

Dundee Central Library Drug and Alcohol Project (DCLDAP)

This project has brought the benefits of library, information and learning activities to recovering drug and alcohol users. Dundee Central Library has developed it in partnership primarily with Axis Dundee, an operational unit of the CrossReach programme.

CrossReach is one of the largest social care agencies in Scotland, providing care and support for thousands of people in need every day of the year. It is part of the Church of Scotland, although its services are available to people of all faiths or none. Through working with this particular organisation, the DCLDAP is tapping into precisely that group of people who are seeking to “move on”, rather than those who are at the chaotic entry point of intervention. Any value that can be derived from therapeutic diversionary activities requires the subject to be in a contemplative mode and actually willing to “move on”. The value of both CrossReach and DCLDAP is that they complement the motivation and individual commitment of the subject.

Subsidiary strands have been developed with Tayside Council on Alcohol (TCA) in the areas of professional advice and consultancy and the purchase of resources for the organisation’s library and information service.

The entire project was initiated by means of a grant from the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC).

Aim

To demonstrate a methodology whereby certain requirements of drug and alcohol abusers and their dependants and carers, in the broadest terms, can be met from existing library structures and resources by means of innovative planning and partnerships.

Objectives

A key feature is that our objectives provide timely support to the ‘Process of Care’ element of the Corporate Action Plans of the three Tayside Drug and Alcohol Action Teams. The primary objective of the ‘Process of Care’ is to “increase the number of people recovering from drug and alcohol problems entering training, education and employment”. The principal objectives of the DCLDAP are, therefore, to:

1. develop and demonstrate a fully integrated and permanent working partnership.
2. acquire an understanding of the needs of clients’ dependants and wider families, insofar as they impinge on and assist the recovery and rehabilitation process.
3. acquire an understanding of caring staff’s requirements, in order to provide tailored onsite collections at the Centres.
4. develop a comprehensive range of library-based resources oriented towards staff information and client self-help.
5. train clients and Centre staff in the use of conventional and electronic resources.
6. develop the use of these resources to create a focus of interest with respect to job-seeking, leisure pursuits and self-help.
7. foster a multi-agency approach, which will provide the foundation of sustained library-based support.
8. promote the libraries and their staff as caring support centres, to which those in need of assistance may come with confidence and have a reasonable chance of having their needs met.

It should be emphasised that the original aim of the project was to demonstrate a methodology, which would form a model for a service capable of being transferred and replicated nationwide. During the lifetime of the substantive project, this aim was not exceeded but this is likely to change post- project, as other agencies look favourably on what is being achieved at DCLDAP. (See Methodology below). The budget for the original project was:

Heading	SLIC	DCC	CENTRES	TOTAL
Consultancy	<i>£6,000.00</i>			£6,000.00
Prof. Support	<i>£1,000.00</i>	£4,000.00	£2,000.00	£7,000.00
Admin. support		£1,000.00	£500.00	£1,500.00
Resources	<i>£1,000.00</i>	<i>£2,000.00</i>		£3,000.00
Computer equip't.	<i>£1,000.00</i>			£1,000.00
Comp. & web supp.		£750.00		£750.00
Travel	<i>£300.00</i>	<i>£200.00</i>		£500.00
Subsistence	<i>£200.00</i>	<i>£100.00</i>		£300.00
Misc. & Contingency	<i>£500.00</i>			£500.00
TOTAL	£10,000.00	£8,050.00	£2,500.00	£20,550.00

Figures in italics represent a cash component

Methodology

The Project consultant, Shonagh Morrison, was recruited and immediately set about contacting the relevant agencies in a bid to elicit support for the venture.

She managed to strike up a very good relationship with the staff at TCA. As a result, and following lengthy discussions, we have supported this organisation in certain specific areas by providing:

- ◆ advice on expansion and exploitation of library and information collections
- ◆ additional materials
- ◆ a mirror collection in the Central Library (for when TCA is closed)
- ◆ a professionally produced database of materials
- ◆ a database on the DCC website (forthcoming)
- ◆ training for TCA staff in use of ICT and retrieval of materials (forthcoming).

We also managed to make contact with the somewhat elusive Axis Dundee, which is part of the Church of Scotland's £50m. Crossreach Programme, and embarked on a very well received programme of Monday afternoon sessions for recovering drug and alcohol users.

The programme to date comprises the following elements, all of which have been determined in consultation with the group leader and the members of the group.

- ◆ 1:1 training on computers in the library learning centres
- ◆ this core activity sometimes combined with other elements below
- ◆ demonstration and use of local history resources
- ◆ opportunity to trace family trees
- ◆ possible opportunities for volunteering
- ◆ introduction to a range of library resources
- ◆ introduction to reading groups (based on the experience of the Scottish Prison Service)
- ◆ formation of a reading group (forthcoming)
- ◆ compilation of a group diary (limited to discussion so far, due to sensitivities involved)
- ◆ encouragement of library membership
- ◆ encouragement of independent use of the library
- ◆ cancellation of old fines and return of old overdue materials without penalty – but new fines and penalties are not waived !

(Dundee Cyrenians will join the continuation project before long and the Dundee Drug and AIDS Project has registered an intention to join in 2007. The Dundee Drug and Alcohol Action Team is well aware of the potential and maintains a watching brief, whilst the Wishart Centre is currently identifying opportunities for joint working with DCLDAP).

The library-based activities have been complemented by visits to places of interest within the Dundee area. So far, these have included tours of the City Archives, Barrack Street Museum, the Frigate Unicorn and the historic Howff graveyard. A trip to the Broughty Ferry Lifeboat is planned for the New Year. These visits are much appreciated, many questions are asked and the visits are referred to during the in-house learning sessions.

DCLDAP clients have also been given several opportunities to expand their horizons by taking a boat trip on the Tay. This comprises a lengthy excursion on the Dundee stretch of the river, with some boat-handling, navigation, wildlife and heritage instruction along the way. This is currently being expanded into the form of a £100,000 project, which has already gained Big Lottery outline approval and will collaborate in a learning partnership with the DCLDAP.

The boat trips are extremely popular - one participant neatly summed up the therapeutic effect experienced by all her colleagues in the phrase "I was buzzing for days afterwards". The boating element integrates well with the mainstream library activities, in that there is a strand of related computer and book-based learning. Participants enthusiastically operate the R.N.L.I's sea safety multimedia training package, or study local history resources relating to the historic ships and the firth of Tay.

Performance Measurement

A record is kept of attendance and participation during the sessions (sample enclosed). Although this is largely subjective, the staff observations are more than borne out by surveys of client project members and staff. Maintaining attendance, which is essential to the building of interest and momentum, is the main problem facing the organisers. Numbers have been a little disappointing at times and it is hoped that this problem will be partly resolved by the opening of a crèche in the Library, since the attendance of women members is largely dictated by childcare considerations. Participation by the other peer groups mentioned above will also assist in presenting the Library as a "cool" place to be.

Other hard indicators include the number of candidates for ECDL - three at present, of whom one will soon have passed all the tests. This achievement by an extremely vulnerable young man will give a substantial boost to his confidence and employment prospects.

Soft outcomes are evolving all the time in the light of experience. At present they largely comprise the following elements.

1. anecdotal and written testimony from client project workers
2. anecdotal and written testimony from client project managers
3. surveys of client members
4. surveys of client staffs.

Surveys were produced in consultation with the principal client project, using Smart Survey (sample of survey analysis enclosed). The surveys were designed to elicit information confirming that the members' life and learning were being valuably enhanced through their visits to the Library, and that this would assist their recovery. The clear impression from the survey analysis is that DCLDAP is excelling in this respect.

In the case of work with Tayside Council on Alcohol, evaluation is confined to that of feedback from the principal project worker, who is convinced that the interventions have made a positive contribution to that organisation's programme.

The following comments from members are very revealing.

- **Building confidence with Library staff:** Michael is an older and somewhat roguish member, who was relatively quiet when he first started on the project. He was recently walking to the Learning Centre computers with a young female member of the Library staff. On encountering a long-lost acquaintance of his and following a brief exchange of courtesies, he said, without batting an eyelid, "*Oh, by the way, have you met the wife?*" Members had been very circumspect about their former drug-taking and the current stage of their recovery. Of late, however, certain members have begun to unburden themselves to Library staff, particularly with regard to methadone reduction and the problems relating to other prescription drugs. Pauline, with an air of triumph, said, "*I've come down from 5 to 4 mls of meth*". Even this small reduction requires an effort of will and DCLDAP assists in providing the necessary motivation for this disagreeable struggle.
- **Reading and family support:** (anonymous survey comment): "*More knowledge than I had before, also introducing my daughter to books more*".
- **Libraries as a welcoming environment:** (anonymous survey comment): "*I look forward to Mondays, as we can talk open about ourselves, i.e. don't have to hide I have a drug problem. The staff are very friendly and I feel I can ask questions if I don't understand, don't feel daft. No dislikes!*"
- **Learning:** (anonymous survey comment): "*I enjoy very much learning about things I would never have thought about*".

Exit Strategy

There is no exit strategy. We shall remain committed to the members of this project, because we are impressed by their determination to succeed, often against quite staggering odds.

Conclusion

The motto of the project is simply that "It's what libraries should be doing anyway". We know we are making a difference, albeit a small difference, to a group of people, who - perhaps above all others - most need the help that libraries have to offer. We are confident that we can continue the project with existing resources but will, at the same time, seek to improve on this by means of an independent income stream from organisations desperate to assist in the battle for recovery.

We have become friends with these people and feel just a little of their pain. We want libraries throughout the UK to follow this path and, in our unique professional way, join with us in demonstrating that libraries can make a real difference in the war against drug and alcohol abuse.

Reference

1. *Dundee Central Library Drug and Alcohol Project*. Information Scotland: June 2006, Vol. 4 (3), p. 8-9.
 2. Also to be published in *Public Library Journal*, Winter 06 issue, 8 December, or subsequent issue.
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Transcript of a Testimonial from Mr. Chris White, Chairman of the Wishart Centre to Mrs. Moira Methven, Head of Libraries, Information and Cultural Services

Dear Mrs Methven

I write on behalf of the Board of Management of The Wishart Centre, Dundee to express my appreciation and admiration for the work done within our organisation by your representatives.

It seems a long time ago that I first discussed the SLIC proposal with your Mr Kett who has been a most committed advocate of your social inclusion objectives. I had never appreciated the need for libraries to seek out and extend facilities to those excluded by social difficulties. The impact on our clients has been stunning and has had a huge impact on their families and supporters too. We will be continuing to promote the joint benefits of such a useful relationship.

You may be aware that The Wishart Centre has had some difficulties and had to withdraw from the initiative at an early stage but some of the Axis clients drop in to us and they are most enthusiastic about the facility. This is due, in no small measure, to the research done by the consultant, Mrs Morrison and the expert guidance of Mr Kett. The approach to understanding the information and reference needs of the dedicated social care staff was very much appreciated and has already sown the seeds for career development in a number of areas.

The Wishart Centre is to be used as a structured Day Service and 'Moving On' facility and is being operated and developed by Dundee Cyrenians now. I have been afforded a seat on the Board of Management. You may rest assured that I will continue to promote and facilitate our client's continued access to your resources, both printed and electronic, to better fit them for social inclusion, leisure pursuits and employment where appropriate.

This new relationship we enjoy and value has shown the benefits of working together not only for our clients and staff but also for the personnel who work in your library who have shown such intelligence and empathy in their relations with us all. As a volunteer worker it has been quite easy for me to detect those of your staff who derive a genuine sense of satisfaction and personal enrichment from engaging in this most worthy and visionary enterprise. I would be obliged if you could pass on my appreciation to your staff.

Should you or your staff wish to engage more formally and learn in more detail how we might forge stronger links, I would be pleased to be involved in any discussion.

Yours sincerely

Mr Chris White
Chairman

Ardhasaig
Campmuir
Perthshire
PH13 9JF

**Transcript of a Testimonial from Ms. Gillian Ferguson, Adult Services Manager,
Tayside Council on Alcohol to Moira Methven**

Dear Moira,

Libraries Change Lives

Over the recent past we have been involved with a project in partnership with your department to enhance the lives of people experiencing substance use problems. We have particularly explored ways of enhancing access to self-help and supportive information resources within our own agency base and within the Central Library itself.

At TCA we have been provided with resources which are available for members of the public and service users to borrow and many of these are out on loan to a diverse range of clients, public and staff seeking to enhance their knowledge. It can be difficult to source and to access resources such as these when facing difficult life circumstances and we are delighted with the commitment and support offered by your department in trying to improve people's lives through this project.

We look forward to continuing to work with library staff and to enhancing further the way in which we promote and provide information to vulnerable client groups.

Yours Sincerely

Gillian Ferguson
Adult Services Manager

Transcript of a Testimonial from Cllr. Chris Hind, Dundee City Council

Libraries Change Lives Award
CILIP Marketing
7 Ridgmount Street
London
WC1E 7AE

Dear Sir/Madam

Libraries Change Lives: Application by the Dundee Central Library Drug and Alcohol Project

I am delighted to endorse this application, which is carving a new role for libraries in supporting the recovery of drug and alcohol users.

My own impressions of the project are that it has succeeded beyond all expectations in helping to change the lives of some of its participants and, as their numbers grow, the DCLDAP will become a significant force in their rehabilitation as productive members of society.

Alcohol and drugs are a scourge throughout the land. Local government councillors see more than their fair share of the consequent misery, which results in loss of jobs, health, family and self-respect. Librarians in Dundee are using their knowledge to assist in creating skills, including literacy, an appreciation of books and the ability to understand computers. More importantly, they accept all their clients without any prejudice and in a spirit of friendship. This in turn encourages members to view the Library as a valuable resource, responsive to a wide spectrum of needs.

I know that these opinions reflect the views of practitioners in the field, who have worked with the DCLDAP, and who are effusive in their praise of what is being achieved. The client numbers involved are relatively small at present, but the salient point is that if the model were to be replicated throughout the land, then many thousands of deserving clients could benefit from the valuable resources and services that libraries have to offer.

It is my sincere hope that this application is successful, not merely for the sake of the project itself, but more in a desire to see all library services thinking laterally about what they can do for the excluded members of society. In the words of the project's motto: "it's what libraries should be doing anyway".

Yours sincerely

Cllr. Chris Hind, Convenor of the Communities Committee

The originals of the letters cited above are available for inspection on request.