

Mental Health Training for Physical Health Practitioners

Contact: Sheila.Hardy@nhft.nhs.uk

Background to the Project:

The majority of mental health problems in England are dealt with in primary care but most of the healthcare workers in primary care have little knowledge of mental health, because of this there has been a need to develop an accessible education programme which is appropriate to the learning needs of this workforce.

Mental health nurses can deliver training courses (developed by an expert) in mental health and well-being to practice nurses. This increases the knowledge of both parties and promotes joint working. Utilising mental health nurses as trainers improves both their clinical practice and that of the practice nurses they have taught. The time mental health nurses need to spend away from practice to carry out the education courses is minimal and therefore has little impact on their usual workload.

Case for Change:

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends all countries to integrate specialised health services, such as mental health services into primary care to reduce stigma and improve access.

In England 90% of people are treated for their mental illness in primary care but most of the healthcare workers in primary care have little knowledge of mental health.

A study of practice nurses in the UK through a grant from Charlie Waller Memorial Trust (TED Fort) found that:

- 81% have responsibilities for aspects of mental health and wellbeing where they have not had training
- 42% have had no training in mental health and wellbeing at all
- 98% identified at least one area of mental health and wellbeing training that they would like to attend
- A third would struggle to attend a course because gaining agreement from employers is difficult
- Face to face training in a classroom environment is preferred to training in the workplace
- E-learning is preferred as part of a package of learning including face to face rather than in isolation

Building mental health capability in primary care has the potential to reduce the number of inappropriate referrals and admissions to inpatient services.

The Solution:

An accessible and sustainable education programme that is appropriate to the learning needs of the practice nurse workforce was developed.

The objectives:

- To develop appropriate training materials
- To train educators to deliver the training
- To provide suitable support to the educators to sustain the training beyond the project
- To train practice nurses in the catchment area in mental health awareness
- To provide practice nurses with the option of further training in mental health and well-being
- To develop a toolkit for organizations who would like to replicate the project in a different geographical area

The method: Train the trainer

- Developing materials: The course content was structured to meet the development needs of the practice nurses, these were identified from the study previously conducted.
- Training educators: Mental health nurses were able to acquire different levels of training and action learning sets were established to provide peer support.
- Educating practice nurses: There was a choice of times and training sessions were delivered by mental health nurses on-site in mental health trusts to attract practice nurses working in those areas and to support local connectivity.

In addition to the education programme, a community of learning is being created by setting up learning events and creating online forums.

Impact:

The nurses trained found that the structure of the project and the model of training delivery was beneficial to them, the areas specifically mentioned were networking, professional recognition, an appreciation of each other's workload and skills, improved listening and teaching skills, gaining new ideas and looking after their own health better (after doing the well-being module). The nurse educators were very keen to continue in this role and outlined what support would be needed in order for them to continue.

The **Train the Trainer** programme is now available through the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust. Those interested in further details should contact **Sheila Hardy** via Sheila.Hardy@nhft.nhs.uk

Three months after the project finished, nurses were asked to complete a short online survey, it found that:

65% are applying the learning to their usual practice and four explained how their practice improved

Five provided a patient case study to illustrate how the training had benefited their patients

12% now contact mental health nurses with queries or concern

One nurse has regular face-to-face meetings with a mental health nurse