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Section One: The Community and Voluntary Organisation



The Time to Change Society launched on 25th October 2013, as part of The Union MMU's (formerly known as MMUnion) pledge [Appendix 8] to combat the stigma and discrimination towards mental health, in line with the national campaign of Time to Change itself. The society was founded with a modest committee of three BA (Hons) Sociology students, but has since doubled its main infrastructure. Whilst two of the three founding committee moved on to flourish in other areas, the Chair continued to establish the society's roots. In addition to the Chair, the existing committee is comprised of six students from various courses within Manchester Metropolitan University, however next year the committee will reduce to six students but they will still span a range of courses. The society is part of Manchester Metropolitan University's Student Union (The Union MMU, 2015a) and is therefore obliged to adhere to its constitution [Appendix 9], in addition to the ethos of the national campaign.

As stated, Time to Change is a national campaign aimed at challenging the stigma and discrimination towards mental health, led in partnership by Mind and Rethink Mental Illness (Time to Change, 2008). The anti-stigma campaign is claimed to be the first of its kind in England to specifically aim to change behaviour as well as attitudes towards mental health and is currently funded by The Big Lottery Fund and Comic Relief (Time to Change, 2008). The society takes this aim to include not only stigma and discrimination that is exhibited within institutions and society, but also the personal stigma and discrimination that is built up internally via primary and secondary socialisation. It is the society's belief that internal stigma and

discrimination are two of the greatest barriers in seeking help for declining mental health, hence why it passionately advocates encouraging open discussion and conversation about all aspects of mental health. Last year, it was recognised by the founding committee that educating each other and wider society about mental health was the best way forward in promoting understanding and vying for change, hence why the existing committee created and are midst enacting plans to drive this forward.

Collectively the committee brainstorm, organise and deliver a vast range of inclusive events which are aimed at trying to reach as many individuals and organisations as possible. The committee try to offer a diverse range of regular and bespoke events so that the society is welcoming to individuals from all backgrounds, inherently making the society very inclusive. Such events include monthly coffee mornings and open discussions, awareness days, and collaborative events with other societies/organisations. The coffee mornings and open discussions are primarily based on talking about and sharing lived experiences of mental health, with trained volunteers acting as facilitators. Awareness days focus on specific mental health conditions, such as Seasonal Affective Disorder, Depression and Anxiety but also resulting factors of adverse mental health such as Panic Attacks and Self-Harm. All of our events are supported by the University's Wellbeing Service, Learner Development Service, Equality and Diversity Department, as well as the Make a Difference Initiative.

Awareness Days



Panic & Anxiety

The amazing Charlotte Murray took on the brave task of organising our very first awareness day. She produced a very informative leaflet which has now been added to our permanent collection of resources. Furthermore, the fantastic concept of a 'worry box' to rid yourself of anything that may be causing undue panic and/or anxiety was conceived.

Seasonal Affective Disorder

This day was organised by incorporating the very creative ideas of Dr John Goldring and may become one of our annual awareness raising events.

Football shirts were worn to brighten up and create curiosity around campus. Make a Difference let us use their Ballpool and Vpod to host our '#BeHappyMMU' activities. And finally, a pledge wall was created to make staff and students alike smile.





Depression

Under the incredible guidance of Hayley Worthington and Sheppu Uddin, the planning group derived an incredible line-up of activities to explore one of the most common conditions. In addition to the central stall, we had a guest talk from the Depression Alliance and our monthly open discussion complete with balloon popping with positive quotes.

This year the society initiated 'The Time to Learn and Change Series' [Appendix 10] which is a branch of events aimed at interactively learning about an agreed specified aspect of mental health in collaboration with other societies/organisations. Events in the series thus far have included 'Beating the Blues and Alternate Highs: The Treatment of Mental Health', 'Food for Thought: Nutrition and Healthy Eating', 'The Journey into the 21st Century: A Historical exploration of Mental Health', 'The Mirror Keeps Lying: Eating Disorders and Body Dysmorphic Disorders' and finally 'The Big Debate: Is a Psychiatric Diagnosis Labelling or Enabling?' A fundamental requirement to all of these events, as detailed above, is that they involved working with other societies/organisations, most interesting because none had any previous connection to thinking about or linking themselves to mental health, hence why they were chosen. Whilst designing these collaborative events, it was ensured that professionals and academics for the respective events were advocated, with the aim of educating attendees on the specified topic as part of each event. In order to enhance learning, a key characteristic of the society is to ensure that where possible, events are fun and appealing, resulting in positive psychological emotions so that attendees are more likely become engaged and interested (Whitton and Moseley, 2014). These events were specifically endorsed by the University's awards scheme, MMU Futures.

Whilst the committee is run by students, and the primary service users are students, the society also promotes many of its services to university staff, other mental health based organisations and the general public. The committee often engages with a range of volunteers that commit their time on a regular basis, not only from their members and associates, but from the wider Greater Manchester community. The society prides itself in never turning away a volunteer that would like their skills and time to be utilised. Additionally, the society makes a concerted effort to take the ideas, suggestions and comments of society members, attendees and professionals on board, so that those who engage with the society feel their opinion is valued and that they can help shape the society's progression. As with the majority of voluntary organisations, the society exists to fulfil a previously unmet, but well needed demand within its associated community (Kendall, 2003). The society is therefore, essentially a safe space and a support network for anybody to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences of mental health, without being judged or clinically assessed.

The friendly, open and inclusive nature of the society is particularly characteristic of the society's aims and objectives. Further to this, the passion, care and drive exhibited by all the society's volunteers, including the entire committee is what makes the society exceptionally different to other societies, hence why the society is arguably one of the largest, and attracts attention from the other two Universities in Manchester, as well as local mental health services. The society prides itself on being very reliable, visible and connected; it is these defining qualities that draws and maintains the society in many networks. These attributes are highly valued in partnership working (Rees, Mullins and Bovaird, 2012) and are often very useful for social capital (Field, 2008), which arguably has mutual beneficial gain to other societies and organisation that collaborate with the society.



Section Two: Numerical Analysis

The society is run by seven undergraduate students studying at Manchester Metropolitan University, who collectively form the committee. The committee are responsible for its volunteers, members and service users. It comprises of a Chair, who is responsible for the entire committee and the society's entirety, a Treasurer, who ensures that all the society's finances are accounted for accordingly and a Vice-Chair who shadows the Chair, and covers the Chair's absence if/when required. These three positions act as signatories for the society and two signatories are always required for any financial exchange in or out of the society's accounts. The first two positions are an essential requirement of all societies within the Union MMU and are non-negotiable. The remaining four committee members consist of a Secretary, a Social Secretary, a Health and Safety Liaison Officer and finally an Events and Public Relations Co-Ordinator. Minus the Chair, the other six committee members are first year students who were elected into their positions specifically for the skills they could bring to the society. All six, were individually briefed and trained by the Chair, in addition to receiving mental health awareness training from Manchester Mind, in order to fulfil their respective roles effectively.

The committee is supported by a number of employed staff at The Union MMU, most specifically the community officer and activities officer, both of whom are elected by the student body (The Union MMU, 2015b), the Opportunities Manager, the Volunteering and Societies Manager, as well as the Societies Co-Ordinator. They mutually ensure that the committee adheres to the all the correct policies and procedures within the institution, that all rules and regulations are met and the



committee are fully supported in everything they are required to do. These full-time, employed members of staff, predominately do most of the logistical work that surrounds all societies within the Union, such as ensuring all committee members are appropriately trained and given ample opportunity to develop their skills, through to booking rooms for various events. They are responsible for all committee members and for safeguarding members of the respective societies that have received their approval. Additionally, they are liable to

the University and their insurers should any adverse incident happen as a result of society activities.

The society has over 100 members, all of which are also students at Manchester Metropolitan University. Further to these members, the society has around fifteen associate members who are either graduates, staff or students from other universities within Manchester. Other service users include the general public, on which no numerical data is collected, but vary according to the event being publicised at any given time. Most of the society's events are open to the general public and are heavily publicised by other local mental health organisations, such as Manchester Mind and The Big Life Centres, which respectively operate from within the Zion Centre in Hulme. Both have a range of volunteers that work with them, as well as employed staff and often have crossovers of service users with the society, hence why they are both very supportive of what the society delivers and helping to promote the society's objectives. The society has almost trebled in its reach, in comparison to the previous year and continues to grow.

Needless to say, as with any voluntary organisation, there are still financial implications in delivering services (Kendall, 2003), regardless of what they are. Fortunately, every society within the Union is given an initial budget of £200, however this can only be utilised if the society can match it with private funding. Luckily, the private funding can be sourced from anywhere, so long as it can be legally accounted for. As such, in anticipation of the society's planned activities this year, the Chair applied for and received £300 from 02 Think Big [Appendix 11] to cover the expected costs of the Time to Learn and Change Series. Further to this, after accepting the proposal submitted by the Chair [Appendix 12], Make a Difference approved a grant of £350 to the society. Due to these sources of funding, the society had an overall budget of £850 which could be utilised accordingly throughout the year, once approved by at least two signatories, but in many cases, out of respect and to maintain comradery, the entire committee. This is a vast turnover from the previous year, where the society could only match around £55, and consequently never used any of the budget provided by the Union.

Receiving funding from various sources can act as a motivator in achieving objectives (Hardill and Baines, 2011), as it has the ability to act as drive to ensure

aims are met, so positive outcomes can be reported back to the funding body. In doing so, this is also more likely to secure future funding, as it is can be proof of credibility and reliability (Taylor, 1989). In many cases being granted funding can also affirm objectives, as it indicates that to some extent, belief has been invested in what is trying to be achieved (ibid). Once again, this has a positive connotation, feeling supported is an invaluable asset to any voluntary organisation (Kendall, 2003), as it provides a wider sense of belonging and acceptance. Nonetheless, having extended the generosity, most, if not all funding bodies, understandably relish hearing about how their investment has been utilised, and what good has resulted from it (Taylor, 1989). This inherently means that most funding comes with a fair amount of additional paperwork, be it continual updates, evaluation reports or even proof of transactions in the form of receipts and/or invoices (Grants Northwest, 2015).

As most voluntary organisations have a vested interest in pleasing their funding body and maintaining a good rapport, most will try to adhere to whatever requests or requirements have been extended, so that they potentially build a good reputation for themselves for receiving future funding (ibid). Despite this often being very time consuming, for reasoning stated above, the society therefore meticulously, albeit sometimes ruefully, document all their events extensively to make this process significantly easier when evidence is desired or indeed required. It sometimes offers room for self-reflection and acts as a springboard for future development, both personal and otherwise (Plymouth City Council, 2015).



Section Three: Application of Theory to Organisation

The Time to Change Society have been very fortunate to have been of great interest to many volunteers, and continues to receive requests for specific events on a regular basis. One of the most prominent reasons as to why many volunteer with the society, is that, as with volunteers in all sectors, they believe that have skills or experience that could benefit others if shared (NCVO, 2014). By volunteering, something is given back to a community which often shares the same beliefs, norms or values, in return, the volunteer may benefit from feeling a sense of belonging, reward, or even pride (i-2-i, 2015). Low et al. (2007), found that in addition to learning new skills and wanting to help people, volunteers also wanted to meet people and make friends with people who shared similar interests or experiences. These findings are reflected in the society's open discussions and coffee mornings which frequently generate a lot of interest; at these events attendees share experiences and engage in conversation, often developing rapport with others in attendance. In contrast, less often do individuals choose to volunteer with the society solely as an opportunity to fill their spare time, which was quoted for 41% of the participants in Low et al. (ibid) research. Further to this, being at the forefront of an anti-stigma campaign and trying to lead the way in change, is challenging in itself, it is highly doubted that individuals who do not have a strong and passionate belief in the cause, would embark on volunteering with the society simply to occupy their time, regardless of how fun and diverse the society environment tends to be.



As found by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO, 2013) in their Community Life Survey 2012/13, volunteers present themselves from all age groups, but are most likely to be women. This is definitively supported by the society's volunteers, who range from eighteen to fifty plus and are mostly women. In addition, Butt (2008), found that individuals who had been volunteering longer, had a stronger likelihood of committing more time to the organisation with which they are volunteering, in comparison to newer volunteers. Once again, this is reinforced by the society's volunteers; those who have been volunteering over the course of their academic year, are more likely to stand in elections in order to join the committee for the following year. Many of the society's volunteers consider their time having been 'invested', and by continuing to volunteer with the society, they get to see how this commitment flourishes, supporting the findings of Clary et al. (1997). Both of these reasons are highly cited when submitting manifestos for standing in committee elections. Inherently, the committee dedicate a vast amount of their time to running the society, whether it be planning and/or delivering events. All committee members take on a lot of responsibility and are generally the face of the society, which is why passionate volunteers considering the role, take their roles very seriously, as they recognise they could potentially represent the society and its objectives.

The society are very fortunate to be supported by a vast range of initiatives and organisations both internal and external to the university and the student union. The Chair spent a vast amount of time establishing the society within the Greater Manchester mental health community in preparation for the current year and future progression. As such, the society has greatly expanded its social capital through bonding and bridging. The *gemeinschaft*, in which the society now exists, often acts as a safe space offering a sense of understanding and belonging which may not have previously been extended to individuals within it, for a myriad of reasons. The term *gemeinschaft* was coined by the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies in 1887, and is partly characterised by a community which shares a strong sense of common identity (Modern Language Association, 2015). Needless to say, it is for this reason that the networks formed with the society are often strongly bonded and heavily reliant on explicit trust, respect and compassion. One of the most prized capitals the society has socially gained this year, is undoubtedly, Manchester Mind. Not only is Mind fully aware of the national campaign because the charity partially lead it, but

they also have an incredible range of resources which they allow the society to utilise at no cost. Such resources have thus far included mental health training, which holds a value of around at least £200 per person and their many publications on various mental health conditions which retail approximately at £1 per booklet. They continually promote the society's events on their own social media and have a presence at relevant events whenever possible. This has been of substantial financial relief to the society and a very welcomed asset.

 **Manchester Mind** @ManchesterMind · Feb 9
 MMU @Time2changesoc hosting 'Is a Psychiatric Diagnosis Labelling or Enabling' 25th Feb 1-3pm. Free registration here: eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-big-deba...

 Eventbrite

The Big Debate
 The Time to Change Society are hosting its first ever debate: 'Is a Psychiatric Diagnosis Labelling or Enabling' on Wednesday 25th February 2015 at 1-3pm in the Business School G.35 (Manchester...)



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According to Putnam (2000), social capital built is on trust and reciprocity as detailed above. He elaborates that social networks are important because they can act as a source of information transmission and can influence identities, both of which have been evidenced by bonding with Manchester Mind. Portes (1998) believed that social capital can act as a source of social control, which could have either positive or negative connotations. For example, having strong relations with committee members, could potentially be advantageous for any volunteer wanting to join the committee as it could be argued they are then more likely to be accepted on to the committee. Whilst this is positive for the socially connected volunteer, other individuals who do not have this benefit may remain socially excluded, therefore social capital could also potentially act as a barrier. This would essentially reproduce divides within communities, hence why The Union MMU, has strict policies on committee elections. For any position that is agreed by the committee, all members must be notified and presented with the opportunity to stand in the election, following this, voting is then anonymously conducted online and the committee are notified of the results once voting ends. This inhibits a range potential biases that could be formed via social capital and promotes equal opportunities, hence why the society is very accepting of this regulatory method.

Section Four: The Volunteering Experience

The following reflection as Chair of the Time to Change Society has been written using a self-adapted version of Gibb's (1988) reflective model, as it was felt that this would be more reflexively beneficial. I have thoroughly enjoyed my volunteering experience. It has been very eventful and I have learnt a lot of new skills in my role, as well as taking it as an ample opportunity to work on my personal development. This year, a considerable amount of time has been spent training my fellow committee members and ensuring they were equip with all the skills they should need as a foundation to flourish in their respective roles. I have helped lead them individually and collectively, as well as helping them to lead others. Learning how to effectively teach others to lead has taken a lot of practise, and I feel this improved as we have progressed through the year together. This years' committee and I embarked on an incredible journey together, we have faced a number of challenges and created great memories together which I am sure will remain embedded in the society's history as it continues to progress forward, beyond our respective input.

Having to plan a six months' worth of events was not an easy task, but it was one I enjoyed completely, and despite the stresses that came with it, I have no regrets in the way this was done. I can honestly say that I tried my very best to ensure that both the committee and all the society's events stayed on track at all times, even when I had to plough through the unexpected, as evident in the end of project report for The Big Debate [appendix 13]. In hindsight however, I do wish that promotion and marketing of our earlier events had been picked up in a timelier manner as attendance at some of these events suffered due the lack of clear advertising, despite all the hard work that had invested in them by several volunteers. This matter was developed during the course of the year and events held in the latter half benefited from correcting mistakes that had been previously made in promoting events. Every challenge has been taken as a learning curve, and we have all been actively encouraged to reflect on the events we have done in preparation for our end of year reports [appendix 14], which all committee members had to individually complete for the Annual General Meeting and handover process.

Due to the sheer extent of the society's events this year, delegation has been key. It has definitely been enlightening to try and adhere to delegating and allowing other committee members complete their respective tasks themselves, rather than simply taking over when something has not gone to plan. Previously, characteristic to my personality being relatively dominant, meant that I sometimes took on more responsibility than was initially anticipated, which would impact on my time. Once again, this is something I have improved on throughout the year, and now pride my ability to simply observe and support when necessary. Forcing myself to step back, has been critical in identifying where areas of improvement are needed within the society. Locating where these weaknesses lie allows for rectification, so that we can pass on our learned experiences to new volunteers, this helps ensure that such mistakes are not replicated.

A major obstacle and regulator in almost everything we have done this year has been the Union's and/or University's policies and procedures. Right from something as simple as booking a room through to chairing an open discussion on high risk emotional triggers such as suicide. Whilst it is appreciated these policies and procedures exist to safeguard and regulate the larger population within the university, adhering to them is often very time consuming and takes a lot of communication. For example, booking a room could be done from within my own faculty building within two minutes. However, as part of society regulation, the Union specifies that all rooms must be booked through the opportunities staff. This entails going online and filling out a lengthy form and then waiting for staff to reply with a suitable room. Whilst this seems simple, the delay in having to wait an unspecified amount of time to hear if the room you require has been successfully booked can often be frustrating, especially if there is a particular rush. Other policies, such as risk assessments for all our events, are more understandable and this documentation is always submitted well in advance of any event. Such documentation exists specifically to safeguard all who will be involved at any given event and can cover any legal implications that may occur if something adverse happens.

On a macro-sociological level, when policies promoting spending cuts on the NHS and the voluntary sector were rolled out by the coalition government, many mental health services suffered the harsh blow (Macmillan, 2011). Arguably it is because of this that the need for the society became more prominent; in order to fill the growing

void. Perhaps it is also because of this austerity, the need for social capital has become even more intrinsic to survival and why other organisations are so willing to collaborate. Had it not been for these socio-economic conditions, it is very possible that Manchester Mind and Big Life Centres may never have allied with the Time to Change Society. Further to this, had there not been significant cuts, funding bodies such as O2 Think Big and Make a Difference may not have felt the need to become established and support projects run by young adults such as myself. In this respect, the knock-on effect of various governmental policies has impacted the voluntary sector in many ways, both good and bad. I am therefore very fortunate to currently fall into a niche where I can obtain support, funding and social capital to create a change, and to advocate such a prominent anti-stigma campaign.

Learning how to best navigate the world of volunteering and critically assess it through practice has been an eye-opening adventure. It has been great to spend such a rewarding time developing something which I am passionate about and watching it grow. I plan to pass on my experience to the new committee through an extensive handover process. Helping others and witnessing the difference it makes has been the highlight of my entire voluntary experience and I feel very lucky to have been presented with the opportunity to support the Time to Change Campaign in the way that I have and will continue to do so.



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