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Auditing a new occupational therapy programme in a mental health facility using evidence from service users and staff

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Introduction

The need for an occupational therapy service to be established was identified as a priority by management and consultant staff at this mental health facility following recommendation by the Mental Health Commission. The Discipline of Occupational Therapy, Trinity College, Dublin and the service providers advanced a proposal for a six month pilot project involving a new O.T. service with two qualified O.T's. The pilot began in November 2007.

Objective

The overall aim of the service was to enable service users to improve their skills in managing their mental health, well-being and lifestyle. Secondly, to contribute to the effectiveness of the multidisciplinary team in providing a quality service. It was also agreed that the new service would be audited near the end of the six month pilot to show evidence of the impact of the new service on service users and on staff.

Method

Ethical approval was received from both health authority and university research ethics committees. The research is a descriptive study involving interviews with service users and staff. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Key questions for service users focused on i) their level of participation in the service, ii) if and how the service made a difference to how people managed their mental health, iii) suggestions for change.

Key questions to staff focused on i) their evidence of improvement in people's ability to manage their mental health through their participation in O.T., ii) the contribution that occupational therapy made to the MDT. iii) the value of O.T. assessment to the team.

Results & Conclusions

Findings showed the following:

Overwhelming support and value for the new O.T. service from both service users and staff. Strong level of recall about specific elements of the programme. Clients made positive changes in their personal care skills. Increased sense of personal responsibility, self confidence and self esteem. Changes noted in client's motivation to participate in meaningful activities. Furthermore, the rate of self referral increased during the pilot.

Contribution to practice

Replicating this type of research is a useful means of auditing a service and demonstrating evidence around the value of an occupational therapy service.