Options for supported living (OSL): inclusion coordinator role

Innovative practice around Personalisation

Merseyside: Options - for supported living

Project: Inclusion role - relationship building

Options is a small local provider supporting people with disabilities to live full and varied lives across Merseyside. They particularly focus on supporting those described as 'difficult' to support.

The people Options support have a group called Voices R Us which provides a collective voice enabling them to put forward ideas on how they wish to live their lives. The main areas the group asked to focus on were employment, relationships and community involvement, they wanted more opportunity to get out and about and do things.

Options employed two Inclusion Co-ordinators initially to enable people to build on their relationships. The Inclusion budget is £15,000 yearly although Options has a separate culture budget.

The inclusion co-ordinator attended the family's development plan day to listen to the views about inclusion and to develop this into the future inclusion plan. Families felt there was a lack of opportunity when growing up, people getting separated when they leave school or day centres and not being able to keep in touch. They felt that they may miss golden opportunities to develop meaningful relationships. Their social time may
become very structured around routine events, staffing schedules and supporting people to build relationships is not a primary focus of many support providers.

The feedback from the people Options support was they:

"*didn't have the chance to learn social skills or relationships naturally.*"

"*they are often viewed as receivers of care.*"

"*people expressed fear of the unknown.*"

"*people had very low expectations of what they might achieve in life.*"

The co-ordinator met people individually and would then research possible inclusion opportunities. This feedback would be relayed at the monthly team meetings.

Events partly or fully paid by Options were organised to focus on who had not been included in any event before and for people to try something new. Particular attention was paid to those people who had not attended any events.

- Christmas pantomime - Aladdin and Puss in Boots.
- Chill Factor - dry ice skiing and tubing.
- London sightseeing trip.
- Pottery Barn.
- Curry night - meals out in Sefton, Wirral and Liverpool.
- Snowdon weekend trip.
- Canoeing day trip.
- Paradigm Conference in Manchester.
- Inclusion Conference in Essex.
- York day trip.
- 50’s Museum.

Each co-coordinator picked three people each to work with, one being outreach and two supported living. An inclusion circle of support was produced and this was reviewed a year later to see the
impact of inclusion.

Options also produced a training session for support staff to discuss how they react to change and any preconceived ideas they may have about the person they support and their ability to live a full and independent life.

Successful outcomes:

An Inclusion report was produced and identified that people’s lives had improved and people had more friendships or relationships. People had more opportunities to try new activities or events organised throughout the year and the ideas were collated from the people we support.

Highly skilled teams were able to make real inroads into supporting people to get jobs, develop friendships and relationships and to contribute to their local communities.

- One person with autism has dreamt of working on the Mersey Ferries for years, and he has now been working there for two months. His family and support team are delighted with the reaction of his fellow workmates and how his confidence has grown.
- Another person has a job of delivering newspapers has grown in independence. A customer has sent a thank you letter crediting their hard work and dedication during the bad weather.
- A man who has an allotment has grown it over the last year so that he now has started delivering groceries to his neighbours. As a result his allotment has many social gatherings for other allotment users, and friends.
- One social worker was impressed by how a person grew in confidence whilst doing their volunteer job and this has lead to a reduction in their support.
- A health clinician remarked how a person we support has been able to integrate into his new community by doing his own shopping
as a result of the community mapping service, which is new to Options.

Relationships come and go but the people we support have had more opportunities to develop them. People are actively involved in their communities.

Visit our website at www.options-empowers.org or contact Richard Williams at rwilliams@optionsforsupportedliving.org.