



WAMH in PC Wales Mental Health in Primary Care

Report on project work funded by WAMH in PC Bursary Dec 2009-May 2010

Delivering a low intensity mental health service in a community setting

The project consisted of employing one Low Intensity/Graduate mental health worker (Band 5) for a period of 6 months for 1 day a week to deliver low intensity interventions in the form of computerised CBT and Stress Management group work. The project would be monitored for effectiveness using recognised outcome measures and questionnaires for feedback, in order to feedback to local service planners, with a view to securing further funding for the role if shown to be effective.

The use of low intensity workers and interventions in Wales is relatively underdeveloped and this project has provided the opportunity to develop and evaluate the effectiveness, necessity and value of group intervention work.

Finding a Suitable Venue

The main concerns here were accessibility and suitability for the course. Coleg Powys in Llandrindod was chosen as it offered a central location for the catchment area and provided an excellent educational environment for the clients without holding any stigma which is so easily related to mental health. The general ethos was one of emotional health and wellbeing whilst learning techniques and strategies for coping with stress and anxiety.

The venue came within the budget of £625 for 12 weekly sessions, and was a safe environment both for clients and tutor and also catered for our technical needs.

Preparation

The first couple of weeks (1 day a week) was used to familiarise with the materials, liaise with colleagues on client suitability for the course, book and coordinate dates at the chosen venue and then to issue invitations by way of letter to suitable clients.

Evaluation forms were devised for the suitability of the venue and the effectiveness of the course and HADS plus C.O.R.E assessment forms were chosen to evaluate the before and after of each client for our clinical feedback.

The stress management course was to be delivered in the form of a power point presentation and time was spent on developing this and tailoring it to suit the client's needs, the aim being to encourage as much interaction from the group as possible, whilst following a structured presentation of CBT based learning interventions and coping strategies.

Files were made up of packs comprising of each weeks course material, information regarding the clients confidentiality, group information and optional paperwork to tailor each individual group using feedback and suggestions from members of the group.

Setbacks

Due to unforeseen circumstances such as the snow disruption there was a delay in starting the course for 2 weeks in total. This however, was the time used to further refine the stress management course using material an evaluated CBT based Anxiety Management course used by the Psychology Unit last year. There are now 6 consecutive weeks of presentable Stress Management material that build week on week into an effective and educational course.

With regards to the **computerised cognitive behavioural therapy** course with the use of laptops, places were filled quickly as there were only three laptops available; a fourth was on order but was unfortunately not here for the start of the course and during the course great technical problems were experienced with one of the laptops resulting in one of the clients having to discontinue on this course. (They were offered a place on the next Stress Management group which they were happy to accept.)

Due to the technical problems experienced over the duration of this course it was felt that this package could not be relied upon on a weekly basis. The two clients that successfully completed the course agreed that it had been educational but they felt that they would have benefitted equally if not more from a discussion group format. There was opportunity to discuss issues that had arisen at the end of each computerised session and in the evaluations it was evident that the clients valued this time and discussion.

Evaluation Questionnaire Results

The client scores for the perceived helpfulness of specific factors provided and topics covered by the Stress Management Course are summarised below.

Out of the 22 persons invited to the courses, 14 persons attended with 12 persons completing the course.

9 out of the 12 evaluations were completed providing the following information:

	Very Helpful	Slightly Helpful
1.Meeting other people with stress and anxiety	77.7%	22.2%
2.Talking about your experience was	66.6%	33.3%
3. Information about bodily sensations & stress	66.6%	33.3%
4. Learning how to identify worrying thoughts & information on common thinking distortion was	88.8%	11.1%
5. Learning relaxation techniques was	77.7%	22.2%
6. Information on how stress affects thoughts and behaviour was	75%	25%
7. Learning how to face your fears through guided practice was	87.5%	12.5%
8. Information on Stress Management for life was	87.5%	12.5%
9. Was there anything in particular that you liked about the group sessions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>Being able to talk to others who are in a similar situation – knowing you are not alone.</i> o <i>Meeting other persons at different stages of anxiety and learning some ways of controlling anxiety</i> 		
10. Was there anything in particular that you did not like about the group? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>No nothing</i> 		
11. What were you able to take away with you and use most in between the group sessions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>Working through some of the CBT exercises and using people's examples helped me to understand how to use the tools when on my own.</i> o <i>The course has given me my confidence and self esteem back.</i> o <i>The ability to use thought processes to combat my situations of stress, confidence etc.</i> o <i>The handouts were great; I will definitely revisit them on a regular basis.</i> o <i>Coping strategies and different ways of thinking about situations and experiences.</i> 		
12. Have you any suggestions about how the group could be improved? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>More group involvement, possible role play.</i> o <i>A possible monthly / bi-monthly drop in sessions for anyone that has been on the courses before as a follow up or support group.</i> 		

With regards to the HADS forms, on the 10 complete pre/post measures, all group participants showed marked improvement.

CORE has cut off scores between clinical and non-clinical populations (1.19 for males and 1.29 for females).

Females:	Before	3 out of 5 scored as case/clinical
	After	4 out of 5 scored as non case/clinical

Males:	Before	4 out of 5 scored as case/clinical
	After	4 out of 5 scored as non case/clinical

Venue Evaluation:	10 out of 12 persons completing the course rated the venue as good.
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All 14 attendees were discharged from the services after having attended and/or completed the course.

Following feedback from both the group and experience gained during the 6 month post, it was proposed to the Director of Planning for mental health in Powys that the post be extended at its current level (as a minimum) to extend the provision of CBT based stress management groups across Powys. He agreed to this, and at the time of writing further groups are being planned in Knighton, Crickhowel, and Brecon and plans are in place to explore venues in the north of Powys.