has delivered Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP) Training to 138 beneficiaries
- **Praxis Care** have trained and supported 86 volunteers to provide a befriending service to 86 befriendees
- **Aware** has delivered a total of 67 Living Life to the Full CBT programmes to 838 beneficiaries
- **Cruse Bereavement Care** has delivered 93 Early Days Groups to 1,338 beneficiaries
- **Praxis Care** has delivered CBT based counselling sessions to 297 beneficiaries
- **The Rainbow Project** have supported 79 beneficiaries in 4 newly established LGBT support groups in rural areas of NI
- **Relate** have delivered relationship and mental health counselling for 578 individuals, couples and families.

Despite the proportion of male beneficiaries (**29.8%**) being lower than that of females (**70.2%**) it is recognised that Project Partners have taken proactive steps throughout the project to increase adult male participation (e.g. campaign during November 2015, male focused flyers, promotion through social media and workshops at Allen and Overy / Michelin etc). Moreover, the RelateNI ‘Healthy Minds, Healthy Body, Healthy Relationships’ marketing programme exceeded its overall target for male referrals to their counselling service by **17%**.
OUTCOMES

The Project’s vision “Resilient and Healthy People and Communities” is supported by four high level outcomes for the services delivered by the Project:

OUTCOME 1: An improvement in the mental health and wellbeing of people who benefit from the projects delivered:

- Over 90% of beneficiaries reported an improvement in their mental health
- They now feel more able to seek help with mental health issues
- They’re more able to direct others to sources of help

Long term impact: 94% of 294 past participants agreed or strongly agreed that the support received had an ongoing/continued positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

OUTCOME 2: Learning for organisations delivering beyond the contract in terms of impact for beneficiaries and success factors that will enhance service delivery:

The Project successfully facilitated joint learning both internally and with wider networks via two full day annual learning events and a shared learning workshop for partner staff (March 2015) which revealed:

- Relationship building at the outset is important to service delivery and the development of the partnership;
- More awareness amongst partner organisations of other services that are available and therefore appropriate referrals can be made that means project beneficiaries are getting the most appropriate support;
- The partnership approach means organisations are receiving referrals from people who may not have contacted them directly; and
- Partners are duplicating the shared learning model in their organisations.

“It’s important to understand mental health. It affects how we think and feel. Now I understand mental health and know where to get help,” Mental Health Awareness Beneficiary, age 11
OUTCOME 3: Enhanced delivery of efficient and effective customer-focused and holistic services:

The partnership successfully established new structures to facilitate partnership working and to allow coordination of services. This included a number of working groups which were established with representation from across the Partners including the Steering Group, Operational Group, Evaluation Group, Communication Group and the Reference Group. Each group effectively delivered on its purpose except the Reference Group, which experienced challenges in establishing a consistent regional representation over a relatively short period of time.

The internal cross referral system was an important part of the Project as it meant clients could be more easily referred to the service most suited to their needs either instead of, or in addition to, the support provided by the organisation they were already in contact with. During the period August 2013 – April 2016 496 internal referrals were recorded across the partnership.

The Project established joint working methods for both the planning and delivery of services and there is evidence of a wide range and large number of activities undertaken by Partners to work collaboratively including joint campaigns and activities (for example, World Mental Health Day) and establishment of an Education Sub Group and Protocol. In addition, a number of Partners highlighted that they have improved their own evaluation systems as a result of learning from the Together For You partnership.

OUTCOME 4: Analysis and evaluation of the range of delivery mechanisms used which will inform new approaches to successful replication of what works:

Project beneficiaries indicated high levels of satisfaction with the services and support provided.

Between 70% and 97% of respondents stated that they would recommend the support to others in need of additional support due to mental health issues.

The most common areas highlighted for development included:

- Longer courses/sessions or an increased number of courses / sessions (to include a wider range of activities);
- More frequent and broader publicity of TFY services; and
- More flexible service delivery times.

There is evidence that awareness raising activity has been undertaken through the dedicated website, social media, press articles, radio interviews, briefing/information sessions and presentations. This has been effective in marketing the Project and the target number of beneficiaries has been exceeded.

"From experience I know how hard it can be when you don’t know what support is out there, so having organisations working together to increase the awareness of all the support available out there is fantastic. The more awareness of support the better" – Project Beneficiary.

Staff feedback included:

"We are reaching people we never would have been able to in the past due to referrals from partners and because we have been able to deliver services in group settings" - Staff member during focus group interviews

“We have been able to build and develop relationships with Partners as well as developing new services and projects with Partners within the Together For You project and intend to identify further partnership opportunities for further projects” – Project Partner (MindWise)
**LEARNINGS FOR FUTURE PROJECTS**

- Successful collaboration and partnership working is challenging and takes time to achieve - lead in time is required to allow for recruitment of staff, introduction of new processes and practices and establishment of service delivery alongside development of relationships and trust.

- Collaboration / Partnership working success measures are difficult to develop - Future projects should consider setting objectives / KPIs relating to partnership working at the outset and thereafter monitor and report on them regularly.

- It is important for time to be invested at the start to ensure the right people are involved and committed to collaboration – This was successfully achieved in the Together For You Project as partnership agreements were signed at the outset and future projects should also ensure the roles and responsibilities of each Partner are defined and a governance structure is in place to oversee decision making.

- Working collaboratively with regard to the planning and delivery of services is difficult as it requires a change in how each Partner delivers services – this should be factored into the Project Plan.

- The development of a common data collection and evaluation processes / system requires significant time and the input of each Partner at the outset - This is important in order to demonstrate collective impact and any future projects should consider developing this system prior to service delivery.

- Past participant follow-up - Future / similar projects should also plan for participant follow-up at 3, 6 and / or 9 months and build into the project plan a means to secure approval from beneficiaries at point of service delivery to contact them post-delivery.

**Benefits of collaboration identified by Partners include:**

- an improved or wider range of services for beneficiaries;
- knowledge and information sharing;
- stronger and better co-ordination of activities; and
- improved publicity opportunities and access to more contacts within the sector / increased networking.

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**FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE**

At 31 April 2016, the Project had spent **94%** of total funding (£2,754,923 against total Big Lottery Fund funding of £2.93 million), however it is noted that the contract provides financial resource for the lead partner until October 2016. Expected overall spend is **£2,902,669.67**, which would result in an underspend of less than **£30k**.

The contract with the Big Lottery Fund required that Project overhead costs not exceed **9%** of the contract value; this has not only been met but overheads have been reduced to less than **7%** across the partnership.

To access the full evaluation report published by PACEC visit [www.togetherforyou.org.uk](http://www.togetherforyou.org.uk)
The Together For You partnership project received £2.93 million from the Big Lottery Fund to deliver a range of mental health and wellbeing services between October 2013 and May 2016.

Total number of beneficiaries: 52,000

- People benefiting from mental health awareness sessions: 2,661
- Individual interventions: 4,064
- Individuals benefiting from training: 45,954

Cost per beneficiary: £52.39

Over 90% of beneficiaries reported an improvement in their mental health, they now feel more able to seek help with mental health issues, and they’re more able to direct others to sources of help.

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Females: 70.2%
Males: 29.8%

"From experience I know how hard it can be when you don’t know what support is out there, so having organisations working together to increase the awareness of all the support available out there is fantastic. The more awareness of support the better.", beneficiary of AMH, Cruse and MindWise via Together For You

"Thank you for bringing me out of the dark and into the light!", beneficiary of Nexus NI Counselling

"It’s important to understand mental health. It affects how we think and feel. Now I understand mental health and know where to get help", Mental Health Awareness beneficiary age 11

Over 17,000 visitors to website

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Access the full PACEC report online at www.togetherforyou.org.uk