



Stories From the City



NETWORK EVENT REPORT

The CASS Network Event 2021 had a different format from that of previous years. The ongoing pandemic and lockdown had prevented the event from going ahead in 2020, and this year's event was planned within an uncertain context of whether or not face to face gatherings would be permitted, and to what extent.

Following meetings with The Network project, the theme of Stories was decided on, and an initial workshop session with a professional storyteller was planned to upskill community groups around gathering stories to reflect their impact to members and potential funders.

Rather than the usual large gathering, the CASS team planned three small drop-in events in the hope that small numbers of people would be permitted to get together, and the drop-in nature would ameliorate any anxieties around larger numbers of people being together. These drop-ins would serve the purpose of disseminating CASS materials, and provide networking opportunities to attendees, and would act to showcase CASS stories gathered by Networkers in the run up to the event. Alongside this, two Zoom events were planned: What's Next in the Story – Community Mental Health; and What's Next in the Story: Mental Health Services.

Storytelling Workshop

CASS recruited professional storyteller Rebecca NK Gibbs to deliver this session around how to capture stories from community groups and tell them in a way that reflects how groups support the emotional wellbeing of members. The aims of the session included:

- Community leaders would gain knowledge about wellbeing and how storytelling can portray a message or information about wellbeing
- Community leaders would gain knowledge about the power of stories
- CASS would gain insight into the impact of their projects with communities.

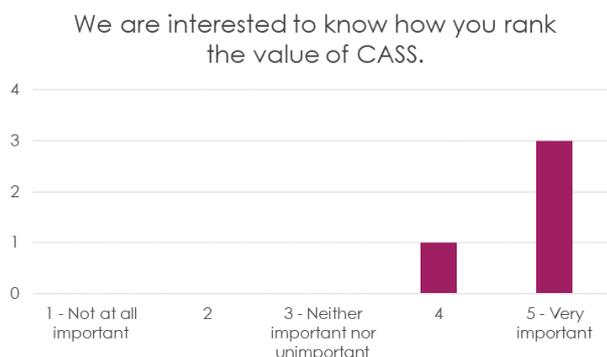
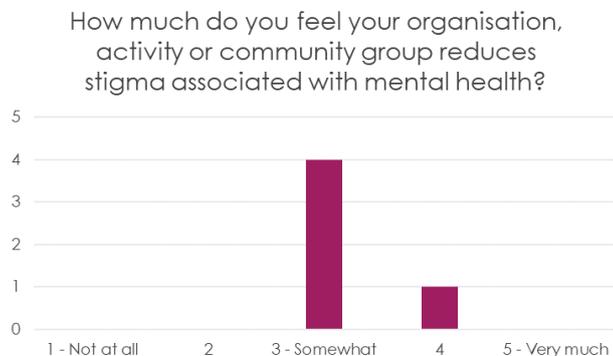
The session was planned to be small enough to give all attendees an opportunity to speak and get involved, and it was decided that invitations would be targeted to community leaders

Networkers had worked with previously and whose groups represented equality groups, with the hope that there would be around 10-15 attendees.

Rebecca designed a workbook to accompany the session, giving an added output.

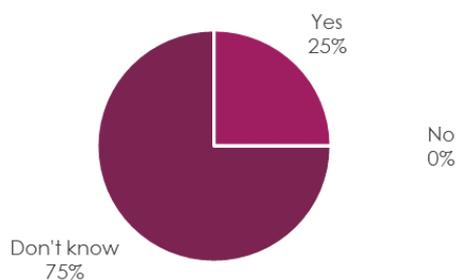
There were seven participants on the day (one did have to leave due to a work emergency), with good participation from all.

Feedback questions asked mid-session:

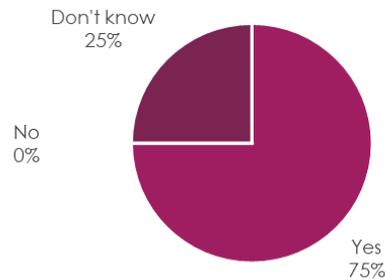


Feedback questions asked at the end of the session:

Following today's event, has your knowledge of mental health and emotional wellbeing issues increased?



Following today's event, has your confidence in supporting people around mental wellbeing issues increased?



Additional evaluation questions around enjoyment of the workshop, increase in knowledge of the subject of storytelling, motivation to follow up on what was learned, and how well the topic was presented and session managed was also sent out following the workshop.

Installations

Networkers gathered video or audio interviews with group representatives who have previously worked with CASS in the past, sharing stories about the work done together. These were edited before the week of installations and shown on a loop during each local event.

Due to the easing of lockdown restrictions, the Inner and East event was cancelled, however the Networker managed to find alternative venues and ran three events due to positive responses to a request for a host venue. One of these was in the week of the installations, and two in future weeks in July.

Inner & East Bristol - St Werburgh's Community Centre

The first proposed date of the Inner & East Installation was cancelled due to Covid restrictions, and the I&E Networker put out a call to local contacts requesting an alternate venue. Following this, the initial venue, St. Werburgh's Community Centre, decided on an alternate date, and two other venues offered space as well. Installations will be held at Redcliffe pop-up and St Stephen's Church in the city centre later in July.

The Installation at SWCC was expected to take advantage of foot traffic to the café, however there were few visitors to the café on the day, and it transpired that the CASS Installation coincided with the reopening after several months of closure. It is possible that it was not yet well-known in the local community that the cafe was open again. One outcome was that the Coordinator of the Raking and Baking project run by StWCC took a batch of CASS SAD booklets to give to all the volunteers involved in this project.

The two upcoming events will hopefully bring more foot traffic: the Redcliffe Pop-up (at the Tenants' Resource Centre) is usually well attended and St Stephen's Church is in a busy, city-centre location.

South Bristol - Redcatch Community Garden

The South Bristol Installation was based outdoors at Redcatch Community Garden, with a plan to take advantage of foot traffic through the garden and café, and making use of the large canopy in the garden in case of bad weather. The event started at 10.30, and included talks, activities and lunch, finishing at 2.30. There were CASS materials available and the podcasts/ videos playing in the background.

Unfortunately, there was torrential rain during the installation, and few people made a specific trip to visit it. The South Bristol Networker though spoke to around 45 people who were either workers or volunteers at the garden, or visiting the garden for a children's art club; gave out CASS resources and made some good connections to follow up on, including a plan for a future mental health awareness session with a Women's Institute branch.

North Bristol - Greenway Centre Café

The North Bristol Networker took advantage of footfall to the newly reopened Greenway Café for the North Bristol Installation and managed to engage with members of the local community

visiting the café. Colleagues at Southmead Development Trust were also invited, many of whom attended.

A free lunch was provided, an Active Listening session proved popular, and around 50 of the usual CASS materials were distributed. Roughly 22 people were spoken to and some evaluation was captured for the event:

- 100% of people completing evaluation reported increased knowledge of mental health issues;
- 90% of people completing evaluation reported increased confidence in supporting people around mental wellbeing issues;
- 95% of people completing evaluation reported increased awareness of the mental health support services available in the community.

Zoom Sessions

The decision was made to cancel the first Zoom session - What's Next in the Story – Community Mental Health due to low numbers of people booking on. Speakers had been invited from Bristol City Council and Healthy Living Consortium partners to update attendees from communities about the mental health and wellbeing response to the pandemic, and plans for the future, with a view to gaining insight from groups about what is needed to support the communities they represent. The team did not wish to have speakers attend and gain little back from giving their time, so plan to run the event later in the year as part of the consultation work around the Community Mental Health Framework.

Bookings were better for the second Zoom session - What's Next in the Story: Mental Health Services, with 23 attendees registering and five speakers from local mental health services agreeing to present information about how their delivery had changed in the past year, and future plans.

Nine attendees turned up for the session itself. The session consisted of 10 minute presentations from the speakers, representing Bristol Mind, Changes Bristol, Bristol Disability Equality Forum, Mothers for Mothers and Creative Shift. Attendees then went into breakout rooms to come up with one or two key questions to ask the speakers.

How are organisations responding to the Community Mental Health Framework?

Changes – on several committees about this and there have been lots of discussions. There does seem to be some confusion in the CCG around the new ICPs so things feel chaotic. Changes feels quite positive about the CMHF though as it should be quite a holistic approach to mental health and should result in more consultation with the VCS sector.

Mind – have had good contact with the CCG around developing the framework.

BDEF – haven't given much time to the CMHF.

Has there been much attention given to the issues raised by Black Lives Matter?

Changes – this has been flagged by the trustees and the organisation are developing new policies and working on engagement. Diversity is at the centre of development.

Mind – feels like the organisation had been complacent, there is a BAME advocacy service but aside from that, this issue has been off the radar. They are now far more committed to making inclusion a conscious effort now.

BDEF – have staff checking that all publicity is reaching BAME communities and looking at funding an autonomous group for disabled BAME people.

Mothers for Mothers – working on pushing back on NICE guidelines to induct expectant BAME women at 39 weeks, and also aware that BAME maternal mortality rates are very high.

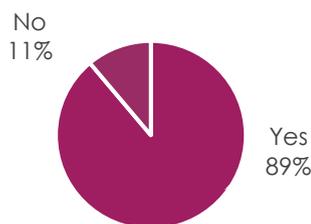
- **How can we work in partnership more, and co-produce more?**

BDEF – it would be great to have a VCS-wide get together to catch up and coordinate work better. BDEF are very happy to help organisations reach disabled people, and also happy to hear from organisations if they have captured feedback from disabled people that needs to be taken forward to appropriate bodies

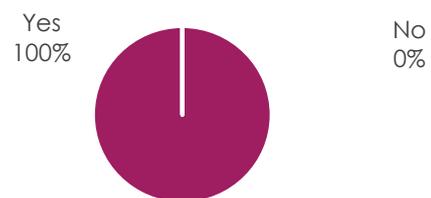
Mothers for Mothers – hope that there will be more opportunities for joint working under the CMHF.

Feedback

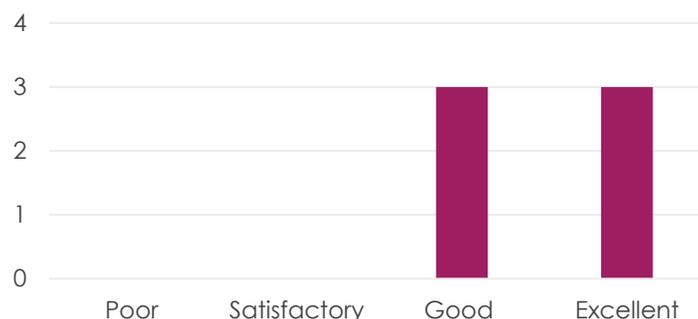
Following today's event, has your knowledge of mental health and emotional wellbeing issues increased?



Following today's event, has your awareness of the mental health support services available in the community increased?



Overall, how did you find the event today?



Unfortunately, all breakout rooms did not get an opportunity to ask both questions due to time constraints.

Learning

Feedback was not captured for all elements of the Network Event, but the feedback that was received was positive.

The Storytelling Workshop wasn't something that CASS has run before and was well received by participants, who left the session with practical skills and tools. Numbers were deliberately kept low to allow for participation from all attendees, and future sessions will be considered by the team. This workshop session was particularly useful for improving the confidence of attendees to support the mental health and wellbeing of others, perhaps highlighting what groups already do to support each other in this way.

The Zoom sessions were mixed, with the Community Mental Health session being cancelled due to only 12 people registering to attend. This was aimed primarily at community groups and leaders, with the purpose of updating them on local efforts over the last year and capturing intelligence around what they felt was needed in the future, especially given the changes in need stemming from lockdown. Historically it has always been difficult to engage community members in CASS events, and past knowledge indicates that this is due to many people either working very limited hours, or on a voluntary basis in these roles. The usual format of the Network Event, which would run for most of a day, allowed people to drop in and out as their availability allowed, whereas a Zoom session requires availability at a specific time. Another factor may have been scheduling the session for a Monday, which is often a non-working day for part-time staff. It is possible that the series of consultation and dissemination events run by the CCG on the Community Mental Health Framework may have saturated representatives from community groups, particularly with reference to the theme of the Monday Zoom session. The CASS team will look at rescheduling this session later in the year, perhaps as part of consultation efforts around the Community Mental Health Framework.

The Zoom session on mental health services that did go ahead was fairly well attended, however may have similarly been affected by staff availability at a specific time. Engagement from attendees was good and the session could have benefitted from being longer, giving time for more questions and responses. From the comments received, the main slot missing from the format of this Network Event seemed to be unstructured time for networking and spontaneous conversations. This, responses to the question within the session about how VCS organisations can co-produce more, and the conversation between speakers while other attendees were in the breakout session has led the CASS team to consider the possibility of holding a regular networking space for VCS organisations and other associated workers, allowing time to catch up and talk. The evaluation from this session reflected the increased knowledge of local services as a result of attending, with 100% of people answering this question reporting that knowledge was increased, but 89% of respondents also reported that their awareness on mental health issues had increased as a result of the session.

Two of the Networker Installations resulted in good interactions and distribution of CASS materials, including Resources Booklets, leaflets and Stress, Anxiety and Depression booklets; these would work to increase awareness of local services, and knowledge of mental health issues. It seems that inside locations which draw in foot traffic to cafes or other venues work well for this type of drop-in session, and in the case of the Greenway Centre, proximity to colleagues also boosted attendance.

A question around numbers of contacts or connections made, or numbers of services found out about as a result of the activities was not asked, however CASS Networkers reported making

connections through their installations, and a follow up from the Mental Health Services Zoom session will address this element of the desired outcomes from the events.

It can be concluded that through all strands, the Network Event activities overall were successful in increasing knowledge of mental health issues, awareness of services and confidence in supporting people.