

# 1

## INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT/PROCESS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE COLLEGE YEAR.

*Prepare and deliver a short introduction to the project/process during the teachers/educators' first Staff Meeting at the beginning of the College Year.*

The project/process is presented to the Educators in the following terms:

- This project is based on the experience of the Mental Health in Education Project developed in Liberties College (CDVEC), Dublin, during the College Year 2004-2005.
- It is being undertaken as a project that can contribute to Staff professional development as well as to improving Student Support.
- Besides raising awareness about mental health, elements of the project will contribute directly to meeting requirements of the FETAC Quality Assurance scheme in relation to student access and equality issues.
- When we talk about Mental Health, we are talking about “being well in oneself”. A student who is well in himself or herself will have optimum chance of doing well in the course of their time in College.
- A student who is becoming unwell has diminished chances of success and is in need of timely help. If the student is fortunate, they will encounter someone who will have a word and an attitude that is affirming for them and who can point them or lead them to sources and resources that will open possibilities of recovery.
- In the College scene there is every chance that the person who becomes aware of the student's need, or to whom the student turns in that need, is a lecturer or tutor or one of the non-academic staff in the College. The aim of the project is facilitate that the outcome of such a vital moment would be a positive and rewarding one for staff member and student alike.
- The other strand of the project is to lower barriers for people with self-experience of mental illness who are in recovery. “Recovery” means that they are taking responsibility for their situation and that may mean that they come to an acceptance that they will remain affected to a greater or lesser extent by what they have been through. Some people in recovery will be accessing further education in mainstream and the project aims to see what supports they need from within and without a College like this.
- The project is not driven by any ideology except the conviction that people have needs to be met and that there is development that can be achieved with multiple goods coming with it.
- The first hub of the project is to be a Workshop on Mental Health in Education that will take place on your next training Day .
- The content and structure of the Workshop has been outlined in terms of research into what is best practice in other institutes, but it is still wide open for change and adaptation.
- It is proposed to hold focus group meetings with the teachers and other staff, first by Departments organised by the Department Heads, and then with any further particular groups that may emerge from those meetings. The aim of these meetings is to find out what particular concerns, interests and experiences you have had in the area of student mental health that may help shape the form and content of the workshop.

# 1

## EDUCATOR FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

### Purposes of the meetings

- 1) To offer each teacher in the College the opportunity of a first hand interaction and relationship with the Project in its initial stages.
- 2) To enquire into Educators' own assessment of their needs for professional development in the area of mental health promotion.
- 3) To collect Educator's expectations and suggestions about the information content of the Training Day.
- 4) To collect Educators expectations and suggestions about the organisational shape of the Training Day.
- 5) To collect Educator's expectations and suggestions about the experiential content of the Training Day.
- 6) To enquire about the extent of teacher's previous experience of dealing with students becoming mentally unwell or with students in recovery.
- 7) To discover among the Educators at each Department Meeting a smaller group of the more interested who could form an interdepartmental focus group.

### Facilitation Questions

1. What are you expecting of this project from what you know of it so far?
2. What, in your opinion, could result in the Training Day being a wasted opportunity?
3. What would make the Training Day something really supportive for you as a teacher?
4. What particularly would you like to become informed about in relation to student mental health on the Training Day?
5. Are there any particular supports that you would like to have available during the Training Day?

# 1

## FOCUS GROUP MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

**Time:** of choice

**Location:** of choice

**Duration:** 40 minutes

**Structure of the meeting:**

The Department Head will chair the meeting.

The Facilitator will introduce the purposes of the meeting and invite discussion on the Questions.

**Recording**

The Facilitator will ask permission of the Meeting to record the discussion on tape solely for the purposes of reviewing and extracting full content of the contributions later. The tape will be erased as soon as the content of contributions is transferred to soft or hard copy

Anyone may signal at any time that they wish the recorder to be turned off before they begin to make a contribution. In the latter case the Facilitator will depend only on notes and memory.

**Synthesis**

The Facilitator will synthesise the content and information from the Focus Group in a standard format that will allow collating of the material generated in the various Focus Groups.