

My gift of authenticity as a leader

Sonia Hutchison – Masters writings for Gifts and Talents unit. Submitted September 2012
– under examination.

In this paper I will explore my talent for authenticity as a leader and how I offer this as a gift to the staff, volunteers, trustees, carers and their families that I support. I will explore why my authenticity as a leader is a gift? How my authenticity as a leader improves my practice and improves the culture of the organisation I lead which improves the support the organisation provides for carers? How my gift of my authenticity as a leader helps to maintain support for carers when I feel myself as a living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989)?

This paper is part of my continuing enquiry into the development of a living theory of mindfulness (Hutchison, 2011). It includes the living standard of judgement of nurturing responsiveness (Mounter, 2012), a recognition of the importance of recognising oneself as a living contradiction in a re-channelling of energy-flowing values within my meaning of authenticity as a leader.

Why my authenticity as a leader is a gift?

I work as a Chief Executive of a Carers' Centre in a small unitary authority. I am a leader in this role and have been researching the theory of authentic leadership, I am attracted to this style of leadership as it fits with my values of justice, inclusion and empowerment.

Authentic leadership is a theory that has emerged over the last decade with its key components being self-awareness, moral perspective and relational transparency (Gardiner, 2011). It is a:

'pattern of leader behaviour that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capabilities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development' (Walumbwa et al, 2008:94).

I am using living theory; action research methodology to improve my practice as I seek to be an authentic leader. Living theory is not restricted in the use of one methodological approach as Cresswell (2007) claims. Cresswell argues that:

'a researcher must choose between the five methodological approaches of narrative research, phenomenological research, grounded theory research, ethnographic research and case study research' (Whitehead, 2012:6).

However, this approach is restrictive in requiring a choice between methodological approach. A living theory methodology can integrate insights from other approaches. It encourages 'methodological inventiveness' Dadds and Hart (2001) who argue there is:

'a genuine concern that we may actually be inhibiting quality and validity if we do not liberate people to be methodologically inventive. (Dadds and Hart, 2001:167)

'Taking an innovative route can be empowering, exhilarating and deeply satisfying, it is never a comfortable or easy option'. (Dadds and Hart, 2001:164)

Living theory: action research methodology has enabled me to effectively research my authenticity as a leader. My methodological inventiveness has led to me using ethnoautobiographical narrative as a method. I started by writing my a ethnoautobiographical narrative to tell my story until I had written myself out.

'I define ethnoautobiography as creative self-exploratory writing (or oral presentation) that grounds itself in the ethnic, cultural, historical, ecological, and gender background of the author.' (Kremer, 2003:9).

For me this took over 60,000 words. I had a real need to write my ethnoautobiography and create an explanatory story of how I became a leader and what my ontological values are that give meaning to my life.

I am using multi media approaches because it enables me not just to use words but to research whether I embody my values as an authentic leader. Huxtable (2009) argues, 'living educational values are dynamic and relational and are not adequately communicated through 'fixed' forms of representation' (Huxtable, 2009:12). And whether the authenticity I am claiming is evident with the relationships I have with the people I am working as the:

'use of multi-media narratives for the explication and communication of the meanings of practical principles with their flows of energy and values will be considered in terms of the creation of a relationally dynamic epistemology for educational knowledge. Considered in terms of the creation of a relationally dynamic epistemology for educational knowledge.' (Whitehead, 2011: 1)

It helps me to develop my epistemology in authentic leadership, not just theoretically but by checking the validity of my claims in my practice:

'It isn't simply that I need to work with video and multimedia forms of representation to express more clearly what is being done, it is that watching the video changes the nature of knowledge itself and allows its development.' (Laidlaw, 2008:17)

It increases my learning and helps me to improve my practice as Jones (2009) says 'as I look at the video clips, I am able to reflect on what I am seeing and I am learning as a result of my reflection.'

In this paper I am looking at gifts and talents in the way Ikeda expresses.

'Everyone has some kind of gift. Being talented does not mean just being a good musician, writer or athlete. There are many kinds of talent. You may be a great conversationalist, or make friends easily, or be able to put others at ease. Or you may have a gift for telling jokes, selling things or living economically. You may be punctual, patient, reliable, kind or optimistic. Or you may love taking on new challenges, be strongly committed to helping others, or have an ability to bring them joy. Without doubt, you possess your special jewel, your own unique talent.' (Ikeda, 2004:41)

Through telling my explanatory story when it is appropriate I have been able to offer my authentic leadership as a gift. This is a gift that takes bravery to offer as in the process of telling my story I open myself up and become vulnerable in the giving. It is key to my three-part theory in developing a shared and pooled vision and knowing based on personal and professional relationships (Hutchison, 2011). As such my explanatory story is not merely my professional story but includes my personal story.

My professional story is that I studied psychology and social policy to enable me to have a wide range of possibilities to help improve people's lives. My career has grown organically, I did not set out to become a chief executive of a charity and did not set out specifically to work with carers. I began by working with 16-19 year olds that had complex needs that meant they were not in education, employment and training and I worked intensely with them to help them overcome addiction, violent behaviour, offending, mental illness, homelessness, abusive families etc. to be able to take up education, employment and training. This led to working with young offenders to co-ordinate a mentoring service. I thought at this time I would continue to work with young offenders as my career. However, when I went for a Court Officer job role and was disqualified from the qualification bar and offered a meagre salary I was so angry at the decision as I felt the qualification had nothing to do with ability I decided to apply for a Young Carers Manager role which I had previously decided not to apply for as I didn't think I had the experience to apply for a manager role. This turned out to be the best thing that could have happened to my career as it took me in a new unexpected career working with carers that I both love and has helped me to personally understand my own role as a carer. My role as Young Carers Manager again led me to organically take the next step to becoming a Chief Executive of a Carers' Centre when the opportunity arose:

'In the postmodern world, employees can no longer depend on an organisation to provide them with a familiar and predictable environment to hold their lives. Instead, individuals must rely on themselves to construct a story – a self and a career – to hold themselves and their lives together when they encounter discontinuity. As they move from one assignment to the next they must let go of what they did but not of who they are. If they let go of everything, then the loss may overwhelm them. By holding onto the self in the form of a life story that provides meaning and continuity, they are able to move on in a way that advances narrative lines and actualises overarching goals.' (Maree, 2007:1-2)

My personal story is also important. As I alluded to, I am a carer myself. Ironically it took me several years of working with young carers to acknowledge my own role as a carer. This is largely because my personal story is not a smooth story of self (MacLure, 1996:283) but includes stories of ruin and narrative wreckage. I was born to parents with schizophrenia and addiction to drugs and alcohol. This led me to be put on the child protection register at birth and to go into a loving long-term foster family at age three and a half. This experience of foster care created a desire to give back from an early age and to want to help people to improve their lives. I didn't want my story to be for nothing but wanted it to be used to make a difference. This has motivated me in my career my whole life and gives me my energy and passion. However, as I began working with carers as an adult I realised that my adult relationship with my real mum who continued to struggle with mental illness and addiction had led me to become a carer myself. This took me a long time to realise as my relationship with my mum became very strained during my late teens and early twenties as I became instrumental in my brother and sister also going into foster

care when I gave witness to social workers that I believed my siblings weren't being cared for adequately with my mum and her boyfriend as they became more addicted to heroin and speed and were no longer meeting the basic needs of my brother and sister or keeping them safe. I also tried to care for my mum but found this a difficult dynamic as I had to accept that although my mum had been unable to provide my day to day care as a child that my love for my mum was none the less such that I wanted to be able to care for her now I was an adult.

As I came to realise that despite these complexities to our relationship I was a carer I was able to empathise more deeply with the carers I was supporting. I now have worked through a lot of the pain my involvement had for mum as a young adult and to move on to developing a more loving and trusting relationship with my mum and acting as her supporter and the bridge builder between her and my siblings. I now take on a more obvious caring role supporting her with her care package, advocating for her when she needs help with her housing, medication, finances etc.

I am able to share my story as an explanation for my passionate leadership which enables the staff, volunteers, trustees, carers and their families I support to accept my authenticity as a gift. Clandinin and Rosiek, (2007) expands this beyond the local arguing that:

'The narrative inquirer, ... privileges individual lived experience as a source of insights useful not only to the person himself or herself but also to the wider field of social science scholarship generally'. (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007:49)

Thus I offer my story as a gift in my research to a wider community of researchers.

This authenticity is based on empathy I can derive from my own story. However the story has just been part of the process of developing my living theory which has enabled my authentic leadership to develop. I am keen that the focus is not on my story but on the living theory it has developed.

My learning has developed through developing my living theory:

'I understand learning as an educational process of creating and offering as a gift, valued knowledge of the world, self and self in and of the world. I deliberately refer to the creation and offering of such knowledge as a 'gift' to imply something that is valued by the creator and offered in the hope that it may be appreciated and creatively accepted by self and/or another.' (Huxtable, 2011:4).

My aim is to have the:

'willingness and courage ... to create enquiry approaches that enable new, valid understandings to develop; understandings that empower practitioners to improve their work for the beneficiaries in their care' (Dadds and Hart, 2001:169)

To check that my understandings are valid I have used social validation as set out by Habermas. Whitehead describes this as

'a process of democratic evaluation ... By this I mean I submit my explanations of educational influence to a validation group of peers with a request that they help me

to strengthen the comprehensibility, truthfulness, rightness and authenticity of the explanation.' (Whitehead, 2008:108)

I have worked with several research groups and submitted my work as I have been writing it to help shape and improve the readerly quality and deepen my understanding of my own work

How my authenticity as a leader improves my practice and improves the culture of the organisation I lead which improves the support the organisation provides for carers?

I believe that my practice improves as I am able to become more authentic as a leader. As I research my practice I am evaluating the validity of my belief. I have increased my learning as a leader that I am not able to lead effectively if it is against my values. As I gain a greater understanding of my explanatory story I have been able to develop my living theory which has enabled me to understand what I believe are the key to effective leadership and an effective organisation. In my research I intend to produce an evidence-based explanation in which I justify these beliefs;

Through this process I have been able to develop a living theory of mindfulness and learning which I evidence in my 2011 BERA paper (Hutchison, 2011) in which I have developed:

'my epistemology of dynamic flowing energy and the beginning of a three-part living theory, which I can summarise as:

- ⤴ Shared and pooled vision and knowing based on the personal and professional
- ⤴ Google philosophy of creativity, fun, appreciation and work that is challenging
- ⤴ Mindfulness and learning' (Hutchison, 2011:13)

The video clip with Rosie <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eyHP-554ilg> evidences that by being authentic I also open up a space for my staff, volunteers, trustees, carers and their families to feel safe to tell their explanatory stories and to improve their practice as they are able to develop their own understandings of their ontological values that give meaning to their lives. I feel the clip also evidences that I have created an organisation that reflects my ontological values and provides a mindful and learning environment which nurtures those that are involved in it. It shifts the power balance of the organisation by making myself vulnerable:

'By starting with a real question and asking someone if they would help you in pursuing it. You know, you come and say in effect: "I'm here asking you for some of your time, your life, because there is something I really want to know and I think you can help me. And that just changes the dynamics, shifts the power relationship ... The place of not knowing is a risky place, it involves making oneself vulnerable to discovery, letting go of control in the sense of being willing to be surprised or to be wrong, and people have all sorts of fears about what will happen, without being out of control or overwhelmed.' (Kiegelmann, 2009:31)

Through my research I have collected videos to provide evidence to validate my claims.

Below is a picture showing my embodiment of my authenticity with Rosie a carer and one of the trustees at the Centre.



Jack Whitehead responded to this image in an email 18/12/12 Appendix 1 as expressing 'a flow of life-affirming energy'. Jack goes on to say,

'I'm seeing you express what Joy Mounter calls 'nurturing responsiveness'. I believe/feel that you are inviting Rosie into a pleasurable and trusting space in which she feels free to express what she genuinely feels and thinks. In my language of creating a living educational theory, I think you are enabling Rosie to 'narrate' her experiences and communicate these with her own values and insights - a great talent, as Rosie offers the gift of her narrative.'

I feel not only does this clip validate that I am living my values but that I also agree with Jack in his email that I am also meeting Liverpool Hope University's purpose of the Faculty of Education,

'To contribute to the development of knowledge and understanding in all fields of education, characterising all work with values arising from hope and love.'

AERA seeks to:

.... advance knowledge about education, to encourage scholarly inquiry related to education, and to promote the use of research to improve education and serve the public good. (Ball and Tyson, 2011).

and BERA seeks to:

...encourage the pursuit of educational research and its application for both the improvement of educational practice and for the public benefit (BERA, 2010).

I feel the video with Rosie show that I meeting these aims to not only 'advance knowledge about education' and 'to encourage scholarly inquiry related to education' which many other researchers are doing successfully but more importantly to 'promote the public good' 'for the public benefit'. This is an original claim of my research that is not currently being researched effectively as Ball and Tyson (2011) make the point that educational researchers have fulfilled the first part of the AERA mission to advance knowledge about education and to encourage scholarly inquiry related to education. They say that educational researchers have been less vigilant and less effective, however, in fulfilling the second part of the mission; to promote the use of research to improve education and serve the public good.

Not only does the video with Rosie validate that I am living my values through my authentic leadership in my embodiment of the values but also in what Rosie is saying. At 1:44 Rosie says I 'give great direction', 'give tremendous leadership' 1:55, that I am 'very inclusive of everybody' 2:05 and that 'staff, volunteers, trustees, everybody is included' 2:16. Showing that Rosie has observed my leadership and that she has seen that it is inclusive.

Later Rosie talks about my style, that 'my enthusiasm comes through but it isn't overbearing' 5:17 and that my 'sincerity comes through ... honest and trustworthy because you mean what you say' 5:23. Rosie is validating that she has seen my authenticity in action.

Rosie also talks about how my openness about my caring role helps in my role. 'Because you're a carer yourself the empathy is naturally there' 5:54 she identifies that this helps carers feel able to talk to me and that my 'open door policy is absolutely fantastic' because it enables people to feel able to talk to me. Rosie also identifies my talent for listening and how it has inspired her, 'you're prepared to listen ... and I've learnt to listen and not only to listen but to hear' 9:23. Rosie is validating that my authenticity is a gift as it enables people to feel able to talk to me knowing I will listen and empathise and that through this modelling I have also influenced Rosie's learning, helping her to learn to listen.

Rosie talks at the end about how the carer involvement work at the centre 'empowers carers to become spokes people ... you can see their confidence grow.' 15:40. This is important to me as I feel it is important to empower others to find the power within themselves by using my own power to open opportunities they perhaps never thought possible.

How my gift of my authenticity as a leader helps to maintain support for carers when I feel myself as a living contradiction?

Developing myself as an authentic leader has not been a smooth story I have at times felt myself as a living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989). In responding to powerful emotions I have created boundaries that have blockaged my writings for this masters unit. Part of the originality of my present enquiry is in showing how I have re-channelled the energy of my 'blocking emotions' into my 'living boundaries' (Huxtable, 2012) that flow with a pooling of life-affirming energy. The significance of this re-channelling of energy can be understood in Vasilyuk's terms of the need to understand better the relationships between energy and meaning and energy and value:

“The Energy Paradigm

Conceptions involving energy are very current in psychology, but they have been very poorly worked out from the methodological standpoint. It is not clear to what extent these (p. 63) conceptions are merely models of our understanding and to what extent they can be given ontological status. Equally problematic are the conceptual links between energy and motivation, energy and meaning, energy and value, although it is obvious that in fact there are certain links: we know how ‘energetically’ a person can act when positively motivated, we know that the meaningfulness of a project lends additional strength to the people engaged in it...” (Vasilyuk, 1991:63-64)

Here is how evidence from my reflective journal shows how I re-channelled my energy from my ‘blocking emotion’ of bitterness into a pooling of a flow of my life-affirming energy in my authenticity as a leader.

On the 16.12.11 I wrote:

'Struggling to do my Masters

I am struggling to motivate myself to write my two units for my masters. After discussing with Marie she has suggested I write down why and review my BERA paper and previous work. Having just reread my BERA paper 2011¹ and watched my BERA presentation² it is interesting as the paper is about maintaining the energy and clearly I am struggling to have the energy for my Masters. In my BERA paper I identify that it is important to be consistent in your work with your values and I think this holds the key to my internal battle with doing my Masters.

Originally I wanted to do a PHD to give me the space and freedom to research my practice. I specifically didn't want to do a Masters as the Masters programme is based on units which impose a subject or context of the writing e.g. gifted and talented education and learners and learning. Although Jack and Marie are clear that this doesn't need to restrict the subject of the research I feel constrained none the less. This leads me to feel the sense of doing the Masters just to get the piece of paper as a ticket to do a PHD. In a piece of writing called Me, my mum and others I describe my feelings toward the education system. 'I saw the educational system as a means to an end and that each mile stone was just to get a piece of paper to set me on my way to the next one until I had enough pieces of paper to get a job that would make a real difference to people's lives and that I would love doing.'³ I already have reached that point as I do love my job and I am able to make a real difference to people's lives. I feel like doing the Masters is about getting another piece of paper to get to the PHD. I want to do a PHD to increase my influence to help more people than I currently do. But I feel bitter having yet another hoop to jump.

Even more deeply I feel bitter because if I had a 1st I could have gone straight to a

1 Hutchison, 2011

2 http://www.youtube.com/watch?tDGSjkFESiU&list=UUnRjBfzn9T6gXC_QBmWAbJA&index=75&feature=plcp

3 Hutchison, 2009

PHD. I feel extremely proud that I got a 2.1 not least because only 1% of children in care go to university and whilst I was at university my mum was injecting speed, my brother was taken into care, my sister went missing for a year when her dad ran away with her to Spain and I didn't know if I would see her ever again and then when she returned she was put into care and then returned to her dad who had run away with her in the first place and was a heroin addict at the time and my mum who was injecting speed. I also had to work to finance myself through university and my first love broke up with me in my second year. I don't want sympathy as all these experiences have made me who I am and I am happy with who I am and would not change it but to have to do a Masters because I didn't manage to get a first with all that going on feels a bit missing the point!

So now I've got all that off my chest can I bring myself back to seeing the Masters as more than another piece of paper and see it as something meaningful and let go of the bitterness I feel in needing to do it?

If my purpose is to research my practice to support and influence more people than I do at the moment I can use it for that so I need to re – engage my energy and move forward and write about what matters to me. If I also write for a unit and to use that unit to publish as a paper then that will further motivate my writing and give me a focus.

So I need to keep my vision of why I am doing this and not default into forcing myself to do it to get the piece of paper to do my PHD or I will miss the opportunity to use this moment to reach my aim.'

Through this reflective writings I have developed a better understanding of myself and managed to achieve my hope and have based this unit on authentic leadership which I am currently writing a joint paper on. This unit has worked to re-engage me on my masters and to feel true and authentic in my writing. Doing my Masters units has been an important process because I have been able to re-channel the bitterness I felt towards doing the Masters into a pooling of my life-affirming energy that flows into my practice and by writing some significant papers to advance educational research.

In my role as Chief Executive I have found myself as a 'living contradiction' (Whitehead, 1989) many times. In my first year I found myself needing to make so many changes to the organisation that at times I found it hard to involve everyone in the decisions effectively as there was so much opposition to the changes I was making. Although I believed the changes were necessary to ensure we could support more carers than the charity was supporting at the time and that it would empower carers and move away from a dependency model that had developed at the organisation. I found that my methods could be more dictatorial than inclusive. This made me feel myself as a living contradiction and need to come back to more participative models.

One of the changes I needed to make was a restructure where I ended up making a staff member redundant. This was a difficult time and I found myself a living contradiction as I felt the tension between wanting to improve the organisation so it could support more carers effectively and my desire to want to be an organisation that values its staff and is a place people want to work. However, this difficult process taught me that an authentic leader needs to make difficult decisions to improve the organisation for the greater good

and that change doesn't always please people. I received criticism from those that felt I was not making the right decisions and some staff did leave as they found new paths which fitted their ontological values more effectively. This has taught me that those involved in an organisation need to share the ontological values of the leader to work effectively and that fundamental divisions will prevent an organisation from developing effectively. Now those involved in the organisation I lead share my ontological values we are able to progress in a way that increases the dynamic-flowing energy and is no longer being blocked by individuals who disagree with my ontological values.

As an authentic leader the most difficult time is when a carer feels let down and that I have not been able to live my values fully for that carer. One complaint letter was extremely upsetting as the carer really felt I was not authentic. The letter said:

'I am writing to let you know how disappointed and upset you have made me feel by not getting in touch with me as you promised, it shows a total lack of concern on your part ... I feel very let down, it is no good promoting the centre or yourself if you are not going to follow through what you promise, it makes me wonder who you are there for. You were not for me.'

I felt this really showed I had not lived up to my values for this carer and that it really challenged me as to whether I was authentic at all. I had to really reflect on my practice and identify that this had been a mistake and was not something I found acceptable. I wrote a sincere apology letter concluding with:

'I really apologise for letting you down and take full responsibility for you not getting the service you needed when you needed it and will work hard to make sure this does not happen to another carer'.

Whilst this is the most difficult way to learn to improve my practice I have made changes to try to ensure this never happens to another carer. I wrote these down and sent them to the carer. The concluding paragraph said:

'This was an upsetting complaint as it does not reflect the service the Carers' Centre is committed to providing and it was avoidable. The Carers' Centre is committed to ensuring processes are put in place to ensure no other carer has this experience.' Appendix 2.

Whilst I would like to never upset anyone in my role and fully meet everyone's needs this is impossible. To be an authentic leader when people are let down I have tried to be open and honest in admitting my mistakes and then importantly to reflect on what can be done to prevent it happening again and to improve my practice.

Conclusion

In this paper I have shown that I am an authentic leader as I live my values in my role as Chief Executive of a Carers' Centre. I have shown through multi-media representations that I offer this as a gift to the staff, volunteers, trustees, carers and their families that I support as it creates an inclusional (Rayner, 2010), empowering and listening culture through nurturing responsiveness in the organisation which improves the support the organisation provides for carers because they are able to influence change. I have

explored the challenging time when I have experienced myself as a living contradiction in living boundaries where my 'blocking' emotions dominated my creative and life-affirming responses. I have shown how I re-channelled the energy in my 'blocking' emotions' in living boundaries that supported the flow of my life-affirming energy. I did this through refocusing on my values to ensure I am being authentic, learning from my mistakes so that the organisation can move forward to support more carers more effectively.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Email from Jack Whitehead 18/12/12

Hi Sonia - just watched the video with you and Rosie and enjoyed listening to Rosie's responses about her experiences as a Trustee for the Carer's centre, her learning and how she sees your influence.

I felt you both expressing what I understand as a flow of life-affirming energy at 18:57 minutes with both pleasure and humour, both of which seem very significant to you both.

I'm wondering about the nature of the expression of your embodied knowledge throughout the clip. Whilst Rosie does most of the talking I'm seeing you express what Joy Mounter calls 'nurturing responsiveness'. I believe/feel that you are inviting Rosie into a pleasurable and trusting space in which she feels free to express what she genuinely feels and thinks. In my language of creating a living educational theory, I think you are enabling Rosie to 'narrate' her experiences and communicate these with her own values and insights - a great talent, as Rosie offers the gift of her narrative.

I'm working on something with Jacqueline Delong for the American Educational Research Association that I think might be useful to you in a doctoral research programme. It is focused on Jacqueline's relationships with her masters students and our relationship as we work together with her students. I'm seeing something similar in your expressions of 'nurturing responsiveness' and in your expressions of Love and Hope. I think that you could show how the purpose of the Faculty of Education at Liverpool Hope University could be fulfilled:

"To contribute to the development of knowledge and understanding in all fields of education, characterising all work with values arising from hope and love."

This is one of the purposes in the attached strategic map of the Faculty of Education of Liverpool Hope University. Nobody has shown how to fulfil this purpose yet.

Liverpool Hope University (2009) Faculty of Education Strategic Map 2010-11. Retrieved 6 July 2011 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/lhu/LHUFacultyStrategicMap2010-11.pdf>

I'm also curious to see if what I'm seeing as a similarity between your way of relational being, what Ian Phillips and Eden Charles refer to as an Ubuntu way of Being, what Joan Walton refers to as a responsibility towards the well-being of all, what Marie refers to as loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility as well as empowering egalitarian and inclusive and what Andy lives in his life as a socially engaged artist. I'll work on this to see if can share my meanings in a way that communicates with others.

Love Jack.

Appendix 2

Complaint

Actions and learning

Agreed actions:

- not to make promises of support when at outreach road show events but to set up a phone support all to phone back in the next 3 days to provide sustainable.
- encourage carers to phone us on the Free phone number if they've not had a call as sometimes we are unable to get through.
- Ensure actions recorded on the database Charitylog are not shut down if the action has not been communicated to the carer but that this is set up as a new action to be completed.

After discussion with the Senior Management Team it was agreed that this was a problem of not having robust processes in place to follow up the support we had offered. We had been put in an exceptional situation to offer support before we had signed the contract and we had tried to offer more than we were capable of providing at that time. However, it was agreed that without making the changes above it would still be possible to make this mistake again.

Sonia Hutchison is responsible for communicating these changes to the team and line managers are responsible for checking that they have been seen through.

This was an upsetting complaint as it does not reflect the service the Carers' Centre is committed to providing and it was avoidable. The Carers' Centre is committed to ensuring processes are put in place to ensure no other carer has this experience.

Sonia Hutchison