

City Bridge Trust – Monitoring Visit Report

Organisation: Attend	Grant ref: 10489	Programme area: Positive Transitions to Independent Living - Newly acquired disability
Amount, date and purpose of grant: 17/03/2011: £120,000 over three years (£39,000; £40,000; £41,000) to help people with acquired brain injury move into employment, education and volunteering, subject to sight of a satisfactory budget for 2011-12		
Visiting Grants Officer: Jemma Grieve Combes accompanied by Mrs. Littlechild	Date of meeting: 26 th February 2014	
Met with: David Wood (CEO); Anthony Mercier (Project Officer from 1 st Sept 2013)		
1. Introduction to the organisation: Attend is a national charity which supports and expands the roles volunteers play in connection with health. It began in 1949 as the National League of Friends, creating a volunteer scheme for volunteers in hospitals. It still functions as the umbrella body for 700 Hospital Friends groups nationwide, but it has expanded into other direct projects around healthy options for hospital food retailers, supporting stroke victims, and accredited training in volunteer management.		
2. The project funded: Your grant supported an emerging project to help those with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI). ABI is the largest cause of acquired disability in the UK working age population. Research by the charity Headway has established that up to 10,000 Londoners per year acquire some form of brain injury. These people undergo medical rehabilitation, but are then faced with making the transition to independent living alone. The Attend ABI service offers specialist services to help people manage the cognitive, behavioural and emotional effects of brain injury to help them enter and/or sustain employment, education or training. Alongside work placements, job coaching and ongoing support, volunteering is used as an integral part of the programme build new skills and self-confidence. The project started in April 2011.		
3. Work delivered to date: In year 2 of the grant 80 clients took part in the employment programme and the organisation reports that numbers have been at a similar level in year 3. Following initial assessment, each client is assigned a job coach to understand their goals; identify realistic employment options; develop their CV; and build up interview skills. They are also assigned a separate mentor who will be their main point of contact; help them resolve any issues; liaise with family, friends and outside agencies; and monitor progress. Clients attend job coaching and formal taught sessions which run over 3 days each week at Attend's offices in central London. Sessions start at 9am to help clients get used to travelling in rush hour traffic. Within the first few weeks Attend aims to set up a volunteering placement for each client. Once a month clients have the opportunity to take part in a mock interview. Attend works with companies including BT, John Lewis and Barclays who volunteer their time and space to provide these. The companies run the interviews in line with their usual practices to make them as realistic as possible. Alongside the employment programme Attend has developed the Friends of Attend ABI user group. This runs a range of social and learning activities which have included 6-week courses in Disability Law, cake decorating, Arts into Life (with Tate Modern) and story-telling. They also include regular film nights and discussion sessions. One enterprising student volunteer has		

successfully organised a group visit to Madame Tussauds.

4. Difference made:

In the year 2 monitoring form the organisation reported that of the 80 clients taking part in the employment programme 68 had progressed into work, education or volunteering. Feedback showed that 85% of clients had an increased understanding of what employers are looking for; 78% had increased confidence in their abilities and skills; and 70% identified that they had now set realistic career and life goals.

On the day of the visit one of the taught sessions was taking place. This session was focused on giving feedback on mock interviews that had taken place the day before. Clients were able to watch video recordings of their own interviews which they reflected on as a group. The benefits of this were that others in the group were much more likely to pull out positive elements of the interview. The project officer delivering the session was clearly confident in their delivery and passionate about working with the variety of clients in the group.

We were able to speak to several of the clients who talked very candidly about their Acquired Brain Injury and the impact it had on them. They clearly valued the support provided by Attend ABI and were focused on their tasks. We were fortunate to be there on a day that one of the clients who, despite several setbacks, had persevered and just been offered the job they wanted. They said they couldn't stop smiling!

5. Grants Administration:

Monitoring reports have been received for the first 2 years of the grant and the final report is due shortly (31st March 2014). The postholder was delivering a session on the day of the visit and we were able to meet him during a break. City Bridge Trust's grant is acknowledged as a restricted fund within the organisation's accounts.

6. Concluding comments:

This is a valuable project that clearly has a profound impact on the clients it works with. Staff and volunteers were knowledgeable and dedicated to working with the wide range of clients. The project has grown considerably since City Bridge Trust first funded the project having securing funding from BIG for Volunteering Solutions for People with Acquired Brain Injury and Access to Work (ATW) from the Department of Work and Pensions. In addition the user led FAABI network has proved so popular that it has now registered as an independent charity in its own right.