



Activ8

Social Work Practice Pioneer Project (SWPPP) evaluation

February 2013

Background

In November 2011, Birmingham was successful in its bid to host one of seven national Independent Social Work Practice pilots (ISWP) (Activ8/Cre8), along with a Social Work Practice Pioneer Project (SWPPP).

The ethos and features of Activ8/Cre8 are:

- placing a greater emphasis on prevention
- making full use of enablement
- maximising the input of user-led expertise and resources
- focusing on building confidence and self-esteem
- helping retain independence
- reducing dependency on long-term social care funding.

The aim for the SWPPP is to work alongside and within the new model of social care and ethos of Activ8/Cre8 to enable people who use services and volunteers to develop a self-sustaining group, providing peer-to-peer support, through a range of activities and services to people with disabilities.

Initially the SWPPP was implemented in March 2012, with an existing user-led organisation (ULO), Helping Hands, but due to the ULO's other commitments and input into various forums, this was re-aligned in July 2012. A new group was set up and existing service users were offered the opportunity to look at providing peer-to-peer support, through the ISWP.

The SWPPP re-aligned in July 2012 but it has unfortunately had a slow start. This was brought about, in part, by the delay in implementing the second stage of the Social Work Practice Pilot (SWPP). The plan for the second stage was to implement an innovative interactive assessment model designed to engage people who may use services in a partnership approach and to develop more community-based, peer-to-peer support. This was known as the CRE8 model.

The SWPPP is being led by three social workers, who commit a total of 1.5 days per week to bring together existing service users, provide direction, encourage peer-to-peer support and develop networks.

The CRE8 model was rolled out in August 2012. It was envisaged that social workers would work with CRE8 as the 'front end' of the ISWP service. This 'front end' was to carry out a simple assessment of needs and to look at what equipment, as well as other services, could be offered from within the community in order to enable and provide

better outcomes for people who use services. CRE8 consists of a senior community support officer, an occupational therapist and a community support assistant.

CRE8 staff are working closely with people who use services to look at innovative ways for the development of existing and new community-based services and to encourage networks of peer-to-peer support. This pioneering approach is to be resourceful and imaginative, and focuses on using people's abilities rather than on their disabilities. Where necessary this also involves facilitating access to services and building capacity (market shaping) in the community, which is independent of local authority assistance.

The main expected outcome for the CRE8 model is to maximise the number of people who are able to receive support in their communities, even when they may not fulfil criteria for a formal care package. It should also enable social workers to use their skills creatively, at both the individual and community intervention levels, to effect positive changes that bring benefits to the target group of potential customers, by promoting independence and prolonging their active involvement in community life.

Progress

The SWPPP is taking two directions:

- 1) A peer-to-peer group has been set up with monthly meetings facilitated by selected social workers, chaired by volunteer service users. This group discusses their own personal social care issues, and how they have or can overcome these, and it also provides support to other people who use services, based on their experiences.
- 2) Cre8 has been developed to work alongside social workers to offer enabling support sessions to people who use services that would enhance their quality of life and empower them.

Peer-to-Peer Group

This group is made up of volunteer service users from a targeted client group. Social workers provided information about the group to physically disabled service users and their carers and were asked to express interest. Interested parties were then contacted by the selected social workers leading on the group, who then arranged meetings to bring this group together.

The goals and objectives for the group were agreed as follows:

- maximising the input of user-led expertise and resources
- focusing on building confidence and self-esteem with people who use services
- helping retain independence for people who use services
- reducing dependency on long-term social care funding
- peer-to-peer support
- identifying volunteers for group expansion
- improving and shaping future services.

Two social workers have been supporting and facilitating the monthly meetings with this group. Five meetings have been attended to date. A summary of the discussions held within these meetings is detailed in Appendix A.

The group currently consists of people who use services, carers and an advocate from Peterborough. Issues have been discussed about service users' and carers' personal experiences of:

- direct payments
- employment law
- fairer charging assessments
- impacts of the Independent Living Fund (ILF)
- personal independence payments
- housing
- transport
- hotel facilities.

Advice sessions have been arranged to provide the group with additional knowledge of some of the issues discussed at meetings. Selected Birmingham City Council representatives and the advocate currently involved in the group have also provided information and assistance which included assisting a service user to set up a website, and exploring the possibility of using this website for the as a discussion forum.

The overall expectation is for this group to become independent and to grow through the forum with contribution and support from CRE8.

Support provided from CRE8 to date

CRE8 reviewed the issues that were raised in relation to older adults and physically disabled people and decided that sign language classes would be a beneficial option to provide assistance to people who use services from this targeted client group. This type of activity would encourage dexterity and also provide a safe and relaxed environment to communicate with other people who use services, in particular, people who are hearing-impaired.

These specially designed sign language classes were offered to people who use services from the physically disabled and older adults client groups who had either previously attended a Birmingham City Council Older Adults Open Day, where CRE8 had a stand, or had an ACTIV8 social worker referral.

A total of 30 people who use services attended six classes (held weekly), six of whom were referred by Activ8 to CRE8.

Due to the overwhelming success of this activity, further CRE8 workshops are being planned. The idea of 'Resolutions' workshops emerged and are currently being planned for 2013. A mail shot is being set up to offer this to all people who use Activ8 services who have had an assessment, regardless of whether they were eligible for services or not. Resolutions workshops are based on the concept of New Year resolutions that are

made, and quite often not sustained, and will look to set goals with people who use services and monitor how they can achieve and sustain their goals.

This activity will entail an initial one-to-one session, where the goal is set with the person who uses services, and then the progress of these goals will be reviewed through weekly workshops. The expected duration of these Resolution workshops is approximately 6 to 10 weeks. People who use services will also be encouraged to attend further workshops and to provide peer-to-peer support on their experiences and how they have benefited others.

Cre8 is recruiting people who use services as volunteers to provide a befriending service, and is also creating a directory of resources that service users know about.

The occupational therapist working in CRE8 has also provided a session to the Peer-to-Peer Group to offer CRE8 opportunities and to encourage links between CRE8 and the group.

The difference it has made for people who use services

Peer-to-Peer Group

The group has gained additional in-depth knowledge of direct payments as well as the fairer charging process, and has discussed various related issues that group members have experienced.

This has also given them the opportunity to socialise and to meet with people in the same situation.

There are currently no tangible benefits to evidence whether the delivery of advice given to date has helped the group as previously expected. However, the formation of this group has provided a forum to air and discuss social care-related issues, and the group is now working on publicising themselves to offer support to other disabled service users through their experiences.

The group is collating what they can offer and also looking at ideas of how they will sustain themselves after the project closes. BID has offered them facilities to continue holding their meetings, and the frequency of the group's meetings is being increased to pave an independent way forward.

The advocate who has been working with a service user has assisted him to set up a website linked to www.cupswithstring.co.uk/birmingham

This website gives a forum for linking up people with disability, where they can access information and interact with people who may have experienced or are experiencing difficulties. People are also able to share information and leave comments and blogs.

This website is in its infancy, but it has links to the following areas:

- News
- Information
- Find and Rate Local Services
- Gallery

See Appendix B for additional information about this website.

This person has also volunteered to work with CRE8 to produce a 'resources' directory providing information on resources available to people who require care and/or support.

It is also hoped that people who use services who attend the CRE8 workshops will start to contribute to this group, and vice versa.

The cost-effectiveness of this group cannot be quantified as yet.

CRE8

The CRE8 signing workshops have made a difference to people who use services by:

- reducing isolation
- providing another form of communication for social inclusion
- increasing dexterity – providing an enablement function.

For example, Mr A has cerebral palsy and was confined to a single lounge downstairs due to poor mobility and low motivation. At the initial assessment by CRE8, it was identified that Mr A found it difficult to engage with people at a day centre and did not have the same level of verbal communication skills.

At the workshop, Mr A was given an assessment of motivational goals, and the aid of a British Sign Language (BSL) test sheet. Mr A followed the movement instructions outlined in the test sheet and eventually started to show improvements in his hand dexterity. The workshops gave him the ability to make and carry his own drinks, improve his mobility and reduce isolation as he became acquainted with other attendees (see Appendix D for full details).

Further feedback has been obtained from some people who use services who attended these sessions (see Appendix D).

The difference it has made for social work and social workers

The Peer-to-Peer Group commenced in August 2012 and the aim is to empower people who use services to take ownership of the group, and to have a period of upskilling so that they are confident to share knowledge and skills with each other and then with others. In the longer term the group's aim is to have a positive impact as social events etc. will be set up; in turn it may reduce isolation and could potentially reduce social work time/the need for packages of care.

The Cre8 element seems to be assisting social workers in the following areas:

- helping free up time for the social worker by doing simple assessments;
- helping with support for cases, where a normal package of care is not addressing underlying issues;
- providing an empowering and enabling service through means of workshops;
- providing knowledge and volunteering opportunities.

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