

An Occupation Based Service for Third Level Students with Significant Mental Health Issues

Clodagh Nolan, Siobhan MacCobb

University of Dublin, Trinity College., Dublin, Ireland

Introduction - The number of students in Higher Education within Ireland with a disability has steadily risen from 450 in 1998 to over 3,500 today with approximately 8% of these considered to have a mental health difficulty (Ahead 2008). In 2003 the Discipline of Occupational Therapy together with the Disability Service in Trinity College set up an Occupation Based Service to cater for the needs of these students entitled Unilink (Unilink is a acronym for making 'university links'). This service is supported by the European Social Fund for Disabilities. It has an inclusive policy, is client led and is informed by Karen Unger's work as well as the PEO.

Objectives - This paper will examine the development, usage and outcomes of this service.

Methods - A mixed method approach was taken to examine the usage of the service. Quantitative methods describe the referral pattern, needs identified and uptake of the service and outcomes from the 'Trinity Student Profile'. Qualitative methods include cross case analysis as qualitative analysis of text messages.

Results - Results are presented in two formats 1. Quantitative - These will examine comparisons across faculty, gender, diagnosis and functional problems for access to service, usage of service including time spent with the service, referral patterns, mobile phone usage including the use of text messaging as a means of maintaining contact and support with the service, assessments undertaken and engagement with the service. 2. Qualitative - the cross case analysis will provide a subjective perspective on the usage of the service as well as presenting outcomes from the students perspectives.

Discussion - Over 200 students have accessed and utilized the Unilink Mental health Service since 2003. More men are referred, access and utilize the service than women. This can be attributed to that fact that in recent years more students with Aspergers Syndrome and ADD/ADHD have entered the University and this is reflected in the service numbers. The discussion will centre on the outcomes and look at the implications for practice, and how therapist might use text messaging as a method to support clients in their practice.