

Case Study - The Chrysalis Training Programme: Towards Occupation Model

Ballyhoura Development, October 24th 2011

Introduction

The TO programme is dedicated to enabling people to develop the skills and confidence to move into employment, self-employment, education, training or volunteering. The intended outcome for individuals is that they achieve occupational fulfilment through further training and career building, more active community participation and or volunteering. The programme targets those who are long term unemployed who have lost their confidence or may have suffered mental ill health in the past but are now in recovery. The programme has been running in the Ballyhoura area since 2006 and to date has run 9 programmes in 5 towns in the East Limerick North Cork Region: Cappamore (3), Killmallock(1), Charleville (2), Mitchelstown(1)and Hospital (2).

Activities

The course ethos is based on Learner Centred Learning based on a community education model “**A living curriculum:** Don't establish the boundaries first the squares, triangles, boxes of preconceived possibility and then pour life into them, trimming off left-over edges, ending potential.” A. R Ammons taken from Waters, L 2007 ¹

This project offers a modular course of learning. The participants elect the modules that they would like to complete. The course runs two core modules to begin with Digital Literacy and Personal Development. This provides an opportunity to acquire basic skills and helps the group bond. The course is run two mornings a week from 10am-1pm. The modules are run concurrently for example Digital literacy is run on a Monday and Personal Development runs on a Wednesday. This allows participants to take both or choose one but still have a weekly learning session.

When the basic learning sessions are completed a series of consultation sessions are held to identify what the participants themselves would like to learn. In previous years the groups have elected horticulture, furniture restoration, confidence building skills, life coaching, digital photography and arts and crafts. If there are other request for information guest speakers are called in, in the past the group have elected for alternative therapies, how to volunteer, supports for farm families, Information on benefits to name a few.

During the course of the programme the participants are offered the opportunity to develop a WRAP® (Wellness and Recovery Action Plan) with each individual on the course. This is done progressively during the course and provides a support structure for each of the participants. This improves coping skills and can help set goals for the future.

¹ (From the paper: Waters, L 2007 Community Education a view from the margins pp 158-169 in T Downes, A, Gilligan eds (2007) Beyond Educational Disadvantage)

Participants have the opportunity to explore their wellness further through equine assisted learning; this allows participants to explore new behaviours and skills through interactions with the horse. The horses act as a mirror for the person's behaviour and respond quickly to changes. These sessions take place at Tory Hill Equine Assisted Learning Centre, Croom, Co. Limerick. These sessions are held as part of a summer programme at the end of the programme built into the plan to support participants before the next step on their journey.

The programme also provides the assistance of a Jobs Coach that helps with CV's Cover letters, Interview skills and Career Planning.

Outcomes

The participants gain newly formed skills that they have achieved at their own pace and in their own terms. They also have a greater awareness of their own wellness. The participants gain the tools for self advocacy and personal responsibility. They are also linked in with local supports and have a greater awareness of services available to them in their area. Gaining a sense of occupational fulfilment and the long term benefits that this will bring to the participants themselves, their families and the communities in which they live as outlined in the 2006 HSE Report 2 A Vision for Change RECOMMENDATION 4.1: All citizens should be treated equally. Access to employment, housing and education for individuals with mental health problems should be on the same basis as every other citizen.

Lessons Learned

Partnership with local agencies is key to the roll out and support of this programme. This project is supported by the Department of Social Protection, HSE Mid-West, Cork and Limerick County VEC's and LCDP. It is targeting those who are isolated in our community. Rural Bus has a central role in the programme as they provide transport to 40% of the participants taking part in the course. This programme is a community based educational programme. The training is held in a community based facility such as a local community house or community centre, a location that is central to the group. The course targets people that may be attending local day hospitals or day centres, so coffee mornings are held in these centres in partnership with the HSE. We also hold coffee morning and information sessions in the catchment areas of the course. Every participant is met in a one to one setting before training begins and a training needs analysis is done in an informal way to garner learner's needs.

Ballyhoura Development is part of a consortium (The Towards Occupation Partnership) of 5 Local Development Companies located in Cork and Limerick rolling out these training programmes (SECAD, West Limerick Resources, IRD Duhallow & Avondhu Blackwater Partnership).

Within Ballyhoura Development there is the support of the other staff and projects for the participants. This can be taken up during the programme for example a qualified counsellor is available to participants and this continues after the programme ends with progression or

² "A Vision for Change" 2006 Report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy. Department of Health.

information options. The constant links and supports provided through the programme are the important. The participants can call the coordinator when there are any issues or concerns. The course coordinator works one to one with each participant to work on their plan for the future. The participants that finished the first programme in 2006 are still in contact with the course coordinator as a link to services within the Ballyhoura region.

We run the course on a modular based system running one course one morning a week and another subject on the other. This way if the participant can only manage to attend one day a week, the course is still open to them and their level of ability to participate.

Success

There have been many successes from this programme over the course of the last 5 years. The progression of individuals has lead to further education opportunities, volunteering and paid employment. The one thing that is common feedback from participants each year is the social aspect and the improved socialisation skills of people who took part in these training courses. This year the programme will undergo an evaluation to capture the subjective elements of the course outcomes. These are key to the success of the training and the progression of individuals that take part in the training. The participant feedback from the 2010 programme produced the following testimonials.

TO Programme 2010 participant testimonials

“I really enjoyed the great chats and the people on the course, I felt like I was going visiting but I was learning at the same time”

“I could relate to the tutors they were down to earth and I found it easy to ask questions”

“I found the wrap planning practical, I examined things and it gave me a new and more positive way of looking at things”

“I enjoyed discovering what I like and enjoy and now I know I am good at things”

“I discovered that making a Daily Maintenance plan through WRAP that I am keeping myself and my wellness in check”

“The course helped me return to work and regain my confidence, I knew this course in the morning I could manage getting to work”

“I always felt happier and never remember a session where I didn’t have a laugh”

“I feel now I am better able to relax”

“It was great to have the bus collect me every morning and not having to worry about the transport”

Conclusions

This project target those who are marginalised and isolated in our community and provides an opportunity where one previously didn't exist. It is the approach and support for participants that sets it apart from other training programmes. It is an original concept that is simple and effective. This is a much valued and appreciated programme in the communities in which it works. The people it targets have been furthered distanced from the labour market due to our current recession and are in much need of the opportunity and support that this programme provides.