

APPENDIX 3 – CASE STUDIES

Case study 1

Name of the project: Independent Learning Skills (Learning Steps)

Aim of the project: To give learners with Learning Disabilities the opportunity to enhance their skills and to improve their quality of life.

Background information:

D is 40 year old gentleman who has mild learning disabilities. D lives alone and is supported by social services. His previous Social Worker contacted RCT council to see what support there was for D and was directed to Adult Education services. D enjoys coming to a Learning Steps class where he has made many friends, this has been a positive experience for D as he does not have a wide social network. D is really passionate about learning and our intention is to encourage him to attend some literacy mainstream classes which will hopefully build his self-esteem up even more.

Participation (*what they did on the project*)

With a mild learning disability D has struggled with reading and writing throughout his life. D lived with his mother until 2010 when she unfortunately died. D now has to live alone and has had to very quickly acquire new life skills. Volunteering three days a week for a local charitable organisation has helped him develop his confidence and social skills.

As a naturally shy person D still struggles with new situations such as meeting new people, despite this shyness his desire to improve his reading and writing encouraged him to enrol on to a class last September.

The course that D attends is part of a busy day centre. On his first day attending the group, he had to come into the class alone and introduce himself to staff and fellow students that he had not met before. He was extremely nervous and scared but his determination to progress helped him overcome his fears. He has stayed motivated and committed to meeting with the group each week and his reading, writing, confidence and social skills have improved immensely.

D's joy of learning has been inspirational and now he regularly contributes to discussions and shares his opinions. D continues to face his barriers with support from his social worker and tutor and has become a very popular member of the group. D does not allow his learning disability to limit his progression or passion for learning.

Outcome and impact:

D has recently gained a qualification with Agored Cymru – Know your Colours and Shapes, Using Written Communication and Handling Data. This term D is working towards and Agored Qualification "Working with Letters of the Alphabet "

As a tutor it is a joy to watch him on his journey continuing to advance and gain valuable skills that enhance his life skills.

Case study 2

Name of the project: Pre-employment

Aim of the project: To increase improve confidence and skills to become more employable.

Background information:

This young lady moved to Wales in 2016 after divorcing her partner. Her background was in the beauty industry where she had previously owned her own beauty parlour.

Since the divorce she had become socially isolated, withdrawn and very felt very insecure.

Participation (*what they did on the project*)

In September 2018 she attended a four week Employability course accredited by Agored Cymru and successfully completed a range of level one/two qualifications at the highest of standards.

Outcome and impact:

After carrying out regular progression reviews it become apparent that she was becoming far more confident and assertive. She seemed far happier in herself and had become very passionate and enthusiastic about life and learning in general.

After the successful completion of the course she expressed that the employability programme had provided her with the opportunities to develop her knowledge, skills, experiences and new achievements in order for her to make a successful transition into Higher Education.

Her future aim is to become a successful solicitor in order to benefit herself, the economy and her community where she wishes to practise. She is very grateful to the Employability Programme for helping her to regain her confidence and enabling her future social and working mobility.

Case study 3

Name of the project: Essential Skills in the Community

Aim of the project: To support adults to improve their literacy and/or numeracy skills

Background information:

C has attended Essential Skills classes for two years. He was referred by his job centre coach after disclosing that he struggled with mathematics.

From the outset, C attended classes regularly but despite appearing committed, was easily distracted in sessions, lacked vision in terms of his career or employment prospects and seemed to find learning a challenge even though he had successfully completed college courses. At this time C did not look as healthy, would often state he was tired and sometimes was shaking.

Participation (*what they did on the project*)

Initially C was assessed to see what his numerical weaknesses were. He was then supported, by a tutor in a small group, to complete work that was tailored to address his needs.

Although he attended class regularly, initially C left early on many occasions either blaming a pain from an arm injury or saying he couldn't concentrate any longer. However, as time passed, C began to gain more confidence in class and also in his peers and disclosed how much he had been drinking on the evenings prior to class. C was referred to different support agencies who were better placed to help him.

This was a period of huge transition for C, including quite intensive counselling by professionals, life coaching by Communities for Work Plus and also being told that if he didn't stop drinking he was unlikely to reach thirty. However, C continued to attend Essential Skills class each week and completed work towards his Agored Cymru qualifications. The work he completed was individually tailored to his needs. Additionally, he observed others completing literacy work which gave him the confidence to complete a literacy assessment and he began working on improving those skills too.

Outcome and impact:

The class was small, held in C's local job centre and the work was relevant to him which meant it was convenient and less intimidating; making him feel supported, included and secure. This has enabled him to achieve several Agored Cymru qualifications in both literacy and numeracy. His engagement in learning helped transform many aspects of his health and lifestyle. C looks healthier; no longer shakes in class; has grown in confidence considerably and is a bright and integral member of class who is often last to leave.

C's confidence improved so much that he attended other courses where he passed a health and safety in the workplace qualification and gained his Construction Skills Certification Scheme card for working on a building site. While he has not gained employment, yet, he is still attending essential skills classes each week and remains sober.

Case study 4

Name of the project: Still Me Dementia Support

Aim of the project: To provide weekly activities for individuals with dementia and their carers.

Funding organisation: This group has been supported by Garth Olwg Lifelong Learning Centre and gained grants from DEEP (Dementia engagement and empowerment project).

Background information:

The Still Me dementia support group have been meeting at Garth Olwg for a number of years. Originally funded by Alzheimer's UK, the group take part in different arts and crafts sessions on a weekly basis. When funding for this group came to an end, Adult Education agreed to fund a tutor for the group and Garth Olwg provided the room free of charge.

Over the past year Garth Olwg have supported the group by advertising and marketing their group within the local community. They have also helped the group apply for grant from DEEP (dementia engagement and empowerment project), WRVS and Interlink, all of which were successful, securing £7,250 in order for the group to move forward. They are now part of the DEEP network and a member of the group attends regular meetings with a member of staff from Garth Olwg to report back about the network and share good practice across the Wales.

They are in the process of setting up a South East Wales DEEP hub with other organisations (University of South Wales, Memoria, Cardiff and Vale UHB, Me Myself and I, Kymin, Research Occupational Therapist, Cwm Taf UHB are some of the partners involved). By being part of this hub it will enable them to grow the group at Garth Olwg and ensure that those diagnosed with dementia in their local area can continue living a positive, fulfilling life and continue enjoying activities they used to love before their diagnosis.

Garth Olwg also contribute to the dementia steering committee in Pontypridd, where they share good practice and stay up to date about what is going on in the local area.

Participation (*what they did on the project*)

The group have been involved in planning the programme of activities this year and they have taken part in a number of different workshops and also led some of them, teaching their skills to others. Some of these sessions have included, acrylic painting, crochet, knitting, pottery, sewing, jewellery craft and more. The group is an opportunity for members who have dementia and their carers to come together for respite and to spend an afternoon making, doing and enjoying. They have made various crafts and sold them at the Spring/Christmas Fayres at the centre in order to raise funds for the group. They also helped to organise activities for the Well-being week at the centre.

With Garth Olwg's help they have drawn up a plan to run a multigenerational arts project and involve children from the primary and secondary school. This will be funded by the grant money secured recently. Along with the help of Garth Olwg they are looking to set up a community choir during the day. Some of the members in the group have expressed an interest in being part of a singing group.

Garth Olwg will be offering support and providing advertising and marketing opportunities in order to spread the word about this exciting new opportunity. It will be open to all and will hopefully be an activity that we can encourage those who are socially isolated to attend and be part of. At the end of March the centre have organised a fundraising concert with local performers too. Money raised will go towards buying materials and providing workshops for the members in the group.

Outcome and impact:

The creation of this group has led to many new developments:

- All staff at Garth Olwg attended a dementia friend's session in order to gain more understanding about how best to support those living with dementia;
- The group has been added to the offer made to our local GP practice regarding local provision for individuals with dementia;
- It has enhanced the provision to tackle social isolation;
- The Still Me group gives people living with dementia a voice and an opportunity to build on past skills and develop new ones. It also gives members a purpose and a place to come to have fun, laugh and make new friends who can offer help and support;
- It empowers members to continue to strive to make an impact in their community and develop a real sense of ownership too.

Below is a quote from Jennifer* who has been a member of the Still Me group for 3 years. Jennifer was diagnosed at the age of 37.

"The group are really welcoming and I find myself going into a world of my own when I'm here. I love the sessions and feel I can rest my brain and it's a really calm environment. It's therapeutic and stimulating. Weather you have had a good or bad day you can come along for a chat and we all support each other. Not matter what emotions members are going through we are there to listen to each other and the sessions help take my mind off day to day stresses. It's a support network and it's an opportunity to socialize, chat and feel reassured too."

* pseudonym

Case Study 5

Name of Operation

Priority 3: West Wales and Valleys c80830



Summary: The participant is 23 years old female living in the Llantrisant area of RCT, upon enrolment she declared that her main barrier to employment was her mental health problems.

Background / what is ...?

The Participant first started suffering from anxiety and depression during her adolescence, she has received support from her GP in the way of counselling and medication, but unfortunately these have not helped and as she has entered adulthood, she is still suffering and felt, if anything that she had become worse. There was no apparent reason for the onset of these issues, nothing tragic had happened in her life, she described herself as *“a normal girl who woke up one day feeling differently about herself and the world”*.

The participant has a supportive family, including two siblings; they all live together on a non-working farm and have a variety of pets including cats, dogs and chickens.

The participant did not enjoy school as she felt her mental health issues were not addressed and were swept under the carpet, she was constantly told what she was experiencing was all part of growing up and she would grow out of it. Despite producing medical notes and medication from her GP, the school still did not put in place any support for her needs, her time in school was subsequently filled with bad experiences.

The participant enrolled onto the I2W programme in September 2018, after being referred by The Prince's Trust, who after her engagement with them considered that further training would be beneficial. She had previous work history but only on a casual basis, due to her complex mental health issues, she felt gaining employment was not an issue, it was keeping the role, as her high anxiety levels and depression made her unable to maintain good attendance. She welcomed the opportunity to gain further skills to support her to progress into permanent employment and hoped the varied activities available would assist her to discover techniques that would help her to deal with her anxiety and depression.

The engagement.

The participants attendance was good, however she frequently came in late as she found it hard to get up. However when there, she was excellent at participating in all tasks and activities, showing enthusiasm throughout and showing confidence on the outside but admitted she did not feel confident on the inside.

She was encouraged to use techniques to help with her anxiety and she found the Mindfulness and Steps to Excellence sessions valuable in that she was able to discuss and write about the issues she had experienced and then in her words "*lay them to rest*" and move on to being in the present. As the programme progressed a difference could be seen in her, she was much more relaxed, comfortable in her surroundings and attended regularly, she felt able to get out of bed, she had motivation and felt inspired to gain employment.

Whilst on the Pre-employment programme, the Participant attended one of our Contact Centre courses which was a massive step for her as it involved using appropriate communication skills with a variety of service users, which caused her anxiety, but she worked her way through this by using the recently acquired techniques. She had a telephone interview and did very well, she progressed on to the next stage and is currently awaiting an invitation to attend a formal interview. Towards the end of the programme the Participant secured an interview with Royal Mail as a Sorting Office Assistant, she was successful and left the programme to commence this employment. However, before she left she had another interview arranged with HMRC as an adviser in their contact centre, this was a competency based interview which she had little knowledge or experience of, she stayed longer at the end of one day so the tutor could explain the process and help her to think through examples she could use during the interview process.

The participant has said the interview went really well, she is still waiting to hear the outcome but in the meantime has started her job with The Royal Mail.

Good Practice Shared / Lessons Learned / Outcomes

As part of the 13 week employability programme, sessions are timetabled so that participants dealing with stress, anxiety and depression have the opportunity to engage in "All about Me" this includes Mindfulness, Art and craft sessions which support and guide individuals to develop techniques to help them deal with the variety of issues. These sessions were a big help to this participant, she found them very beneficial and used the techniques she had developed to aid her attendance at the programme and also to support her whilst attending interviews. The participant has attended a range of courses, but found the I2W programmes the most beneficial as this is where Mental Health issues were tackled, discussed and supported instead of it being a taboo subject.