

My Time [Community Interest Company¹ with shares](#): reaching out to dysfunctional families with mental health issues and those at risk of social exclusion

Details in this case study are taken from an interview with Michael Lilley, Founder Director, My Time Community Interest Company (CIC), Birmingham.

Summary

[My Time CIC](#) is an award winning, Birmingham-based, [community interest company](#) delivering mental health services and counselling to those individuals who may be underserved by mainstream health provision. A service-led, culturally sensitive approach is taken which has resulted in evidence-based outcomes for children, young people and families from, for example, refugee and ethnic minority groups.

The Family Action for Choice Tomorrow approach (fully validated by C4EO) and the associated Seven Steps Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence Building programme have both been developed by My Time CIC.

My Time CIC is a social enterprise in which three different groups of stakeholders come together in partnership: service user shareholders, local social organisation/other sector shareholders and the social investment shareholder, Big Issue Invest (BII). The £200,000 investment in shares in My Time CIC from the BII Social Enterprise Investment Fund to set up fifteen franchises represents a pioneering move in this area. This agreement will enable My Time to scale up and ensure replication of their counselling model in other areas, so that the practice demonstrating positive impact on the children and families in Birmingham can be shared with others elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Background – how did My Time evolve and what is their approach?

The origin of My Time CIC was as a community-based, therapeutic educational provider, specialising in counselling and confidence building programmes. Based in Birmingham, West Midlands, the company was formed in September 2002 by socially engaged psychologists and educationalists. The company was subsequently commissioned by a West Midlands partnership involving housing, faith, health and educational groups, to develop counselling and self esteem building services and support for dysfunctional and vulnerable families such as those with mental health problems, asylum seekers, refugees or those facing social exclusion. Following a period of two to three years raising funds to get started, support was provided by the Church and from the St. Peter's Trust, alongside sponsorship from the Laura Ashley Foundation. The latter was to conduct a feasibility study and set up the pilot programme, the Family Action for Choice Tomorrow (FACT). The feasibility study was

¹ A CIC is a new type of company introduced in the UK in 2005. CICs are social enterprises and businesses 'with primarily social objectives' see [Wikipedia](#) definition.

conducted over the period 1999 to 2001 and when My Time was established in 2002, there were just two people working in the company.

My Time CIC – what is it and who are the other stakeholders?

My Time CIC is a community interest company with shares. There is a Board of seven directors which comprise two service users (one of which has to be the Chair), two social owners, one community representative, one representative from the health and social care sector, and one Big Issue Invest Board member. The voting shares for the company are divided up as follows: 49% of the shares are owned by service users through a trust and service user forum - there are two elected Service User Directors who act as the service user share Trustees; 51% of the shares are owned by social owners and there are two Social Owner Directors.

My Time's Mission Statement and model

My Time's mission is:

*'to enable the individual and family to establish safe therapeutic alliances that break down their internal and external barriers by bridging the gap between personal, workplace and community needs in response to the challenges of a changing world.'*²

The model involves a service-led, culturally sensitive approach. The company delivers mental health services in 22 languages to individuals who may traditionally find it difficult to find help, such as refugees, asylum seekers and ethnic minorities. Further details on the company's core objectives, belief and values, and their 'stepped/stage' approach of working with multi-agencies can be found in [The My Time Approach to Mental Health](#). For details on their work on helping to identify the needs of asylum seekers and refugees see [Planting the Seeds of Hope](#).

Some of the research and learning supporting My Time's work

The driver from the start has always been a desire to change the situation and the complete lack of services available for these families. Following the feasibility study, and overtime, My Time CIC has based its work on a combination of practical experience with over 4,000 clients over eight years and nine research projects on self-esteem, community engagement, different therapeutic approaches, gender differences and assessment tools.

From 2006-2008, My Time carried out a detailed two year study on Mental Health and Asylum Seeker and Refugee (New) Communities. Evidence from this research titled, *Planting Seeds of Hope*, showed that of the 132 (100 men and 32 women) asylum seekers and refugees interviewed, 75% of them had experienced trauma and also presented Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

My Time also found in its early research work that the experience it had gained from working with the Children's Centres in 1999 to 2004 corresponded with other research that had been conducted by the Fatherhood and Tavistock Institutes in 2009 on separated families.

A twelve month action research study commissioned by Birmingham City Council was published in December 2009 by My Time CIC. This explored how psychological therapeutic approaches might

² My Time (2011). *The My Time Approach to Mental Health*, p 2

complement existing support services for carers in Birmingham. For a summary and further detail, see [Carer Counselling](#).

During 2010, My Time also published a report titled *Creating Storied Places*, commissioned by Birmingham City Council, evaluating the process and outcomes of the Seven Steps Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence Building programme, January – May 2010. This programme was developed in 2008 and delivered by My Time CIC under the auspices of the Worklessness Innovations Fund. It was targeted at people suffering from stress anxiety and depression and who were also on incapacity benefits and this programme has run in a variety of different locations in the Birmingham and Solihull regions. The findings are found in the [Creating Storied Places](#) summary report.

The approach – more about the service user journey

The pilot has now moved on and been fully implemented. There is now a department within My Time called The Family Trauma Centre.

Listening to the client and adapting the service to fit their needs is an essential element of My Time's approach and why it has been so successful. The pace of the client's recovery journey can be adjusted to suit their individual circumstances and falls into three levels: fast, slow and very slow. See further details in [Service User Journey](#).

See also further information showing the process, distance travelled and outcomes for the [Family Trauma Case Study Process](#) and further information on the Family Trauma Centre's multi-agency approach.

Outcomes for children, young people and their families

The pilot programme, FACT, resulting from the feasibility study during 1999 to 2001 was fully validated by C4EO last year and more details and a link to the published example are shown below.

The Family Action for Choice Tomorrow (FACT) approach – fully C4EO validated example

This pilot project, funded by the Parenting Fund, was a partnership between My Time CIC and three local Birmingham Children's Centres in the Small Heath cluster. The aims were:

- to promote active and positive fatherhood, with particular emphasis on engaging fathers in their children's learning and development
- to promote inclusion and equality by enabling the take up of existing services by disadvantaged, vulnerable, 'hard to reach' and less well served communities.

FACT was designed as a participatory action research project. Each case process and outcome was fed into the development of the project by using participants as the tool to modify and refine it. It involved 41 families and 58 children and resulted in evidence-based impact for those involved.

For further details, and to read more on the approaches of this fully validated local practice example and the outcomes achieved for the families and children, please see the [FACT published example](#) on the C4EO website.

Currently My Time is working with 38 families and 45 children (numbers vary from year to year). In 2010, all 58 children referred to My Time due to domestic violence involving negative interaction

with their fathers, progressed to safe, non-violent environments. These referrals were predominantly through Birmingham City Council and other West Midlands' authorities. Other successes attributed to My Time's work in 2010 were: 211 adults returned to work after being off sick, a further 42 adults found employment, and 31 homeless individuals were successfully found housing.

Funding – how is My Time sustaining its development?

My Time CIC has managed to attract various funding from a number of sources over the years and has grown steadily since 2008. Funding and investments have come from the Lottery (£219,000 for three years specifically for family work), Tudor Trust (£120,000 over three years) and Big Issue Invest's (BII) Social Enterprise Investment Fund (£200,000 to develop and replicate their model by launching fifteen franchises across the UK) and a further £70,000 from the Esmée Fairburn Trust to support the piloting of this model in Worcestershire. It is estimated that the franchises are likely to create a further 50-100 jobs over the next five years. The investment of non-voting redeemable preference shares into a CIC shows that equity investments are a feasible alternative to financing developments by loans. These shares are held in trust by the founder – Michael Lilley on behalf of My Time's associated charity – Shared Voices and in 2012 it is proposed to transfer these to Ashram Housing Association/Accord Housing Group. There are two Social Owner Directors that represent Shared Voices and Ashram Housing.

My Time is also currently paying back a loan invested in the company by Futurebuilders in 2008/9. In 2009/2010, it achieved a turnover of £330,000 mainly from contracts from Birmingham City Council, the NHS, West Midlands Police, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, and Worcestershire County Council. In 2010/11, the turnover increased to £550,000.

Costs and cost avoidance

The work of My Time has resulted in substantial savings for the local authority. My Time CIC has been working with C4EO and [Social Finance](#) on developing models that identify savings when working with children in care or at risk of in care. My Time has tracked families it has worked with and children that have been in care and are reunited with their families and there is evidence of substantial savings to local authority. See [Social Impact Bonds for work with vulnerable children and young people](#).

Challenges, barriers and solutions

My Time has experienced the following challenges over time.

- Establishing the organisation at the start and seeking sufficient and appropriate funding.
- Gaining credibility with commissioners and winning contracts.
- Making sure there was a good product and service.
- Ensuring there was a robust evidence base.

The main driver, through good times and bad, has been a belief in the work of My Time. Originally, this came from firsthand experience of a complete lack of services in this area.

Winning various awards has also helped them over time. For example, in 2007 My Time won the national British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP) Award for Innovation in Counselling and more recently, has won the BACP Award for Outstanding Research in 2010 for their [Carer Counselling](#).

The C4EO social audit and validation of My Time's practice also helped to secure the recent BII equity investment and funding from Tudor Trust and Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund.

Learning points – what can be shared with others?

- Nurture and listen to your active service users as they can act as your focus group, providing you with your social impact evidence.
- Listen to commissioners and seek feedback from them – but know where you are coming from.
- Be flexible to change as goal posts sometimes change, particularly in relation to the political climate and working with families and children.
- Conduct good research for your evidence base, providing evidence of need and using a good measuring tool.

Key features and leadership characteristics in achieving success

A number of distinctive features are evident in My Time CIC which could be instrumental in its success. Many of these are **linked to key leadership behaviour characteristics** described in the report *Resourceful leadership*' (NCSL, 2011)³. This case study exemplifies the key features listed below.

1. Openness to possibilities - My Time's approach is one that if as an organisation we are not open to possibilities how can we expect others to be?
2. The ability to collaborate - My Time has been one of the lead organisations in Birmingham to bring 23 third sector mental health organisations together to form the [Birmingham Mental Health Consortium](#). They work with Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation NHS Trust to deliver a Birmingham Healthy Minds Programme.
3. Demonstrating a belief in team and people - My Time is about its team and people, and this is fundamental to its core way of working. Seventy per cent of My Time's staff team were service users that have been nurtured to train, work as volunteers and then take up professional positions. Sofia left school at 14 and she is British Pakistani, Muslim and a single mother of 5. Sofia attended My Time programmes, became a volunteer, and now works (in five languages) in local GPs. In 2010, she won the [Outstanding West Midlands Learner of the Year Award](#). Also see Voices of Change – My Time Service Users and Staff speaking on www.mytime.org.uk.
4. Personal resilience and tenacity – resilience is the key to human recovery and survival. My Time has tracked its service user's journeys and how individuals/families experience human tragedy and are able to pick themselves up and use their stories to help others. See [Voices of Change](#).
5. The ability to create and sustain commitment across a system - My Time views psychology as a science and puts great store on the scientific concept of robust research and the ability to replicate. My Time has sustained itself and in fact grown over the last ten years (including through recession and public sector cuts) and now with Big Issue Investment enables the roll out of social franchises across the United Kingdom ensuring replication of the model.

³ National College for School Leadership and the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes (2011). *Resourceful Leadership: how Directors of Children's Services improve outcomes for children* [online]. Available: <http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/docinfo?id=144732&filename=resourceful-leadership-dcs.pdf>

6. Focusing on results - My Time CIC scored 5/5 in the Royal Bank of Scotland Social Enterprise 100 Data Report 2011 for Social Impact and was listed in the [Top 10 of UK Social Enterprises](#) with the greatest social impact in 2011.
7. The ability to simplify - the My Time Approach is simple and based on a common sense, holistic and joined up thinking approach. My Time CIC is a case study in the Centre for Social Justice Report on Mental Health (published on 31st October 2011) and this report concludes the need for service user-led family mental health services in the UK instead of adult and CAMHS services.
8. The ability to learn continuously – Action Research methodology is used in My Time’s work and it listens continuously to its service users and learns from their experience. A service user always has to be Chair of the Management Board and any development or policy review can only be done through service user consultation.

Contact details

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Further reading/references

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