**People affected by substance use and homelessness**

**Tests of change – Scoping Exercise**

**Project Title**

**Making Dundee Home/Just Bee Productions**

Draws on hospitality, creativity, and spirituality to improve social and environmental justice and human well-being. This broad aim has been focused on engaging with those who are often excluded from society for a variety of reasons.

**Situation**

In normal times MDH includes lunches on Wednesdays and Fridays for people who struggle on low incomes, poor mental health, isolation, addictions and sometimes who are homeless, in hostels or at risk of being homeless. Along with lunches there is creativity that includes art and drama productions. We usually provide some clothes and during the pandemic – DVDs. The aim is to build relationships so that we can help people connect with other services or provide support ourselves where relevant. We will often accompany people to appointments and help them prioritise their own actions as part of their recovery. We have also run a group called Soul-Space that was a time of meditation and conversation. The way that this was done encouraged conversation, discussion, personal reflection, and the growth of personal resilience. We have now obtained a labyrinth to assist with walking meditation, but this has yet to be used due to the pandemic.

Since the start of the pandemic we have operated as a food bank with people queuing at a distance in our large hall to then select groceries. Again, hospitality is the means of continuing and building relationships of mutual trust. The way that this operates enables chatting as people wait and we have helped address various issues that arise. At present, we usually provide food bags for between 90 – 120 people, including children. We have more in-depth relationships with about 40 people and have now started holding 1:1 meet-ups in our café to enable more listening and enabling.

We do have a database of around 150 people that has been built up over the pandemic, but this includes families from other parts of the city. Our normal level of contacts would be between 80 – 100 people with around half of them having issues around addiction. Having said that, we have not retained any information on people until the pandemic where we have started to obtain data protection permissions to hold information online.

**Background**

Some of our participants remain homeless as at present for complex reasons. We try to maintain contact and help them work through their steps towards accommodation – so the priority can be accommodation. Other issues for those with substance use and homelessness are: -

1. Improving or helping them move accommodation as they may be in a place where they are subject to drug dealing.
2. Presently, there is a real need to help address isolation and loneliness that exacerbates addictions. We do suggest that people visit for company, not just food and we do help people think through how they might create a simple structure in their life even at this time.
3. Lack of money, especially for energy costs is a big issue and we do assist with cash at times. There is no doubt that this has been abused, but in most cases, this works as a short-term support. We do provide guidance to submit fit notes for UC and to apply for PIP. In this regard we are very ably supported by the Keep Well team.
4. Court attendance and completion of community service are other issues for people, and we have very recently helped someone complete their community service hours satisfactorily.

Issues are identified as we listen and may not be identified initially. We are unable to provide assessments, so the approach is to get to know people and then build up information on issues, unless of course an issue or issues arises from the outset.

We work with the Cairn Centre outreach team who come along every Wednesday. We have also begun improved liaison with the ISMS team. More specifically for ourselves the Keep Well team have become an integral part of what we do, and this scoping exercise has been discussed with the relevant worker and team leader.

**Assessment**

Our aim has always been to establish relationships of mutual trust. This does mean that we do not judge, and we look for the good in everyone and hope that they can see the good in us. During this pandemic it has become clear to us that relationships have been deepening in many instances. This has been because we have shared the pandemic throughout together, we have visited with food, we have listened, chatted and in many cases met up on a 1:1 basis as restrictions were lifted. We have also maintained phone contact in many, many cases.

The has meant increased demands on our time. One positive is that my other post as Locum in the church has finished successfully so that I have more time. Claire of Just Bee Productions with whom we work very closely has also being giving extra time. Presently, this is only part funded by reserves and therefore is not sustainable.

So, one barrier to change is the need for sustainable funding to develop the 1:1 support. Other barriers are: -

1. We need to improve our record keeping beyond data protection forms and our online records. We have at times used outcome stars, but they are cumbersome, so another tool is necessary to assist people in establishing priorities and helping people to move forward.
2. We also need to improve how we access other services. We do call upon Welfare Rights, Brian Shaw (homelessness), Alessandro (ISMS) and Sonja (Keep Well). But we need to improve our ability to refer on and complement existing services.

Our approach to addressing these barriers are as follows: -

1. Obtain sustainable funding, which we are exploring.
2. In addition, we will work with and learn from the Keep Well team in relation to improving how we refer people onwards, how we complete forms and record people’s progress.
3. Obviously, Keep Well are key to this development, but we will require closer working with ISMS and Brian Shaw (homelessness).

All our participants have lived experience. Presently, a student on placement is carrying out research into isolation and loneliness. This is one way of listening, but basically our whole approach is to listen and enable. Some of the participants have delivered a drama production co-ordinated by Claire Bee – the Mental Musical and in normal times the creative element assists people to express their stories as well as provide a focus for leaving these stories behind. Claire is initiating small women’s groups around creativity in our café at present.

The change to be achieved is to develop this additional 1:1 support effectively and achieve proper recording and reporting. The aim is that more people can be more effectively supported in their recovery from substance use and to move on from homelessness.

**Recommendations**

Change to be delivered by developing the 1:1 support for those with substance use and homelessness, though our 1:1 support will include others. This includes time spent at the drop ins and follow ups.

Records of those supported will be created and used for reporting as well as the feedback and stories of participants.

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