

Tailor Made Training on Mental Health

2

Peter Bates is Theme Coordinator for NDT work on mental health and learning disabilities



In April, I was contacted by a national organisation providing residential and day-care services for people with learning disabilities. They sought advice on how best to access training for their staff on mental health issues, as this had been identified as a priority need in a Local Authority Inspection Report. It was agreed that a "tailor made" course should be designed and run on site to enable a large staff group to gain an understanding of local mental health service delivery. Bruce Maughan, (an independent training consultant and approved training provider with the local authority concerned) and myself designed the course ensuring that it

fulfilled the identified requirements. It offered good value for the organisation as it incurred the same financial outlay as the cost of only three staff attending less focused training.

The training course began with a discussion on what types of things are good for our mental health. The group then discussed the labels used by mental health services to describe mental distress including depression, schizophrenia and bi-polar disorders and whether these labels are meaningful. At the end of the first day, we compiled a list of ways in which learning disability and mental health services can work more closely together.

On day two, we explained the main sections of the Mental Health Act 1983 and how the Act can be used to hospitalise people against their wills. Several people in the group had some experience of the 'sectioning process', and everyone found it really helpful to examine the wider picture. The role of GP, psychiatrist and approved social worker were explained, along with the different types of 'section' that can be used. In the afternoon, we used a specific group approach to identify new ideas for key-workers. The aim was to apply the learning from the course to real situations and find new approaches to old problems. After some guidance and encouragement, the group learned how to use the approach and created a range of new possibilities for establishing better supports for people.

We ended the course by spending some time on risk assessment management in the context of mental

The training course began with a discussion on what types of things are good for our mental health. The group then discussed the labels used by mental health services to describe mental distress

health. As with all the other subjects covered during the course, many examples were given and the group discussed actions that could be taken to provide better support.

We learnt that two days is a short time to cover all the important aspects of mental health. But, despite time limitations, the group developed a better understanding of mental health services, some clear plans about building relationships between mental health and learning disability services, and ideas about supporting people who use both services. A follow-up session in two months time will explore how successful the new techniques have been. ■■■

If you would like us to bring a seminar to your organisation, then please contact Peter Bates at the NDT.

Summary

- Peter Bates was asked for advice on how a large organisation could train their staff on mental health issues.
- Bruce Maughan and Peter designed a tailor-made course.
- It was good value for money for the organisation.
- The training course looked at labels given to people with mental health difficulties.
- The course also looked at how learning disability and mental health services can work more closely together.
- The group came up with ideas about supporting people who use both services.