

BHFNC 8th Annual Conference **Mental ill health workshop**

Case study Summaries

Case Study 1: Coping through Football **Mr Alex Welsh, London Playing Fields Foundation**

Coping through football is funded by the London Playing Fields Foundation, The Football Foundation and the NHS. Patients experiencing mental ill health are referred to the project where they can take part in twice weekly football practice sessions, 2 hours per session. Social activities are also part of the programme; a group visit to a Leyton Orient FC home game is organised every month. Coping through Football aims to increase the physical activity levels of the client group, raise their self esteem and confidence, and help them to re-engage with society in a meaningful way.

At present, 100 service users have engaged with the project, and the results are encouraging: 3 have returned to full time employment, 4 have returned to academic studies, 8 are now playing in mainstream football leagues, 5 have completed an FA coaching certificate and 12 now have voluntary roles within the community.

Alex believes there are many factors which make the project a success; the importance of a suitably qualified activity coach being one of them. As well as being experienced FA coaches, the coaches also undertook bespoke mental health awareness training to improve their understanding of mental health conditions and to help them work more effectively with people experiencing mental ill health. Consistency was also identified as important when working with this target group, particularly in terms of coach, venue and time. Timing of football practice sessions is key in itself, as the client group often demonstrate irregular sleeping patterns and may not turn up for sessions if they are scheduled in the mornings. Consultation with the clients also proved to be successful, one of the participants of 'Coping through Football' designed the project's logo. Finally, it was emphasised that the staff involved with the project need to be persistent, proactive and positive. Often the participants take two steps forward and three steps back, making persistence and positivity among coaches and staff key.

Next steps for 'Coping through Football' include having the project commissioned within Waltham Forest and the production of a toolkit and training package. To increase the likelihood of the project being commissioned within Waltham Forest PCT, 'Coping Through Football' used a bespoke computer package to collect data, along with an economic cost-benefit analysis and evaluation of project outcomes.

Case study 2: 'Community based physical activity groups for mental health'

Dr Naomi Ellis, Staffordshire University

'Community based physical activity groups for mental health' consists of two projects, one which offers early intervention for psychosis and one for general mental health problems. Clients can either attend a sports group or a walking group. The physical activity groups aim to help reduce some of the barriers to physical activity and provide this 'hard to reach' population group with an opportunity to participate. The project for those experiencing early onset psychosis engaged service users aged 14-35 years in Badminton, basketball & indoor football. The sessions were weekly, lasted for 2 hours and were free to attend. The second project for those experiencing general mental health problems engaged a range of service users from early 20's to late 60's in a walking group and badminton & short tennis sessions.

Dr Naomi Ellis was mainly involved with the evaluation of the project, which involved interviews with the service users, carers and mental health professionals involved in the delivery of physical activity groups. Benefits to service users included health benefits (both physical and psychological), and social benefits. An unexpected health benefit was that service users reported a reduction in hallucinations after engaging with the project. The evaluation found that one of the key factors to this project's success was that the mental health professionals maintained contact with the service users through the physical activity sessions, even if service users were not attending other elements of their therapy, such as cognitive behavioural therapy. The physical activity sessions also gave the mental health professionals and their clients shared experiences and something to trigger conversation during therapy.