

SECTION 4:

Resources generated by the Project

- Educator Focus Group Meetings: Facilitation Questions
- Educators' concerns analysed and sorted by cross departmental interest

- Project Suggestion Sheet
- Educators' suggestions analysed and sorted by theme

- Inclusion Policy Workshop Facilitation Questions
- Notes from 5 workshop groups

- Project Steering Group Minutes
 - Minutes of first Steering Group meeting
 - Minutes of second Steering Group meeting
 - Minutes of third and final Steering Group meeting

- Student First Interview Questions
- Student Responses to First Interview

- Student Follow-up Interview Questions
- Student Responses to Follow-up Interview

- Focus Group Meetings at the Basin Club, Blessington Street, Dublin
 - Meeting 1
 - Meeting 2

Educator Focus Group Meetings

The Project Coordinator attended the first Department meeting of the year and was given about 30 minutes of the meetings time. The Facilitation Questions were put out to the meeting and with the permission of those present the ensuing dialogue was audio-taped.

Purpose of the meetings

- 1) To offer teachers 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 organizational 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 would make the Training Day dedicated to Mental Health in Education (November 12) good for you?
3. What particularly would you like to become informed out about in relation to student mental health on the Training Day?
4. What, in your opinion, could result in the day being a wasted opportunity?
5. Are there any particular supports that you would like to have available during the Training Day?

Educators' Concerns analysed and sorted by cross departmental interest

The transcripts of the Educator focus Group meetings were analysed for Educators expressed concerns and needs. These concerns and needs were then translated into possible learning outcomes as follows

On completion of Training the Educators could

- 1) Have progressed in awareness that a student who is subject to a mental illness is a person with a problem rather than a problem person
- 2) Have become familiar with current concepts in mental health rehabilitation, especially the notion of "recovery".
- 3) Have a deeper understanding of effect on a Group (e.g., a Class for whom they have some responsibility) of a member of the Group entering into a mental health crisis without adequate supports
- 4) Be enabled to debrief a class or group after such a crisis
- 5) Be aware of Educator's formal responsibilities in relation to a person in a crisis related to mental illness
- 6) Be aware of the personal options open to an Educator in a mental health crisis situation and the boundaries that should be observed
- 7) Be knowledgeable about the mental health issues of students in the age range 15 –30 years
- 8) Be familiar with how to proceed in the event of a student mental health crisis taking place outside the confines of the College
- 9) Be familiar with how to proceed in the event of a student mental health crisis taking place within the confines of the College
- 10) Be familiar with how to proceed as College Educators in case of a referral to Crisis Agencies outside the College.
- 11) Be familiar with current College Policy on Crisis Situations
- 12) Have the opportunity to suggest development of College Policy on Crisis Situations
- 13) Have perused a glossary of mental health related terminology
- 14) Have perused a list of contact information about principal resources outside of College that may be accessed Educators in College crisis situations
- 15) Be appraised of the latest developments in approaches to mental health, its maintenance and recovery
- 16) Be better able to distinguish ordinary "unacceptable behaviour" from "behaviour arising out of a mental illness issue"
- 17) Be better positioned to make a sound judgement call whether to refer a student for professional assessment.
- 18) Have an understanding of what college life looks like for a student with a mental health issue from an actual student's experience
- 19) Know how to address an individual student about his mental state
- 20) Know possible ways to suggest that an individual student may be in need of help
- 21) Be familiar with common guidelines for early recognition of mental illness symptoms in an individual within a class or group.
- 22) Be familiar with possible side effects of the principal therapeutic drugs used in treatment of mental illness

- 23) Be aware how side effects may affect student performance individually and in a class setting
- 24) Be aware of ways to support a student with mental health difficulties in a class setting
- 25) Be better able to distinguish between what can be done to give support in the class context what would need attention by a referral.
- 26) Be able to share with other Educators their perceptions of Educator's difficulties in the area of student mental health
- 27) Be appraised of successful outcomes in other institutions in relation to student mental health issues
- 28) Be familiar with guidelines on how to engage in a conversation with a student who raises the fact that they have a mental health disability
- 29) Be familiar with guidelines on how to engage in conversation with a student who refuses to acknowledge any problem
- 30) Be familiar with guidelines on how to engage in a conversation with a friend or group or students who express concern over the mental state of a fellow student
- 31) Be aware of how the training implements CDVEC guidelines in relation to Teacher Student Relationships
- 32) Be aware of how the training meets relevant FETAC Quality Assurance Descriptors.
- 33) Have a personal collection of documentation that will support and prolong the training process

Most frequently expressed concerns and needs across Departments

The list above was then scored across departments and the six most frequently expressed concerns and needs emerged as follows:

6) Be aware of the personal options open to an Educator in a mental health crisis situation and the boundaries that should be observed (confidentiality and transfer of information)
17) Be better positioned to make a sound judgement call whether to refer a student for professional assessment.
5) Be aware of Educator's formal responsibilities in relation to a person in a crisis related to mental illness
9) Be familiar with how to proceed in the event of a student mental health crisis taking place within the confines of the College
15) Be appraised of the latest developments in approaches to mental health, its maintenance and recovery
16) Be better able to distinguish ordinary "unacceptable behaviour" from "behaviour arising out of a mental illness issue"

Project Development Suggestions

Suggestion Sheet Training Day 1

The following occurs to me in regard to the direction and development of the Mental Health in Education Project:
1
2
3

Signed:

Date:

Project Development Suggestions from Training Day 1

The Educators were generous in their furnishing of suggestions for the direction of the project.

The suggestions were taken, studied and grouped according to theme. Here are the suggestions that emerged from the Training Day.

General

Education generally, in my opinion, is becoming more accessible (e.g. Life long learning approach) and inclusive, so those at the "margins" should be able to fully avail of these opportunities.

An opportunity to change the way they (Opinions formers) (teachers) think about mental illness (when they do think about it!).

Increasing awareness of mental health as an 'illness', i.e., 'remove' current misconceptions about mental illnesses; eliminating 'mental' - these are illnesses (just).

Raising Awareness. This was a first step for the College. Some issues that emerged were obvious to us beforehand, others we may not have thought about. The feedback today should form the basis for improvements that can come about for the benefit of these students (and all students)

I think there is enormous denial and prejudice about the issue of mental health - I hope this can be overcome.

Firstly, talking to teachers at ground level a good thing. For a start it makes us feel listened to. It also is a place for us to make points about our own experience on these issues.

The fact that as a society we are more aware of these developing health issues, I believe that all Educational institutions should have a support base structure in place to help not only to deal with the educational development of the student but the future support and reactions of tutors to deal with these issues.

The Vocational element of Post Leaving Cert courses may be a more productive way of ensuring that adults recovering from mental illness can achieve their goals better: compare this with other third level courses: a step up approach - (Good support systems will have to be in place)

Colleges

Request mission statements regarding these issues from colleges around Ireland.

Mental Health issues should be 'normalised' in a school community. The entire community should 'own' the 'problem'. If it is kept a 'secret' adaptation will not become normal to the student body or to the community.

Sometimes people's problems become boring - both for the teller - having to explain all this again, and in an 'normalised' school where mental health issues become routine. A FAQ pack could be available to the recovering person to hand out so any issues are dispensed with in a matter of fact way.

Educators

The focus is on the mental health issues of students - what about teachers?? Becoming more aware of ourselves in this respect might lead to greater empathy on our side.

A college where everyone, staff and students, whatever their difficulties / illnesses enjoys adequate supports should be the goal. By meeting all our various needs the specific problem of mental illness will be addressed and helped too.

Information to Staff is vital. Today was beneficial in that it informed us further about certain issues. Keep information coming.

A general point: As a teacher dealing with students with mental health issues one must not lose sight of your role as an educator and the empowerment offered to students with these difficulties by dealing with the underlying emotion in a practical / academic manner. i.e. the student's desire to learn to fulfil themselves is the primary motivation for their being here and always must be respected.

Teaching

Would be interested in the development of a creative arts curriculum e.g. art therapy in the College.

What extra allowances are made for the student w/a mental illness, and how do other class members receive them?

Staff need much more help with how and when and to whom to respond about student behaviour that impinges on

- 1) teacher's input into delivery to class
- 2) class response / reaction to intrusive or destructive behaviours

These above deal with students we have. Guidance and assistance possibly needs to be put in place by other agencies prior to the individual entering education.

Some participants were pleased to learn that medication does not interfere with study - this impression was certainly given by Tim in his very appropriate and generous sharing. However, he also said

- 1) he is still on medication
- 2) Schizophrenia is only a small part of his needs/life. What about students with mental health problem who may be "living out of " that aspect/need? Medication may be a prison for them.

Updates and information to College on ways to help people with mental disabilities.

Tutors

The role and boundaries of the tutor need to be clearly defined, along with procedure and support systems.

Look at the role of tutor. Can something be done on this? Can tutors have a choice?

More awareness for tutors means that the student with issues can be dealt with in a compassionate manner.

Partnership between persons with mental health issues and teachers/tutors
i.e. relationships of trust, safety, strong level of commitment of tutor to person with MH issues.

Personal tutor training e.g. face to face evaluation of human skills that irritate and console: "Personal Development in day to day interaction situations".

How about further workshops for tutors, providing more specific guidelines for dealing with mental health issues as they arise? I think it is really useful to hear the experience of those who have recovered- this is invaluable.

More clarification in roles within the College may also result. This could be worked on. Training for tutors -> advice on how to encourage a student with such difficulties to go to attend the correct people in College.

Students

More awareness at the beginning of the year of counsellors about students.

The modular system in FE works well for allowing students to access education and gain qualifications over time.

The Student - Tim's contribution suggests that a student may wish to make his own way - but for him his wellness wasn't an issue at first and his problems later on seem more down to bad life choices - i.e. decision to leave was in itself a good decision. His world doesn't have a lot of need for peer supports, guidance, tutors, etc - pursue this somewhat - is Tim typical?

That although pupils are not obliged to reveal any mental problems that they may have it is my belief that they should be encouraged to make this information known in order that staff are in a better position to cater for particular needs and also that staff are in a more informed position should a problem arise. I am aware that the imparting of personal information of this nature is not obligatory and were it so it would infringe on personal rights. But that said I believe that the nature of the teaching profession would be greatly improved in these institutions were teachers privy to relevant information.

The best forms of training and development? This day helped. Listening to Tim helped. But it also raised Q's and issues. One was disclosure, should a student inform us. If we had understanding it could be something that we would inform students about at the onset of training - Establishing our own limits/boundaries and the College's at the same time.

Although it is not imperative that students divulge information about their mental state, it is definitely advisable. By doing this, students may get the understanding and extra attention they need.

If possible teachers should in a formal way be informed about mental health issues that individual students have brought to the attention of College. Perhaps students when they divulge such issues should be asked: Can we inform your teachers?

Disclosure can work for/against student. Should he/she be obliged to disclose personal information only or information relating to extended family? - How far?

A workshop such as this, also for our PLC students. It may enlighten them, and create an understanding of this area of Health.

Workshops for students in relation to mental health. Depression is a big Q. If a workshop could be aimed at general groups on the subject.

Peer education would help the ... and supportive element of developing awareness.

The student may need a structure outside the classroom to deal with minor problems - perhaps a self-help group within the school.

Encouraging individuals with mental health issues to attend the College -
Marketing

The importance of not stigmatising sufferers.

Given the speed of courses/programmes, provision of

1) space in terms of time for reflection

2) space "physical" in that the College is all hard surfaces - no area for students to relax, feel calm (be silent, even!)

The Project

The project will be most productive if it can impact on the college as on institutions - changing / developing services and support to back up staff and students in classroom

As a development suggestion, I feel from what has been discussed and learnt so far that further information and awareness for teachers is the key. Many people are scared of mental illness, fear makes people act inappropriately. So training and education for teachers and students is paramount.

Slow down - more input at the level of Tim's story needed to enhance people's awareness of the issue.

I see it as important for both the College and the development project to learn and listen to each other.

All staff need to be informed of both the direction and development of the project on a regular basis.

Positive Developments with an emphasis on inclusiveness of both

- 1) teaching/tutoring personnel and their input/experience and
- 2) the service users/ students.

If possible include another person who has experienced mental illness personally or with a family member.

I would be concerned that a project like this should have to work within a given timetable (budget). If there is to be a timescale it needs to be 10, 15, 20 years.

Training

The idea that " we are not trained /equipped". What block of training is appropriate to a large group (whole staff) - possibly more equality / quality training (Cillian's point) with some input in mental illness. For such a broad group, this can't be much.

Better education around mental health for all of us - and make it an equality issue would help - teachers and tutors to be fair to student with mental health problems.

New Teachers should be given a thorough orientation on mental health issues in general - and their particular boundaries and responsibilities in the particular context in which they teach.

Need to give staff more insight into responding // identifying students presenting with possible mental health issues

Provide a clear definition(s) of what mental illness is and possible methods of identifying it.

Little or no training for teachers. This is the first attempt to tackle this issue and lay the problems/challenges of mental health before the staff.

Increased amount of workshops in this regard (mental health) will information be available to all schools (1st, 2nd and 3rd level)

Ongoing training and evaluation very important.

Being an advocate for people with MH. Perhaps education for staff on "equality legislation". Development of a "spiritual" dimension / space in the College. Used to be a quiet room, an oratory (non-denominational, of course)

Meaningful training in frontline contact/effective management by tutors of mental health issues.

This is a complex area - symptoms of mental illness can sometimes be difficult to distinguish from poor general behaviour.

The need for a holistic approach need to be emphasised

There seems to be a shrinkage to

Student - tutor -counsellor

Seems a bit narrow.

Aim for something between

Tutoring (for everyone) and Counselling (problems)

e.g. a mentoring structure.

That Teaching Personnel can be appropriately informed of various psychological conditions, experiences and their manifestations and: -

1) Be clear about the boundaries of their role

2) Know the appropriate referral; if required

3) See the student as an individual.

What are appropriate responses re

- class work

- personal concerns / issues

- crisis

*for teacher(s) + tutor

See 3) on Evaluation Sheet: Something around the facility/ies of counselling and guidance in the college(...). Were something built in this would/ might be easier and informative for the larger staff body.

Setting up a team approach to MH with the input of your sp. Guidance

Is there any way to develop some training program (3 day workshop etc) that can be delivered for next year (on voluntary attendance, even) in dealing with students with difficulties in mental health area.

Legal

Definition of teacher/tutor boundaries needs to be clarified. Is there a possibility of a legal issue here?

The possibility of lawsuits against an individual or school should be investigated.

Policy

Lack of policy in relation to Mental Health in the College

Look at College policies. If there isn't one, develop one - but only if it is going to be implemented.

I think this project is vital, there is not thought given /or procedures in operation for dealing with students. The College only deals with the issue when a crisis occurs with a student.

Equality statement from the College re: Equality in Mental Health Education.

Need for overall College Policy which is put into writing for students in general information given - (1) College Prospectus (2) Information Pages in Diary - either or both.

Mental Health should be treated as an equality issue. But the equality should run both ways, classmates who are part of the educational process should have equal opportunity.

Should a student with serious mental health problems be afforded circumstances that will level the playing pitch with all the others? How fair is this to other members?

When mentioning equality I would like to hear illness physical and other considered more together or alongside each other. It feels to me like one is more acceptable than the other.

. Policies and support need to be specific within the college setting.
A whole school policy should be in place so that individual tutors and teachers are aware of how to deal with problems that arise.

Any policy emerging from this workshop needs to have clear step-by-step procedure. The College must not pay lip service to this initiative.

What structures should be in place re:

- referral to services
- accessing services
- within college
- outside college

Referral - there is feedback that people view this as only generally required, governed by loose protocol - do some work on this.

A structured approach + procedure in the college dealing with a person when they show any kind of mental disability - for teachers in general.

(collaboration between these groups)

for Tutor. Confidential file to be kept on what support and help the person gets.

Mental Health in Education Project Liberties College Workshop

August 31 2005

Indicators of inclusiveness

1. Applications to the College from learners with particular needs are welcomed.
2. **A learning environment is fostered in which learners feel they have the opportunity to communicate a particular learning need.**
3. **The support, learning and assessment needs of learners are identified.**
4. **Tutors are informed of specific learner needs e.g. the use of coloured paper for handouts; the use of a tape recorder during class.**
5. Professional development re Inclusive Learning is provided.
6. **The learning needs of individual students are met with reasonable accommodation.**
7. The Examination Secretary is informed of specific assessment needs e.g. a scribe; longer time.
8. Confidentiality and respect are core qualities of practice.
9. Inclusive learning policy and practice continue to be developed and managed.

Workshop Questions

1. **What Objective¹ or Objectives are possible in relation to the above emboldened Indicators during the coming year in the College?**
2. **What would be a key measure or metric of the achievement of the Objective?**
3. **What data, information, etc, would need to be gathered regularly to calculate the key measurement?**
4. **What Initiatives could be taken to support the key measurement?**

¹ Objective: 'A goal intended to be attained (and which is believed to be attainable)'

Workshop on the College Inclusion Policy (Training Day 3)

Notes from Workshop Groups

Group 1

Objectives

- 1) Communication at Induction: Class tutor, Information only
- 2) Plan on how to make learners feel that they can safely express that they need support, that it can be done confidentially.
Support Team
Identification initially in the Tutorial Process.
- 3) Counselling, Career Guidance, Learning Support and VTOS – needs are identified, by these specific people. – Team-approach support.
- 4) Handout is given to each student at induction
- 5) The way people are encouraged to approach their issues around being included.

Measures

1. % of people who look for support and the real figure.
2. Second Level – more support than here in PLC. Access is a problem – to identify, as it takes time.

What would be a Key measure

1. Who do we go to – as it is not a Tutor's role.
2. How do we find out – about their needs.
3. The key person for funding.
4. The key person for counselling.
5. Make up a team of all those professionals involved in supporting students.

Student Support Team

Made up of different members offering Student Support throughout the College.

- 1) Head of Team
- 2) Careers Guidance
- 3) Counsellor Psychological Service
- 4) Learning Support – Educational Support
- 5) Funding, VTOS, financial
- 6) Guidance Counselling (maybe same as 3))

Tutor refers student to Head of Team. They meet with the student and suggest who may give them the most appropriate support.

Group 2

Objectives:-

Q. How do we include/recruit vulnerable students?

A. We don't actively recruit candidates who may be vulnerable, but agencies may be involved.

Induction – opportunities to normalise inclusiveness, inform students of services, etc.

Perhaps student's difficulties can be as much emotional (and not necessarily intellectual/physical) e.g. poor self-esteem = self-defeating attitude.

Confidence Building?

Memory/Retention problems can be a problem.

Points discussed:-

Legal Obligations/Framework:-

Equal Status Act

Reasonable Accommodation

Ethos of College

NB Standards must be maintained within this facilitative environment.

Data/Files Management:-

What is recorded and by whom?

Referrals? – When?

Time for students – maybe not 1st Week

Outcomes of Referrals/Interventions

Sensitivity and facilitation around student's appointments for literacy/counselling issues; i.e. missing or leaving classes.

Tutorials – opportunity to check progress

Student Files? What could be recorded therein? “Dossier” Language sensitivity.

Group 3

As teachers we are not fully confident people with those who have a special need – which may or may not arise at interview.

Perhaps a percentage of places could be allocated to people with special needs.

There should be a recording of cases of non-admittance – the reasons for non-admittance so we can learn from the situation. Data could be taken firstly from the interview.

If people are refused a place at the Liberties they are basically not welcome at the Liberties. This is how it will be perceived.

Because of equality laws teachers have to update skills – a responsibility to do this – to keep up the special needs etc.

All of this structure requires for the teacher, training, support.

All special needs people have a right to apply to a course. So course must have course criteria for entry pertaining to each particular course.

Then students can be informed they did not meet all criteria.

People who disappear from a course may need a platform or forum to say why they left. They need to make themselves heard, so we can understand the reasons.

Group 4

- A. Policy, Procedure, and Practice needs to be Structured. Clearly communicated to all personnel and students.
- B. Definite Procedure, which is followed by all staff, and students, which will ensure Best Practice.
 - Maybe a Diagrammatical Approach.
- C. This Policy and Procedure must be made clear to all Students
 1. During Induction.
 2. At Tutorials.
- D. There needs to be a Team of people in place who will have the responsibility to assess students' needs.
- E. There should be a Phone number made available by the college for students to access these services.
- F. Statistics should be available at the end of each year to measure the number of students who accessed these services, the type of services and issues that presented. This would need to be presented to at a College Forum e.g Staff Meeting.
- G. There should also be an onus on Students to take responsibility for self: Self Referral.
- H. System needs to be put in place now.
 - Team put in place.
 - Allocated Time and Room.

- Resources made available.
There should be a time limit on implementation e.g. within a month from now this system should be in place.

Group 5

Issues raised during brainstorm (or highlighted points)

(Indicator #2)

- Criteria from a College perspective regarding confidential issues.
- What is our responsibility, i.e., respect for students...
- What is the College Policy ... on this.
- Visibility of facilities is good i.e. learning support and counselling service. This is also measurable.

(Indicator #3)

- How is assessment to be interpreted in this case (assessment of learning)
- Assessment of need- disability etc. ... do we have some sort of referral system.
- Self-disclosure helps. Student tells tutor.
- Central support system needs to be established. I.e. support systems liaising with each other and teachers. (visibility).

(Indicator #4)

- College Policy on tape recorder.
- Fairness of system. Teacher held accountable.
- Protection of confidence – negotiation.
- Tape recorders: This reads that it has already been established that recorders are OK!
 - Why can't everyone have one, etc.
 - Teacher is entitled to a copy of tape!
 - How are we protected?

(Indicator #6)

- Work experience issues not covered in this document (all course have work experience). What about accommodations and confidentiality in this regard?

- How far does the College develop/maintain reasonable accommodations (assistance).
- Requirements of teachers need to be established. This may be a union issue, ie no teachers mind accommodating but we also need protection in this area.

Comment

We presume that these inclusive indicators are a work in progress and not necessarily a policy.

Workshop Questions

2. Policy on Confidentiality (needed).
 - Personnel available and continued training (greater need)
 - Visibility of services (this works well)
2. That the above are achieved
 - i.e. more personnel if needed
 - training
 - and policy written
3. Report from class tutorials on student needs.
 - Tutorials
 - Assessment period
 - Feedback from student
4. Initiatives
 - Forms that may be devised for tutors to fill in to use for statistical data.
 - Forms for students at the beginning of year as a way of maybe identifying their needs.

Minutes of First Steering Group Meeting

Chair: Eamon Sweeney

Present : Pauline Hensey, Pat Hoey, Patricia Mackey , Anne O'Donohue, Fergus

O'Rourke, Cillian Russell

Apologies: Paul Condell

1. Discussion on terms of reference was postponed until the members became more acquainted with the Project.
2. The Project definition (Learning Needs, Aims and objectives, Targets) as presented to the Education Equality Initiative was reviewed with a brief summary of what has been achieved so far.
3. Under the heading of "What is the project to do now?" a broad discussion followed from which the following are the salient points
 - a. The question of teachers' own mental health, while sounded at an early stage in the project, was not suitably echoed in the Training Day. As a result issues were raised on the day for some teachers present and supports were not in place. When dealing with student mental health issues, teachers' own mental health must also receive attention.
 - b. There is need not only to have a holistic approach in relation to students but to query how the institution itself deals with mental well-being. This maybe wider than the remit of the project.
 - c. There is no reason to think that other institutions are different to this one unless someone has consciously made it so.
 - d. The idea of the Project in Liberties College was that it would be a learning experience that would be exportable. The need for teacher support was a learning that could be included in the training plan the next time round.
 - e. The thrust of development in mental health sector is to see how support can be mainstreamed. How could an institution like Liberties College mainstream this support?
 - f. It was noted that in their evaluation response, teachers surprisingly did not raise the question of resources. This was understood in the light of the Training day being mainly about awareness. The Training day was also focussed on the notion of equality rather than on asking extra responsibilities of teachers. Further, the day had a background viewpoint that teachers were already working with people with mental illness. The question of resources would probably arise later on.
 - g. Up to now the College deals with incidents as they arise. There were enough incidents to warrant having a policy on how to deal with them. A recent incident had been more successfully dealt with using insights about recovery and responsibility drawn from the activity of the Project in the College. These notions add confidence to dealing with students who are in need of support.
 - h. The relationship of student's disclosure to receiving support was discussed. Students may disclose a mental health issue under the

heading of disability. Some, on the other hand, may be unaware of having a problem. The right of people to disclose or not needs to be catered for by creating a culture that is prepared for whatever issues may emerge related to mental health.

- i. In the case of a 'troublesome' student there may be a question as to who has a problem, the student or the teacher.
 - j. A person may be confident of disclosing to one individual but may not want the information to be divulged further. The personal context of disclosure is important and the flow of information may need to be limited.
 - k. From a reading of staff responses on the Training day, there was an impression that they felt they should be informed of a student's disability. The level of disclosure is an issue, which needs to be driven by the individual concerned. Negative attitudes to mental health issues are a reality and negativity may be generated in some cases. What is to be done with information coming from disclosure? Will it lead to something constructive?
 - l. Is there an analogy with HIV, where the assumption is that everyone may have a potential HIV problem? As a result, all blood incidents are treated with the same care.
 - m. Although some inappropriate student behaviour may be due to mental illness, the student him/herself is responsible for his/her own behaviour. The education system has a role in giving the student the opportunity to convert a negative experience to a positive one. This may involve either getting someone back into the system or recognising that that person needs supports beyond what can be given here. Or maybe a combination of both. There is a right to learn through failure, but for that to happen the negative experience must be followed through to the end.
 - n. Sometime failure can occur because a person is in the wrong course. There is a need for guidance and information and a good interview system. Maybe there is a need for a sampling process, where some students can find out what they want to do by trying it out.
4. A further workshop for Teachers was discussed. The following points emerged
- a. Some work on College Policy should be undertaken which would be presented to teachers on the occasion of the Workshop.
 - b. The Steering Group would not be involved in writing the policy, but would have sight of it as it developed.
 - c. The College was experienced in having a working group of teachers write policy.
 - d. The Project would have the role of supporting the policy working group. There would be a need for input on new thinking in the area of mental health.
 - e. There is rich experience amongst the teachers that can be tapped into and brought to policy and practice.
 - f. The policy drafting group(s) will know how to identify what is needed in terms of policy and can ask for supports from the Project.

- g. One approach for the groups would be to begin with looking at elements of the learning cycle in the context of the Project.
5. The first draft of the policy could be probably be best presented to the teachers at an inschool/outschool afternoon dealing with mental health issues.
 - a. A holistic institutional approach to the issues would avoid isolating the teachers as a group.
 - b. Mental health can be put centre stage for all, staff as well as students. It is everyone's responsibility.
 - c. Not everyone knows that CDVEC provides free psychological support for staff. It is normally assumed that the support is for students.
 6. Work so far has been mainly to do with Teachers' attitudes. Focus on attitudes will continue to be central The question of skills and knowledge will follow.
 - a. There is a need to hear from people with self-experience as regards how to respond to their needs.
 - b. The notion of responsibility is key. Most psycho-social models remain professionally based. For someone with mental illness to succeed they need to see themselves as responsible. How are we to empower them in this way?
 - c. Creating an environment where disclosure can be seen as a good thing. Mental ill health is only one reason why a person might need special support. It becomes an equality issue.
 7. In the light and context of the above discussions the Steering Group agreed to
 - a. **Develop another day/afternoon for staff**
 - b. **Instigate the setting up of a team to draft policy for the College**
 8. The next meeting of the Steering Group will take place at a date in early February 2005.

Minutes of Steering Group Second Meeting March 14th 2005

Chair: Eamon Sweeney

Present : Anne O'Donohue, Pauline Hensey, Pat Hoey, Susan McFeely, Paul Condell, Ger Twomey

Apologies: Patricia Mackey, Fergus O'Rourke

- The Group welcomed Susan McFeely from Schizophrenia Ireland and Ger Twomey, who has self-experience of mental health issues in a further education context.
- The Project Coordinator reviewed progress since the last meeting in relation to the project Objectives:
 - Objective: Developing Models of practice.
 - The policy writing exercise being undertaken in the Liberties College will be used as the basis for developing guidelines for teachers and students.
 - Objective: Teacher education and awareness.
 - The Inclusiveness Policy will form part of a further awareness and training afternoon for Staff to take place after Easter.
 - Objective: Setting up support structures for students
 - Ongoing consultation with users is producing a conceptual framework for an orientation course for returning students.
 - Objective: General Student Mental Health Awareness.
 - Contact has been made with the Head Student Representative in the College.
 - Objective: Researching good practice
 - Belfast Visit for a Networking meeting with the Inclusive Learning - Development Centre of BIFHE on March 7th
- 2) Pauline Hensey and Anne O'Donohue reviewed the learning from the Belfast visit.
 - An enlightening and eye opening experience.
 - The openness and generous sharing of the Belfast Centre was much appreciated.
 - It was clear that many of the ad hoc processes in the College were conducive to being structured and formalised along the lines seen in Belfast.
 - Some of the learning points were:
 - The need to be careful not to disadvantage the able student.
 - Awareness of equity and equality for both students and staff.
 - Boundaries were very clearly set out.
 - The learner support group assess learning and examination needs of students who present. The

learning assessment is forwarded to the class tutor who informs staff members of learner needs. Emphasis is on learner needs and not on disability.

- The examination needs assessment goes to the Examinations Secretary, who has the responsibility to set up what is required for the student.
- There is a sense of a standard of quality and equality to be reached.
- There is a duty of care to see that the student's needs are met and there is accountability for this.
- While not having the finances of the Belfast setting we can do a lot within our budget.
- We could include general operatives in staff days. The general operatives are on board with us.
- Confidentiality. Every person has a duty of care. If some information comes their way, they must act on it.
- The movement is away from thinking about disability to focusing on learning and teaching. The focus was on how we could make our classroom more inclusive. What tools we could use to help people learn better? A different way of thinking.
- Clarity of systems: Belfast seems to have a clear model.
- The report from Belfast gave rise to a discussion of several issues:
 - Examples were given of how in Killester College inclusivity was implemented in relation to documentation, and visual challenge.
 - Accountability was for students as well as for staff. We are trying to level the playing pitch, not to tilt it.
 - We are dealing with any learners who have any issues, making accommodations within the learning-teaching environment.
 - Some discussion took place about what stage in the application process would the question of disability be raised.
 - The question was raised of some students difficulty with disclosure due to their wanting to be part of the mainstream.
 - The project was important because it was trying to build a community that has knowledge and understanding in which people will feel able to disclose.
 - There would be a minority who would not want to disclose in any case.
 - The need for positive role models. People who stand up and say: I have had some trouble but now am getting on with it.
- Discussion on the model of inclusivity currently followed in Liberties and an improved model as seen after the visit:
 - Anne outlined how the model was working in Liberties at the moment, in particular the inclusive effects of streamlining the intake of VTOS students in the last year.
 - Paul explained elements of the Killester model, especially the role of NTDI. The procedure is: Disclosure, then follow the model. There is no stigma in a student coming to see Student Services. If students

disclose in another context, they are tactfully asked to see the Student Services. Student Accountability is managed.

- Pat explained what is done in DIT. Needs assessments are done by learner support tutors. Assessment goes to Head of School.
 - The model being developed in the College approximates to a formalised system.
 - Susan said it was up to those working in the mental health area to find out and to Educators to tell us what courses people can do. There is a fear among users of becoming unwell.
 - Ger told of his experience of being told on one occasion that a course he was giving could not be termed education only information.
- Discussion on the policy draft:
 - The draft inclusion policy statement was read and glossed
 - The challenge of any policy is its implementation
 - All 9 areas of discrimination to be mentioned.
 - Orientation course for returning students:
 - The emerging elements of the Orientation Course.
 - Clarification, Confidentiality, Confidence Building, Guidance, Support, Applications to the College, Budget.
 - It was agreed that Clarification was vital, a key issue for any student is doing a course that is right for them.
 - The question of doing something at the interview stage was raised. A discussion followed about the advisability or not of asking a question about disability/ learner needs on the application form.
 - What does the project we need to do now?
 - As regards the type of training material: leave until the next meeting.
 - Policy discussion will take place at staff level.
 - Policy is great, model good.
 - Orientation course very good.
 - Next Meeting after the Second Training Day for Teachers.

Minutes of Third Meeting of Steering Group

**The Library, Bull Alley
Friday October 7th 2005**

11.30 - 1 pm

Chair: Eamon Sweeney

Present : Anne O'Donohue, Pauline Hensey, Pat Hoey, Susan McFeely, Paul Condell,

Apologies: Patricia Mackey, Fergus O'Rourke, Ger Twomey

The Steering Group reviewed the outcomes of the Project: The Student Guide, the Staff Handbook, and the Draft Project Report

Student Guide: The Student Guide is to be printed for use this year and next and in later years will be incorporated into the Literature of the College.

The Student Guide was necessary to synthesise the outcomes of the project. The Student Guide will help to synthesise it.

The Guide should try to model its own values of inclusion. Larger print/ possibly a Braille edition, etc

The view was expressed there was a value in having a separate guide beside what might be contained about inclusion in the College Literature.

Draft Project Report: The material in the is an valuable source of Staff and Student input for anyone planning workshops in this area.

Staff Handbook: Include in the Staff Handbook the fact that the contents are a suggestions for best practice rather than standardisation norms.

Printing the Staff Handbook. Some corrections of language were suggested and incorporated into the text.

After a detailed discussion of various accommodations it was agreed to omit from the Handbook the appendices on Reasonable Accommodation. They will be available for the Project Report. The language is not totally applicable to Irish context and could amount to misinformation. But leave in the Equal Status Act and CDVEC extracts.

It was suggest that the copy of the Student Guide contained in the Handbook be brought to the front alongside the Inclusion Policy.

Under Orientation/Induction. Mention that it should be ongoing.

The Group agreed to send the Staff Handbook to print with the above adjustments.

On the question of what might have been done differently during the Project, the Project Coordinator felt that a course in Facilitative Leadership at the start of the Project could have prompted a more ambitious engagement with the Staff of the College, which would have led to an even greater buy-in to the Project outcomes.

It was agreed by all that a good start had been made through the Project in relation to Mental Health issues in further education but that there was still a long way to go before the mainstream took full awareness and responsibility for its part in supporting learners with mental health issues.

Interviews with Students who declared disability to the College in 2004-2005

Purpose of the first Interviews

- 1) To liaise with Students of Liberties College who have declared disability under VTOS to the College and who have agreed to cooperate with the Project in the interests of Educator awareness and training
- 2) To explore the experiences of the students in relation to any difficulties experienced in the application process arising out of their disability.
- 3) To explore the experiences of the students in relation to any difficulties experienced in the introductory weeks of College arising out of disability.
- 4) To explore if students would have been interested or benefited from a pre-vocational course.
- 5) To explore students experience of the presentation of course demands by Educators.
- 6) To determine students the extent of supports that students have in place already that are relevant to attending the course successfully.
- 7) To explore what supports might be put in place to enhance their successful completion of the course.
- 8) To explore whether a peer group (inside or outside College) would be perceived as helpful and desirable.

First Student Interview Guide

1. Tell me about your disability and your decision to go to College.
2. Tell me about how you found the process of applying for the Course.
3. Tell me about what you have found hard so far since College started.
4. Is there anything that could be better if the Teachers were more aware of how you might be feeling?
5. Tell me about the supports you have in place:
 - a. a counsellor/Therapist/ Mentor?
 - b. A group?
 - c. Family backing?
6. Would you have appreciated doing some course in preparation for going to College?

7. How would you feel about taking part in a support group within the College over the year?
8. Are you willing to keep in contact with the project throughout the year and keep us updated on your experiences as the course goes on?
9. Anything else?

Responses to first round of interviews

Eight of the Students met with the Project Coordinator over the period September 2004 – Jan 2005.

The following are sample extracts from the conversations, deliberately mixed and omitting any details that might identify a student: Some comments are literal and others are from notes made during the interview.

Disability and the decision to go to College

The most difficult thing was getting used to mixing with people after tending to isolation because of disability. On the other hand welcomes the challenge because wants to be with people.

Had the idea of going to college for a couple of years.

Does not want to be on disability for the rest of life. Wants to get back into education, which left after primary school. Has been in disability and unemployed for past few years. Finding the change difficult.

Wasn't comfortable in (a supported institution). Too remedial. For personal self found himself uncomfortable in that remedial situation. Questioned if he had a right to be there, seeing the issues that others had there. The (Institution) was very supportive. Maybe over supported. Liked the fact that here you are treated as a responsible person.

I like the College so far. Done one year. Like to meet the people. Made some friends. Some people see things in black and white. Most of the teachers are good teachers and teach you to the best of your knowledge.

The process of applying for the Course

Asked for Info from Admin Office. Saw XXX course. Applied. Everyone pleasant and nice. On the day made aware of VTOS. Great. Unexpected support. Fantastic to be independent. Last year spent a lot of time at home. Has learnt a lot in two days. Is Buzzing. Self-esteem has got a good boost.

Great that College is interested in special needs. Shared with College on disability. College was very respectful of that. Felt welcomed. Had fears before that.

College very helpful. Filling out the application form: Someone in office said: “If you aren’t able to fill out the application form, you shouldn’t be doing the course”. This was good. Made him sit down and fill out the form instead of giving it to someone else. This person woke him up and made him do it for himself, which was good.

Going in and out of FAS office. Looking for CE scheme. Saw poster for College and followed through. Rang up to do one year. Looked up web site. Told have to do Foundation as did not have requirements. That was OK.

The Application process was helpful. No problems. Great when I got the place.

Hardest thing was the XXX. Like going back to secondary school. But glad I did it. Doubts about self. Got over that and doing well in class. Doing the course has been a confidence builder.

What you have found hard so far

Mixing, socialising was a big challenge.

Side effects of medication, chronic pain at times, embarrassment.

Takes more medication to deal with side effects.

Medication does not affect performance, work wise.

Finds interacting and meeting people is hard. Has survived a lot on own. College is a big change.

Social stigma is a big concern. When people know, like family, that’s OK. But still a social stigma.

Does not mind explaining what the difficulties are, but finds that people are shocked by the variety of the difficulties and are not prepared to listen.

Nothing. It was brilliant. Back into mainstream living!

Anything that could be better if the Teachers were more aware

Anxiety was increased as Teachers announced the projects that had to be done.

This would have been helped if Teacher has issued verbal reassurance that ‘everyone could do it’. One teacher had said “Just relax..” and that made big difference.

If Teachers could check before they go in if someone has a problem so that they won’t bring it up in front of the class. Because it is really embarrassing when asked in class to do something that one knows one cannot and one has to explain life-story in public.

Doesn’t care if teachers know as long as they understand.

On 24 hour call with the parents. Mobile phone may go off during the class. Have told them not to ring. But there could be an emergency. Phone rang. Teacher said: no phones. "My Father is dying". "Oh! Ok."

Supports you have in place

Sees a therapist/counsellor weekly and will continue to do so.

Has not group support. Did belong to a group but felt that had moved on while the group remained in the same place.

Great support from the family.

Sees a counsellor associated with the Hospital.

Would like to have someone to talk to besides partner who does not want to get into what is happening in College.

Counsellor was there if needed, but what would you say?

Went to counsellor in College and that was helpful. Asked one of the teachers if there was a counselling service. Went down and found out. Found it easy. Good to be able to go to Bull Alley, not the same building.

A course in preparation for going to College?

Would have jumped on a course like that. In the College they are quite strict with time and absenteeism. If someone has a flu that's understandable. In my case might be out for three days. No one to plug into to know how to deal with that.

If I knew there was something available, I would have gone there before going to the office. How would such a course be make known to people who would need it ?

Would have appreciated an orientation course.

Yes. Would have taken an orientation course.

Might not have needed a preparation course, but she could see that others would.

No. Has been in college. Knows the score.

A support group within the College over the year?

At first expressed unwillingness to be part of a group in College for fear of being stigmatised. Was willing to consider a group outside of College, and then moved to being more open to a peer support group within College.

Does not want to be part of a group. Does not want to be labelled.

Don't think I need support.

No.

Contact with the project throughout the year

All were willing to remain in contact with the project throughout the year.

The follow up interviews

The second round of interviews took place during February – March 2005. These interviews we held preferentially with students who had expressed more interest in helping the Project and who were ready to offer ideas about the structure of an orientation course.

Purpose of the Meetings

1. To reconnect with Students of Liberties College who have declared disability under VTOS to the College have agreed to cooperate with the Project in the interests of Educator awareness and training.
2. To explore the experiences of the students in relation to any difficulties experienced in the first term in College arising out of their disability.
3. To find the students openness with regard to participating in a focus group about a pre-vocational course.
4. To explore students experience of the course demands made by Educators.
5. To determine students the extent of supports that students have in place already that are relevant to attending the course successfully.
6. To explore the supports the students has access to so far and what supports could be usefully added.
7. To explore the level of peer group support that the student has or would perceive as helpful and desirable.

Follow up Interview Guide

1. Tell me about your experience of the Course so far.
2. Tell me about how you found the College support for your disability.
3. Tell me about what you have found good about the College in relation to your disability
4. Is there anything that could be better if the Teacher's were more aware of how you might be feeling?
5. What supports do you have in place at the moment?
6. Are other students aware of your disability?
7. Would you be willing to help the Project design a course that would prepare for going to College?
8. How would you feel now about a support group within the College?
9. Anything else?

Student Responses to follow-up interviews

Experience of the Course so far

Going very well. Great. Done so much for me. Have not been ill once since starting college. Sense of achievement with the results. Really feel a lot stronger since the course. Has helped me psychologically no end. Couldn't overestimate how good it's been for my general psyche. It's marvellous, marvellous. I couldn't say enough good things about it.

Very intense. An awful lot to take on. Have discussed it with teachers.

College support for your disability

I didn't have to call on their support in any extra way, as yet. I do sense that the support is there. I feel if I needed it, I could get extra time, etc. I have built up a rapport with them.

This morning I was told I was being supported, that there was support there for me. Was told there were 8 modules and could do one or two of them. I felt supported this morning, not dismissed.

Good about the College in relation to your disability

The overall package has just been great. It's been so therapeutic. When I finish here, if I never work in XXX, I will never regret a day I spent here. Having had a chaotic life up until now, I now have this structure to which I am adhering quite well. Becoming part of society instead of feeling outside it, which I have done for years."

"Doing a mainstream course, that alone has done so much for my psyche. I realise the value of education now in a way that I only had intellectually understood before. I can feel a difference. It has a lot to do with self-respect. It has a lot to do with health as well. Maybe there not enough research in this area. Doing something that you want to do, that you are passionate about, how that can completely change your life, build your immune system up, because you feel you are in the right place, you are doing something you love so there's no problem with motivation. You are being given the energy you need to follow these things through."

"I hadn't even considered doing this foundation course over two years. Then it was like, 'I wonder if I did do it? What would it be like?' And then 'I probably won't get in, but I can always go for the interview' and then always putting myself down. But I got the interview and then 'I probably won't last'. And then to do it and to do it well and for that to be recognised. It is something. To realise that I really had an input to make in day to day stuff".

If the Teachers were more aware...

It is a long time since I was in school and what I am experiencing here is different to what I knew then. I find that difficult.

Experience of the course demands

Supports do you have in place at the moment

Has not found any more personal supports since the last conversation. Feels missing out on friendships because of the age difference with the class. One or two of the same age, but in general younger. Get on well but not on the same wavelength of concerns.

Are other students aware of your disability?

No. Confided in one student, who came across medication he was taking.

A few but not many. Tells some, more from point of view of them not being caught unawares if was having a moment. But nothing has happened in class. Felt a bit unwell two or three times. They were supportive

Designing an Orientation Course

Can understand how someone less extrovert and outgoing might have difficulties and might need an orientation course. It was touch and go that I got started. If there was a point where I could go and talk to someone and to get that information about support that I had no idea about until I came in.

A support group within the College?

Would find it very helpful. The last time said No. But now feel have not many friends. Don't like the idea of the group talking about their disabilities. Wants a group of people who know they have something in common and don't talk about it all the time.

Focus Group Meetings at the Basin Club, Blessington Street, Dublin

Meeting August 11th 2004

1. There was a general consensus that Assertiveness training was essential in order to be able to cope with daunting aspects of dealing with Administration when enquiring about courses or applying to institutions.
 - a. People had experience of getting a “brush off” over the telephone from administration staff when they showed themselves unsure about what they wanted.
 - i. In general it was agreed that getting information over the phone was not easy.
 - b. Unemployed and lacking self-confidence, you had the impression of being treated by administration staff as if you were a “vagrant”.
2. Too many courses offered seemed to be related to computers or computer skills.
3. One of the effects of not being well is difficulty in deciding what you would like to do by way of a course.
4. There seems to be nothing that is suitable for you.
5. Application Forms are very off-putting.
 - a. Some institutions asked for complicated things like “enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope”. Several people had taken to simply putting a euro in the envelope.
6. There is a need for better information about the questions that are of interest to you like
 - a. Can you sit in on a class?
 - b. Are the lecturers available to talk to you about the course?
 - c. Is there any follow up to the course in terms of job possibilities? Does the College have a job placement programme?
7. There are practical aspects of institutions that are annoying e.g. Some institutions have old and steep stairs, which are a problem for people who are of heavier build.
8. There is a difficulty in knowing the meaning of terms which are widely used like, for example, FETAC. What is FETAC about? What does it do?
9. There was enthusiasm for a preparatory Training course, which would involve some action research in relation to applying for a College.

Meeting 2 August 18th 2004

1. One person had the recent experience of their Application Form for a College being mislaid by the College Administration. The pressures on you when you are living on the bread line in a bed sit have to be appreciated.
2. One person had started a VTOS course but found that too much was expected. The staff often stressed how much was expected of students on the course. That was fine for people who were in good health, but if you were not in good health it created stress.
3. Your home situation made a great difference to your ability to cope.

4. One person had done a computer skills course. He found that there was little accommodation to people's different needs. It was a case of "one size fits all" in many courses.
5. The question of what you might be **able** to do came up. You do not know if you are able until you try and then you may find out you are not able. It would be good to know more about the course content in advance.
6. There needs to be more understanding of the needs of people with disabilities.
7. The importance of having confidence in your abilities to do a job.
8. The question of knowing the procedures in applying for courses came up.
9. There was mixed experience of getting on with other students on courses. Some classes allowed you to fit in, others did not.
10. One person wanted a course with work experience built in, work experience that would stand up later in application for a job.