



The Happiness Project

Name of Organisation

Light Box

Title of project/programme

The Happiness Project

Dates of project/programme

April – June 2011

Summary

Light Box provides creative workshops that introduce people to effective strategies for promoting good mental health. These workshops are held in a city-centre empty shop space. The strategies that Light Box advocates are taken from Positive Psychology's evidence base. Light Box believes that mental health applies to all people, and learning how to invest in it can improve the quality of any person's life.

Light Box ran a fully funded 3-month project from April to June 2011. There were 487 attendances including young people with psychosis, women offenders, GP referrals and the general public. Project evaluation was mentored by Willis Newson/UWE's Knowledge Transfer Partnership.

Shortlisted for an Arts & Health South West Award for an arts organisation in 2012.

Overview

'An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure'

Benjamin Franklin

During a one-month pilot of Light Box's workshops in March 2010, which saw 282 attendances, Light Box received feedback from participants stating there was a perceived need for the ongoing provision of this service and 99% reported taking part in workshops as 'very useful'. Subsequent stakeholder meetings attended by mental health service users, health professionals and statutory and third sector representatives confirmed this local need, in particular the need for a universal, nonclinical and engaging approach to promoting mental health in Bristol.

Research supports this. Poor mental health in Bristol is higher than the national average with 15% of the population suffering mental ill health in any one year. Rising unemployment is linked to increased mental health problems. Although anti-depressant prescriptions in Bristol have increased in step with growing unemployment, there has not been increased provision of public mental health resources. Without raising public awareness about how to promote mental health and resilience, the community's ability to tackle the problem is limited.

Aims, objectives and intended health outcomes

- To promote mental health
- To prevent mental illness
- To provide an early intervention facility
- To support people with mental health problems.
- To create and employ a robust evaluation framework.
- To use evaluation outcomes to develop an ongoing project.

For its 2011 project, Light Box transformed an un-used shop space in the city centre into a comfortable, colourful and inviting place that the community could come and engage with the workshops.

From April 1st to 30th June 2011 it delivered:

- 50 two-hour public workshops
- One 10 week course for a group of young people from Bristol's Early Intervention in Psychosis Team
- One 10 week course for women offenders Avon and Somerset Probation Service's Eden House Project.

The 10 themes covered by the workshops and courses were:

Gratitude	Vitality1: Food and Mood
Nurture and Kindness	Vitality2: Movement
Savouring and Flow	Goals
Character Strengths	Confidence
Appreciation of Beauty	Humour and Playfulness

In each session, facilitators presented research findings that relate to mental well being. During the group discussions and creative art activities that followed, participants generated ideas and tools to help them carry out the Recommended Actions. The Recommended Actions are practical suggestions on how to use the strategies they have learned about in every day life.

This project was not just an opportunity for Light Box to reach a wider audience and work with targeted groups. It was also an opportunity to demonstrate to others how it works and why it works. Willis Newson and University of West England mentored Light Box in putting together a robust evaluation framework that enabled them to capture and record data, and use that data to review the project's effectiveness and

demonstrate its impacts.

Art forms

The art forms included in the workshops were an innovative blend of fine arts; paper installation, kinetic drawing using body drawing straps and "box paintings" that utilise inks, paints and bouncy balls in a shaken box, spinning drawing tops, handmade camera lenses, lomography, laminating mobiles, mosaic, Japanese book binding, collage, blind drawing and toy re-making. The creative aim for the project was to involve participants in new, interesting and fun art activities that were different to those already offered in arts and health settings. By moving away from traditional approaches to fine art, Light Box delivered a range of activities that could be used to open participants up to experiential learning opportunities that were very much process led. The playful approach to mark making within activities such as blind drawing, kinetic drawing and box painting were used to enhance positive emotion without adding judgement or worth to the finished product.

Outputs

From April 1st to 30th June 2011:

- 50 two-hour public workshops
 - One 10 week course for a group of young people from Bristol's Early Intervention in Psychosis Team
 - One 10 week course for women offenders Avon and Somerset Probation Service's Eden House Project.
- SUBTOTAL attendances = 487

From July – September 2011:

- 24 creative all day drop-ins where passers by could take part in open-ended art activity in a variety of mediums and pick up information on investing in mental well-being
- SUBTOTAL attendances = approximately 250

From September – December 2011:

- 18 2-hour public workshops
- SUBTOTAL attendances = 181

2011 TOTAL ATTENDANCES = 918

Partnerships and who was involved

Light Box workshops are managed and facilitated by a small staff team supported by up to twenty-four volunteers.

Staff team:

Lucy Duggan - Head of Business Development

Lucy Barfoot - Head of Creative Direction

Kathryn John - Head of Learning and Participation.

Nine members of the volunteer team are previous participants who either self-referred, or were referred by G.P surgeries or Avon and Somerset Probation Services. As well as supporting service delivery, volunteers formed a steering group, which met three times over the year and advised on project development.

Light Box's partner organisations for the 2011 project were:

Artshine: As part of the pilot GP Arts on Referral scheme in central Bristol, Light Box worked with NHS Bristol to deliver social prescribing for 11 patients enrolled on Artshine.

Avon and Somerset Probation Service's Eden House Project: The prevalence of mental health issues amongst female offenders is significantly higher than those in the general population. With a move towards increased community sentencing and a multi-agency approach to offender management, Light Box particularly focused on engaging with women offenders.

Avon and Wiltshire Partnership's Early Intervention in Psychosis Team: Light Box understands the value of early intervention and prevention in mental health and worked with the Early Intervention staff to support young people experiencing mental health distress.

Happy City Bristol: Happy City identifies and promotes services, initiatives and events in the city that support individual and community well-being. They have helped Light Box to signpost participants to existing networks of communities, people and organisations working for well-being within Bristol.

Innovation

Light Box's blend of positive psychology and creative arts presents an innovative approach to mental health promotion and prevention. Where traditional psychology focuses on illness and disease and the transition from "unwell" to "not unwell" the research of positive psychology focuses on what actions, thoughts and behaviours promote well-being. Positive Psychology focuses on the individuals existing strengths, and not on their weaknesses. Accordingly, Light Box workshops do not focus on participants' mental health diagnoses or histories. Instead they explore the universal aspirations of becoming happier and more resilient, and how this can be achieved at an individual and community level. A holistic approach which recognises the role of social determinants and community in personal well-being is what makes Light Box different. The difference is also in its location: hosting the project in a city-centre shop space places mental health, and its relevance to all, directly in the public's line of vision. By making it part of the 'every-day' Light Box takes a new approach to mental health that challenges stigma.

Participation

Feedback forms and monitoring data were collected after each session

(with a 98% return rate).

Participant monitoring

82% female
16% male
2% non-responders
93% white British/Irish/Other
6% BME
1% non-responders
43% disability
45% non-disability
10% preferred not to say
2% non responders
32% 0-29 years
33% 30-49 years
23% 50 years
+2% non responders

14 participants joined a steering group which met once during the April to June programme and again in Autumn 2011. This steering group provided an opportunity for the projects beneficiaries to have direct involvement in making improvements to the workshops.

Outcomes

'Thank you. You have made a big difference to my life.' - Participant

93% found the workshops either useful or very useful.
96% of respondents found the workshops enjoyable
97% of respondents said they would recommend the workshops.

The project helped to motivate a large number of those who took part to take action on investing in their mental health:

75% of respondents felt empowered by the experience of participating.
89% planned to take action as a result of attending.
80% of respondents planned to spend more time on creative pursuits.

The workshops helped tackle mental health stigma by promoting a good understanding of positive mental health:

79% of respondents felt that the workshops had helped them see how mental health applies to all of us.
71% of respondents had improved their understanding of happiness.

Before and after Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being scores were collected from the case-studies and those who attended the courses:

- The average WEMWBS score for the general public case studies changed from 42.1 at pre-test to 49.8 at post-test.
- The average WEMWBS score for the course participants changed from 42.1 at pre-test to 49.8 at post-test. (50.7 is the national average).

Case studies felt that:

- Taking part helped them to build their confidence and group skills and had presented them with social opportunities, a chance to meet and be around happy people and build supportive relationships and networks.
- It provided opportunity to be creative and explore the creative process using a range of art forms and felt encouraged to continue exploring and developing creative aspects of their lives beyond the workshops.
- They had experienced a shift in outlook which they attributed to attending: feeling more in control through exercising more choice, taking things less seriously and an improved ability to 'live in the present' and be future-focused were examples given.
- Participating had helped them to develop resilience, to face challenge and disappointment and to become more able to cope.
- Since attending the workshops they were better able to actively improve their own mental health.
- Increased exercise and improvements to diet were a result of taking part. (Reported by six of the thirteen case-study respondents).

Learning

Being sensitive to the needs of some participants to 'go slowly' emerged as an important lesson. The participant steering group suggested that extra mentoring and signposting support should be provided for those who need it. These new services are now being developed.

Regular data entry is a better than doing it all at the end. This lesson was learnt by spending four consecutive ten hour days in front of an excel spread-sheet at the project's close.

It's important to recognise and celebrate volunteers' contribution by making time for social events.

After the April to June programme, staff went on until December delivering sessions, unpaid, due to continued demand. Although passion is a good driver for the project, it has to be backed up by resources. Staff found working unpaid for 20 + hours a week unsustainable.

The importance of setting boundaries while working with a diverse public became clear as the project progressed and relationships were formed.

Improving boundaries training and making it a key item in supervision helped to 'unblur the lines'.

The summer drop in days were less structured. In a number of cases this led to participant over-reliance and distress on the days that the shop was closed. Light Box helps people more when it is run in a purposeful and structured way.

Chaotic life-styles and ill-health prevented some of the targeted participants from seeing through the ten-week commitment to the courses. Attrition during the courses and consultation with those who did

not complete has prompted Light Box to start developing courses with a shorter period of engagement.

Critical success factors

The evaluation of its impact was one of the project's biggest achievements. The Evaluation Report demonstrated improved mental health outcomes for those who took part. The evaluation expertise that Light Box developed now supports the work of others, as case-study material, through speaking at events and informal consultancy.

Key factors that made planning and delivery successful were:

- A creative approach – Being playful, experiential and experimental in workshop facilitation and steering group meetings.
- User involvement – Keeping the beneficiaries at the helm using stakeholder meetings, steering groups and volunteering.
- Accessible and Inclusive - The shop became a place where people of different backgrounds and abilities felt comfortable to come and learn together.

Light Box has a rapidly growing social media presence on Facebook, Twitter and Wordpress and continues to receive regular enquiries about when it will re-open to the public.

With an increasing number of partners from arts and health organisations, support agencies and the public sector, Light Box is becoming increasingly valued as a community resource in Bristol. Fundraising is underway for a three year project anticipated to begin in Autumn 2012. Light Box looks forward to working closely with Bristol's emerging Health and Wellbeing Board to carry on promoting public mental health in Bristol.

Funding and resources

Light Box's biggest resource was the shop space, provided rent-free and rate-free. Volunteers provided most of the man-hours that went into set up and running of the project.

The total 2011 budget was £35,000 with funding from:

- Llankelly Chase Foundation
- Arts Council England
- Awards for All – Big Lottery Fund
- Art Shine