



Holistic mental health care

Mind in Taunton and West Somerset

The SUCH Project promotes well-being through complementary therapies to anyone suffering mental distress.





Background

The Service User Complementary Holistic (SUCH) Project provides a number of complementary therapies (aromatherapy, reflexology, Indian head massage, juicing therapy and back or shoulder massage) to individuals experiencing mental distress. Initial funding from Skills for Care supported the development of the Therapist Assistant role, created to support the project therapists. All of the therapists have personally experienced mental distress.

Aims

Initially, when the service was created it had a community focus, but now it operates primarily in hospital settings. It aims to offer therapy to:

- service users
- carers
- volunteers
- anyone working in the mental health system.

How does it work?

The service provides sessions in eight hospital wards (two dementia care wards, one low security and five adult mental health wards). The work is currently funded through the Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. Services are offered through an appointment system run between ward and project staff. Individuals are usually offered three sessions of half an hour and can choose the therapy they want. Therapy is also offered to a carers' group, based in the community.

Outcomes

Outcomes include a high level of benefits to individuals. Recipients of the therapies consistently report relief from stress, and enhanced feelings of well-being. The annual report from 2011 states that:

“Feedback from staff and patients shows that complementary therapies offer a short term, yet important, relief from anxiety, stress and the pain associated with mental health problems.”

In 2011 1,326 sessions were delivered. Staff feedback about these sessions indicated that levels of chronic agitation and deep distress were reduced, with patients experiencing a reduction in stress post-therapy.

Individuals are asked to rank their problems and concerns in a number of areas, both before and after treatment. Rankings are on a scale of 1-6; average post-therapy ratings show a 1-2 point improvement. No one ranked 'worse'.



Impact

There have been significant benefits to individuals, and potentially financially, as people experience relief from stress and anxiety related symptoms, and understand that they do not always need medication to achieve this. Patient feedback showed that, as a result of the service, 87% of patients felt 'much better', and 13% of patients felt 'better'.

Other reported benefits included:

- improved interaction between patients receiving therapy, staff and other patients
- patients 'opening up' to therapists, who were then, with the person's permission, able to raise issues with ward staff
- people working as therapists themselves benefitting from their work, both in feeling useful to others, and in having a worthwhile occupation with an opportunity to develop new skills
- the success of the service has increased recognition of the significance of the psycho-social model of mental health and well-being.

Learning

Key learning points include:

appropriate physical contact has a positive impact on people's sense of well-being
the opportunity to work as a therapist, providing a service to others is equally beneficial, giving practitioners a sense of purpose and value
teaming up with a larger organisation has significant benefits, including the sharing of knowledge and ideas, and increased opportunities for staff training and development
initial 'seed' funding can lay the foundation for developing services, and provide an opportunity to demonstrate the worth of a service to potential users, purchasers or funders.

Next steps

The service is well supported by the Trust, and it is hoped that the service will be able to expand; there is a possibility of a pilot being set up in a high security hospital.

Contacts

<http://www.mindtws.org.uk/>

(website being transferred to new hosting provider at the time of writing, subject to disruption)

Links

http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/workforce_strategy/workforce_innovation_programme/prevention/NToW129.aspx (includes video)

Further information

For further information about the health and social care integration work between Skills for Health and Skills for Care please contact:

Skills for Care info@skillsforcare.org.uk

Skills for Health office@skillsforhealth.org.uk