

Oasis Community Centre Group

Group Evaluation Summer 2014

Background

The group is facilitated by CP Learning Trust's Development Worker. The group has been running weekly meetings for the past year in well equipped facilities in the Oasis Community Centre in Wisbech.



Group Evaluation

The evaluation report has been arranged to reflect the evidence in line with the four project outcomes of CP Learning Trust's "Learning for Wellbeing" project.

Outcome One (*beneficiaries have improved confidence, aspiration and self-esteem and are more optimistic about their future*).

Members were comfortable enough to provide their feedback comments via a 'round the table' question and answer basis. The friendship amongst members is very noticeable, the support and encouragement for each other is a key

feature of this close knit group. Although numbers attending have been as high as 10, especially in the early days, the group has settled down with a regular compliment of 6 to 8. This number was suggested as a preferred size by those present as it is ideal for effective interaction in a share and learn environment.

Outcome Two (*beneficiaries have a greater sense of belonging, are treated fairly and with respect and more support for those where they live*).

Meetings generally last for two and half hours which is then followed by lunch at the Ferry Project. The lunch aspect has been recently introduced by group members themselves and is an illustration of how the group has developed a closeness out of the respect and sense of belonging that they have for one another.

Outcome Three (*beneficiaries have increased basic and life skills and more informed regarding opportunities available to them, socially and economically*).

They highlighted the equal importance to share personal problems as it is to share skills. Individual knowledge and experience especially relating to medical and family issues are easily shared and discussed amongst the group. As a group they take levels of responsibility and loyalty to one another very seriously, very often providing support outside the meeting occasion.

The group have undertaken learn and share craft skills in; candle making, decoupage, watercolour, china painting, crochet, 3D card making.

The group, together with the Oasis Centre, have negotiated with the County Council Public Health Department to fund the cost of the room and thereby the group for a further 12 months after the completion of the Learning for Wellbeing project.

Outcome Four (*beneficiary volunteers are positively engaged in the community, there are more active citizens and an overall improved sense of community*).

An additional interview with the Oasis Centre manager provided an insight into how the group is integrating itself within the community.

The Learning for Wellbeing group is just one of the many groups operating within the centre. Active groups include MS sufferers, Over 55s, Rainbow Savers together with the Learning for Wellbeing craft group. These groups often act as feeders for the numerous ongoing training workshops which are run in the centre thereby enhancing the learning occasion.

Although it happens naturally Oasis staff actively encourage interaction between groups. Members easily turn themselves into vocal advocates carrying the news of achievement, building trust and support for members to try new opportunities. It is apparent that peer support works and a ripple effect is having real benefit for the local community.

Individual comments

Ginette is a regular user of the Oasis centre and also attends the over 55s group meetings. Encouraged by centre staff to try the Learning for Wellbeing group she has found the companionship both rewarding and stimulating.

She looks forward to the meetings especially now that they have been extended to include lunch. As with her fellow members she suffers with severe aches and pains but finds the activity of learning and making things is a real boost to her mental and physical wellbeing.

Karen has both mental health and a degenerative spine disorder and joined the group to help take her mind off of the pain and to meet people. Having moved into the area she was restricted to the confines of her house. Since joining she has made friends who she communicates with all through the week and her new found levels of confidence and self-esteem have helped her to expand her learning horizons.

She is currently enrolled at the Oasis Centre to study a Sage accounting course.

Sandra suffers from MS and as with others she was referred to the group by Oasis staff. In her previous job as a hairdresser Sandra was comfortable when meeting and interacting with people but her illness prevented her from pursuing her career and she became depressed and nervous of mixing with people. By joining the group it has enabled her to gradually forget her worries and learn new craft skills without any pressure and at a pace which she finds comfortable.

Her time in the group has helped her to build her confidence and for the short time whilst she is at the meeting she is able to forget her worries. She readily confirms that this type of learning environment (craft) is ideal for keeping her mind and hands active and it never fails to improve her mood.

Carol suffers from depression and admits to being reliant on a great amount of medication. A friend introduced her to the group and although she was reluctant to leave the familiar and safe confines of her house she has not looked back since joining. She finds the atmosphere to be friendly and not competitive and taking part in the learn and share activities has opened her eyes to numerous exiting new things.

She has impressed her family with her painting attempts and is surprised how attending the group has given her confidence to express her right to voice her values and opinions.

Pam is a MS sufferer which has caused her to be confined to her home. Both she and her husband are retired and there was a real chance that she would vegetate and loose all appetite for life. The group is helping to take her mind off of her problems and through the new found skill of watercolour painting is giving her the confidence to try new things.

The encouragement from the group has stimulated her to get her brushes out. She has also recognised that the atmosphere at the Oasis Centre provides the right platform to have a go at anything, it is relaxed and a great way to building your confidence.

