

Isle of Man 3-Year Evaluation

Main Findings

Sept 2004

WHO USES THE SERVICE?

Between January 2000 and August 2004, 129 individuals used the Home Support Service. 58 Service Users currently receive the Home Support Service. The typical Home Support Service User was around 50 years of age and female. Many had at least one previous hospital admission (73%), with one in every 2 Users having had an admission during the previous 2 years. Almost 50% of Users experienced Depression and/or Anxiety symptoms.

SOCIAL & BEHAVIOURAL FUNCTIONING

The impact of the service on Service Users was examined using the Life Skills Profile¹ and by obtaining ratings in other aspects of functioning and quality of life. Ratings for 18 Service Users were collected over 4 time-points (on entry to the service, and after 12, 24 and 36 months).

Overall, the greatest improvements in Service User functioning can be observed during the *first 12 months*:

- Significantly less **reckless/offensive** behaviour
- Significantly greater **compliance** with treatment
- Significant improvements in **personal appearance**
- Significantly improved **interpersonal skills**
- Significantly increased **confidence & self-esteem**
- Increased **assertiveness**
- Increased **interactions with staff**

Ratings of Service User **quality of life** also increased significantly over the first 24 months of the service. Although, a few small dips in ratings were observed in reckless/offensive behaviour, compliance and self-esteem over the next 24 months, these dips were marginal and failed to reach statistical significance. Functioning in all these areas remained higher at 36 months than on entry. Ratings of User **communication** decreased slightly between entry to the service and 12 months, rose again at 24 months, and generally stabilised at 36 months.

Overall, ratings on **social contact** (interpersonal contact; social activities) only marginally increased over the 36 months. Closer examination revealed 2 distinct groups:

- 11 Users, whose social contact significantly *increased*
- 7 Users, whose social contact significantly *decreased*

VIEWS ON THE SERVICE

Both Care Coordinators and Service Users were asked to provide their views on the Home Support Service. A number of **positive aspects** were identified, including:

- The Action Plan and Review Process were commended as inclusive and beneficial
- Working relationships between Praxis staff and Care Coordinators were valued and communication was good
- Care Coordinators were generally very satisfied with the support provided to their clients, indicating increases in User confidence, reduced hospital admissions, fewer fluctuations in mood and reduced anxiety
- Coordinators also reported that their clients were engaging in a greater number of social activities, were less socially isolated and had improved social skills
- Service Users identified a number of positive changes in themselves, including feeling better, feeling happier, getting out and about more, and having greater confidence
- Users reported very positive relationships with their Home Support Workers, with many referring to their Support Workers as a friend, a confidant, and someone they can turn to for support

A number of **recommendations** for improving the service were also proposed, including:

- More training for Home Support Workers
- Increasing the staff team, including more male workers
- Improving communication during office hours
- Greater contact with management
- Increasing social activities and more practical support
- Provision of an 'out of hours' service and longer visits
- A more assertive approach with some Users
- Maintaining contact with hospitalised Users

IN SUMMARY ...

Many areas of Service Users' functioning and quality of life improved significantly during their first 12 months receiving the service. This level of functioning was generally maintained over the following 24 months. However, ratings on Service User social contact and communication increased only marginally over the 36 months, despite Service Users and Care Coordinators emphasising the value of the service in improving social skills and reducing social isolation. The reasons for these ratings require further exploration.

The evaluation has identified many positive aspects of the Home Support Service and has encapsulated the important role the service plays in the lives of those who use it. The ethos of the service is epitomised in the words of one user: **'It has broadened my horizon & seeing life is for living & having fun ... It has helped me to learn to enjoy life'**

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¹ Rosen et al (1989). The Life Skills Profile: A measure assessing function & disability in Schizophrenia. *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, 15(2), 325-337