Northampton: Headway East Northants Case Example 2

Training Carers and Volunteer mentors

Headway East Northants is a small provider supporting people with mild to severe brain injuries. They support around 29 people over a four-day week, from 10am to 4pm. Headway pride themselves on delivering person-centred support in whatever they do. *Working together for change* enabled them to further improve the way they organise their support and gave them a method for understanding what support people most wanted and how people wanted to be supported.

In this case study, we see how Headway East Northants achieved their goal of training carers and volunteer mentors to accommodate a more flexible support, giving the people who need support more control.

"When we looked at what people were saying in their reviews we found that people wanted more control over how, where and when they were supported."

People were saying

"I want people to understand me and I want support that is about me".

To tackle the issue of understanding people, we worked together with the people we support, as well as other providers and local commissioners to agree how we could best ensure people could get supported in the best way for them as individuals. We agreed to develop a brain injury and person-centred training package and to deliver the training to volunteers and carers as well as to our
staff. We developed a social support group to encourage peer support for families, carers and brain injury survivors. We also developed communication companions tailored to the needs of our people with verbal communication issues so that they could communicate more effectively and be understood by others.

Headway spent time involving the people who use their services in the design, approach and content, by incorporating stories to illustrate how people wanted to be supported, and finding out what was important to them.

We asked people when training would suit them and ran courses for carers and volunteer mentors at times when they told us would work best at the weekends as well as during the week.

We supported one person to develop skills so that they could co-deliver the training and worked out the support they needed to take part with them.

We got support from our local politicians, council staff, carers, and our members to run a family support day in the autumn and used this as a springboard to publicise the new training as well as raise awareness of the services available to families and carers.
About us

Headway East Northants provides for the needs of mild to severe brain injured adults through therapeutic-based activity services and support. This is in the form of both fee-based and non-fee based services from a centre in Irthlingborough.

Our aim is to be a dynamic and flexible service which provides activities, support and information and promotes education around Brain Injury in our community. Our values all stem from the need to provide a responsive service to those who have survived an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI), their families, carers and professionals.

The Centre provides a range of services to people with brain injury and their families and carers, including:

- assistance to regain lost skills and learn new ones in a supportive environment by providing structured activities such as arts, crafts, computer and life skills.
- a safe environment which gives an opportunity to gain support from others and develop coping strategies.
- services to address emotional and social needs.
- day respite for carers and families.
- facilitates access to activities and services within own communities.
- services to enable people to live independently.
- activities to improve cognitive and memory skills that encourage social inclusion.
- preparation for people returning to work, education or volunteering
- awareness raising of brain injury and its consequences within Northamptonshire.

Website:
http://www.headwayeastnorthants.org.uk/

Headway East Northants
What people told us

We used the Working together for change process to work in partnership with:

- people we support
- local commissioners
- other local providers

to look at information from people's reviews to see what it told us about our service to enable us to ensure we could develop our service in a way that was sensitive to people's needs and life aspirations.

We worked together looking at people's reviews to cluster the information into themes and to make the themes into 'I' statements. People told us:

"I want support that's about me" and

"I want more specialist support"

People told us they wanted a consistently individual approach that really understood their needs as an individual.
What we did

We spent time involving people using our services in designing the approach and the content and we incorporated stories to illustrate how people wanted to be supported in different ways according to what was important to them.

We asked people when training, what would suit them and ran courses for carers and volunteer mentors at times when they told us would work best at the weekends as well as during the week. We supported one of our members to develop skills so that they could co-deliver the training and worked out the support they needed to take part with them. This person went on to produce a short DVD of their experiences as a brain injury survivor. We got support from our local politicians, council staff, carers, and our community to run a family support day in the autumn and used this as a springboard to publicise the new training.

Feedback on the day included:

"I liked being able to take my time and speak to all of the staff on the stands. I liked the fact that there were people with an ABI jointly involved in running the event."

"Great turn out of service providers so a great networking opportunity and knowledge gathering."

"It was really helpful to find out more about the support available for our family in a relaxed way."

We ran our first session for carers on 19 November 2010 and since then we have trained carers and volunteer mentors and had great feedback from both groups.
Outcomes

Headway East Northants is continuing to offer training with support from Headway UK. We have signed the national Skills Pledge to carers and volunteers and are committed to improving the support people receive. We also were awarded the *Positive About Disabled People* award due to our efforts to provide a more accessible and inclusive service.

From this project we have achieved the following outcomes so far:

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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Measure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Raise profile of carers and head injuries.</td>
<td>Ran a drop-in family and support day, launched by the local lead member.</td>
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<td>Social support group for families, carers and brain injury survivors set up to provide a supportive environment to socialise together. The first session was held in January 2011 and was a great success. It is a user-led group and hopes to meet regularly in future.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Training package put together.</td>
<td>First Carer training delivered on 19 November 2010.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Training is accessible.</td>
<td>10 people coming to each of two planned days. One session on weekends.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Sustainability.</td>
<td>Further training sessions available subject to support from Headway UK.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Training pack is condensed version of pack put together for volunteer mentors - includes techniques for dealing with memory.</td>
<td>Training pack has feedback from volunteer mentors and is reviewed from this. DVD of presentation produced by a member to increase awareness and put a human face on brain injury.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Organisation committed.</td>
<td>Headway has signed 'Skills pledge' and been awarded the Positive About Disabled People Award. Communication companions produced and tailored to the service to support our people to communicate effectively and be understood by others. Person-centred approach used to gather service user and stakeholder feedback on the service.</td>
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