Northamptonshire: Headway East Northants

Example 1

A social life, 'out-of-hours' activities

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 Headway to further improve support for their community, and develop another method for understanding what people wanted most.

This case study shows how Headway East Northants managed to develop a successful social life for their community by offering activities outside of their normal working hours.

The service managers at Headway looked at what people were saying in their reviews and it was clear that they needed to broaden their support. People wanted more than the daytime services that were set up - they wanted more social activities in the community. Using the feedback, they worked with people to find ways of ensuring they could accommodate this safely with the limited resources available.

"We set up an 'activities board' in the centre where people could post their ideas for activities they wanted to do and see which were the most popular. People could then put their names against the ideas they'd like to join in with. If enough people wanted to do a particular activity like bowling, for instance, we would then support them to coordinate
the travel and practical elements to make it happen."

"We supported people to adapt our existing lone worker safety guide and re-write it into a Personal Safety guide, which anyone could use. We also supported them to produce a reminder sheet of the different elements they would need to remember, for example how to get to and from an activity and how much it would cost."

To ensure Headway could support people properly, they recruited and trained volunteer mentors from the local community to work alongside staff so that they could offer activities people wanted at the times which suited them. They offered tailor-made training programmes to provide the mentors with an understanding of brain injury and the issues survivors encounter. By October, Headway had seven trained mentors actively taking part and another five waiting to take part in the next training session.

"We started modestly, offering activities once a month, but the feedback and the interest was so positive that we quickly moved to offering activities weekly. Our community became very enthusiastic about ideas for trips during centre hours."
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.

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What people told us

We used the *Working together for change* process to work in partnership with the people we support, and with local commissioners and other local providers to look at information from people’s reviews to see what it told us about our service. It enabled us to 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 a social life and friends.*"

We discussed together why this was such a strong theme for people and agreed that one of the key factors was that the services supporting people, including ours, were geared towards supporting people from a base and doing so during office hours. People wanted a social life outside of this, to help make it happen and maintain it.

Next, we worked together to look at what we could do to improve things. People agreed that the most helpful action would be to find ways of researching and identifying the types of activities that people needing support would like to attend outside of normal working hours of centre. Increase people's knowledge of local resources and range of activities locally to them.
What we did

The services manager Sara Stewart and the Opportunities Coordinator Katy Sellick-Taylor took the lead in driving this project forward.

We used person-centred feedback sessions to gather information on the types of activities people wanted.

As our resources were limited, we knew we needed to recruit volunteers to ensure we could provide support for people at the times they wanted it. We coordinated the work with our newly started Volunteer Mentor programme. By October, we had twelve people on our books; seven of them ready to be matched with brain injury survivor.

To support people to choose activities on an ongoing basis, we started an activities board in the centre - a dedicated space where people could post ideas for activities and see which ideas were popular with other members. When there was enough interest, we would arrange the transport and support for people at the lowest possible cost. We encouraged people to be proactive and take control of arranging activities. We supported them to join their local community car scheme and provided information about accessible taxi services. We also put up posters and leaflets of upcoming events to encourage people to take part in new activities.

To tackle health and safety concerns from members and carers in a person-centred way, we worked with the people we support to develop and write their own personal safety guide copies. These were posted on the activities board and available to all members. It was important that our people were supported to stay safe when out in the community.
Outcomes

Headway East Northants is dedicated to providing person-centred support and to ensuring the services we provide match what people are asking for. *Working together for change* helped us do this and to deliver a number of positive outcomes for people.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Measure</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Social life outside Headway.</td>
<td>Ideas placed on the out-and-about board at the centre were used. Trips out have now grown from once-a-month to once-a-week. Support is provided from a mix of volunteer mentors and staff. 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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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Co-produced approach to safety.</td>
<td>Personal safety guide put together by the people we support, adapted from lone worker safety guide.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Support for people to get out more.</td>
<td>7 Volunteer mentors recruited and five awaiting training (many are Occupational Therapist students).</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Person-centred culture developed.</td>
<td>Information from reviews captured and publicly displayed for people and visitors to see.</td>
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