

Practice Evaluation

This practice evaluation describes the implementation of a 2-day workshop on psychosis with third-year undergraduate occupational therapy students at Brunel University. The work was undertaken by the teaching team at Brunel University, a clinical psychologist working in assertive outreach and an occupational therapist working in community mental health. The background to the project and the way in which the 2-day workshop was adapted to accommodate the university timetable are outlined. An evaluation of the workshop, its place in the occupational therapy programme and the feedback from students are presented.

Enabling Occupational Therapy Students to take a Fresh Approach to Psychosis

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Introduction

In 2000 the British Psychological Society published a report exploring the psychological and social understandings of psychosis, which was welcomed by user and survivor groups because it challenged the traditional biomedical approach. It also received positive comments from both psychiatrists and the Department of Health. A key recommendation was that there was a 'need for a national programme of training for mental health workers to enable them to make use of the ideas and information in the report' (Cooke 2000, p7). This hope became a reality when in 2001 the Department of Health funded the development of a number of learning materials, one of which formed the basis of a 2-day workshop. This now takes the form of a training manual entitled *Psychosis Revisited: a workshop for mental health workers* (Bassett et al 2003).

The aim of the 2-day workshop is to create a space where participants can stand back and take a fresh look at psychosis and examine the ways in which they can work more effectively with people who have psychotic experiences. The workshop uses a mixture of teaching methods and experiential exercises, including art, role play, mime and discussion, sharing in pairs, in small groups and in the large group. A pivotal part of the workshop is the opportunity to learn from service users' experiences and the workshop includes a session on 'The service user perspective'. The workshop presents many challenges to traditional ways of viewing psychotic experiences, particularly the biomedical perspective. There is an emphasis on safety and support during the service user session and throughout the entire workshop.

The workshop addresses the following areas:

- The breadth of perspectives on psychosis and psychotic experiences
- The value of service user views
- The meaning of psychotic experiences
- The importance of hope
- Barriers to recovery
- The development of alliances and partnerships
- Developing strategies and putting them into practice.

Developing the workshop manual

The draft workshop manual was piloted with a community mental health team and an assertive outreach team in a mental health trust in West Sussex, with extensive contributions from an occupational therapist (first author) working in partnership with a clinical psychologist (second author). Subsequently, the workshop was offered to workers without a professional training, acknowledging that their limited ability to influence the practice of teams and organisations was traded against their closer proximity and greater availability to service users. Five workshops were delivered to approximately 100 workers from a variety of inpatient, residential and day service settings.

Pivotal to the success and credibility of the workshops was the continued involvement of service users, who shared their experience of psychosis and receiving services within a space that was made safe enough for them to contribute (Hayward et al 2005). Service user involvement was organised through the CAPITAL Project Trust (Clients And Professionals In Training And Learning, an organisation

that promotes the views of users of mental health services in West Sussex), which took responsibility for the session on service user perspectives.

The pilot workshops were invaluable in testing out the training material and led to redrafting and changes that the present authors felt greatly enhanced subsequent workshops. They also demonstrated that there are people within mental health services with both the desire and the ability to provide training and education across the traditional professional and user/provider boundaries. Following the publication of the manual by Bassett et al (2003), this desire led to the delivery of workshops across a range of disciplines. All subsequent workshops run by the authors of this paper have been based on the *Psychosis Revisited* training manual. Of significant benefit during this process has been the increasingly collaborative and personal nature of the relationship that is evolving between trainers and the local service user organisation.

Further changes to the workshop were made in response to feedback and modifications have been made to the range of teaching methods to engage participants. Acknowledging that the workshop manual provides a framework for training that can be modified according to local need and context, activities such as mime, role play and visual demonstrations were introduced to engage an audience for whom didactic teaching may be relatively unfamiliar. Within professional education programmes, part of the workshop has been delivered to the Doctoral programme in Clinical Psychology at the University of Surrey. As stated above, the authors of this paper have been keen to disseminate the workshop widely among groups of professionals who work with people who experience psychosis. Occupational therapists clearly are part of this group of professionals and an opportunity to deliver a workshop was presented to the authors via the first author's contact with the undergraduate programme at Brunel University. The workshop also provided an opportunity for an occupational therapy education and training course to operationalise some of the values that underpin the Ten Essential Shared Capabilities (Hope 2004), a Department of Health framework for the training of the mental health workforce.

Aim

The aim of this practice evaluation was to establish if the workshop could be successfully delivered as part of undergraduate occupational therapy education and to obtain the views of students on its relevance.

Method

An approach was made to Brunel University, who provide both a full-time and a part-time programme for a BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy. At level three of the degree, a 20-credit

module, 'Contemporary issues in occupational therapy', is delivered in the final weeks of the programme, which enables both staff and students to reflect on the education already provided and to identify aspects requiring further development. These are then incorporated into a lecture and seminar programme, which assists students to select a topic to study to complement their experience on the degree. In 2004, among the topics identified by staff was user involvement in intervention. Therefore, the workshop seemed a useful way to highlight this important topic.

The challenges of the implementation of the workshop with occupational therapy students were many. There were two main areas of concern. One was the difficulty of incorporating the workshop within the existing university timetable; the other was the challenge of delivering a workshop designed for groups of 20-25 participants to a cohort of 110 students. Following discussion about the possibility of delivering the workshop to a small number of students, a decision was made in the interests of equality that all students should have the opportunity to receive this training.

At Brunel University various teaching methods are used, including small group seminars of around 16 students led by a member of staff, and it was decided that the workshop materials could be disseminated through seminar leaders acting as workshop facilitators. Two seminars, each lasting 2 hours on consecutive weeks, were used to deliver key elements of the workshop. In addition, a large group session of 2 hours for all 110 students was used to present the service user perspective session. The seminar leaders were provided with detailed seminar plans designed by the first author, who is an occupational therapist and visiting lecturer at Brunel University and therefore familiar with the teaching methods used.

Presenting service users' perspectives was an additional challenge. Although two service users had extensive experiences of training, this had been in smaller groups and here it was proposed to deliver this section of the workshop to 110 students in a large lecture theatre. There were concerns about the loss of the intimacy and the impact of delivering in this way. One of the service users felt unable to speak in front of so large a group and her story was therefore presented via a video recording. The other service user initially felt able to address the group, but on the day of the workshop he was unable to participate in the session: he had been becoming increasingly unwell over the days and weeks leading up to the workshop and his wife felt that it was unsafe for him to drive. The facilitators therefore decided to proceed using a videotape of one of the service users. It is clearly not ideal to use a videotape in place of a live interview and the facilitators were aware of the lack of balance in the two service user stories (one is very negative while the other is a more positive, hopeful story). However, the facilitators took the view that it was necessary to have a pragmatic approach to teaching and to be flexible.

Ethical considerations

As part of quality assurance at Brunel University, all modules are routinely evaluated by an end-of-module written evaluation form and, in this instance, all the students were aware that this was a pilot piece of work. The evaluation was confidential and anonymous. By attending the workshops and completing the evaluation, consent was implied. The two service users' participation was on an entirely voluntary basis and unpaid except for travel and other expenses.

Findings

From a cohort of 110 students, 48 evaluations were returned. Nine of these forms evaluated the whole module rather than just the workshop so these forms were discounted for this evaluation. The evaluation of the workshop was therefore based on 35% of responses. From the qualitative comments, four main themes emerged.

Importance of the service user perspective

The majority of the students cited the service user perspective as the most useful aspect of the workshop, particularly exploring the role of professionals and the impact of client-centred practice. The students commented on the value of hearing at first hand about people's experiences of using mental health services. Many felt that they had learned something that they would remember in future practice – a lesson about treating people with respect and humanity:

This has been an excellent experience, the focus on the patient being the expert and learning/listening and hearing your patients has opened my eyes ...

Some students, however, felt that the workshop in general and the service user session in particular were rather unbalanced and biased against the medical model. One student noted, 'Not all doctors are megalomaniacs!'

Client-centred practice

The students felt that the workshop enabled them to grasp more fully the concept of client-centred practice and to understand the client's perspective on this approach to therapy:

The involvement of service users and their stories really made me realise the importance of being client-centred and listening.

A really useful workshop which made me think about how we as professionals should be working with clients (in a client-centred manner).

I was able to gain further insight into what client-centred really means.

The College of Occupational Therapists' Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (COT 2005) states that services provided to clients should be client-centred. With

this approach to practice at the centre of assessment and treatment, it is important to note how central this was for many students.

Teaching methods

The students commented positively on the teaching and learning strategies used in the workshop and seminars and valued the interactive element of the seminars. They stated that this approach had helped to develop further their understanding of psychosis. The content of the workshop was popular with its interactive discursive style, mixed teaching methods and wide range of perspectives on psychosis. Others commented on the way in which the workshop was arranged. One would have liked more context for the workshop in terms of its development; another would have preferred smaller groups and more continuity in terms of facilitators and less of a time lapse between the first and second parts of the workshop.

Timing of session

The majority of the students felt that the workshop was inappropriately placed at the end of the undergraduate programme and would have been more useful if it had come earlier in the programme at level one or two. Some commented that they found it difficult to understand why the topic had been included in this module and that they felt they understood the issues in question already. However, one student felt that it had enabled a review of previous learning and experiences.

Conclusion

The part of the 2-day workshop that usually makes the biggest impact is the session on the service user perspective. This was no exception in the Brunel University version of the workshop, where students clearly valued this aspect of the experience. An emphasis upon client-centred practice was also pivotal to the students' experience of the workshop, reinforcing the philosophy for occupational therapists enshrined in the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (COT 2005).

Overall, the students appreciated the teaching methods used in the module and this appears to endorse the decision to use Brunel University lecturers to deliver the material in this way.

Many students commented on the timing of the workshop at the end of the final year of the BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy, with most suggesting that it should be delivered earlier in the degree. This advice has been heeded and has influenced the relocation of the workshop to the second year of the degree for future cohorts.

The value of including the workshop in the degree was encapsulated in the words of one of the students: 'I'm really pleased we were given this opportunity. It has been a positive experience ... which I will be able to use and think about in ... practice.'

References

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