

REPORT ON THE
CONSULTATION PHASE OF
JIGSAW'S PROJECT TO
SUPPORT
THE DEVELOPMENT, DELIVERY
& EVALUATION OF A PILOT
COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS
PROGRAMME

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Acknowledgements:

I would like to express my gratitude to the youth work staff from the various youth services and to the volunteers from the Local Sports Partnership (South Dublin City) who gave their time to participate in the focus groups and interview - to the youth work staff and Scouting Ireland volunteers who recruited the young people and to the young people themselves who gave of their time and energy for this consultation.

Introduction:

This consultation has been conducted as part of Phase 1 of Jigsaw's proposal to develop, deliver and evaluate a new innovative community-based pilot programme to train, build the capacity of, and support community-based youth mental health champions/advocates to increase their own mental health literacy and that of key target groups in their community.

A process of consultation was undertaken with a range of key stakeholders (identified with the support of Jigsaw's Youth Mental Health Promotion Team and the Dublin City Jigsaw Service) who could usefully inform the development, delivery and evaluation of this programme. Due to public health restrictions imposed as a result of Covid-19, a qualitative consultation process, comprising of focus groups and one semi-structured interview, was used with the key stakeholders. These consultations took place during February and March 2021 as follows:

Consultations with 'One Good Adults'

- Talk about Youth St Andrews Resource Centre, Pearse St, Dublin 2 – 5 youth workers
- Canal Communities Regional Youth Service (Bluebell, Inchicore, Rialto) – 4 youth workers
- Local Sports Partnership South Dublin – 2 volunteers/parents
- Core Youth Service (Inchicore -one to one interview) - 1 manager

12 participants in total from the 'One Good Adult' category.

Consultations with 'Youth Mental Health Champions (young people aged 18 – 25 years)

- Venture Scouts, Scouting Ireland, Donore Avenue – 5 participants
- Young people from Ballyfermot Youth Service – 8 participants
- Young people from YAP Dublin South – to be held on March 30th

13 participants in total + young people from YAP

Format for the Focus Groups

The focus groups took place via Zoom. Each focus group began with a round of introductions, followed by an outline of the session and a short group contract. This was followed by a brief presentation on the work of Jigsaw and an outline of the proposed pilot programme. Feedback was recorded in written format.

The following questions were used in the focus groups alongside some supplementary questions where appropriate to elicit additional/clearer feedback.

- What is your reaction to this proposal?

- Who might be interested in getting involved with this initiative?
- What would encourage people to become involved with this initiative?
- What might be some of the blocks with regard to this initiative?
- What could help address these blocks?
- What areas should the proposed training address?
- What would be required to support this work?
- Any other comments?

The one- to-one interview addressed the same questions.

Feedback from the Consultation Process

The feedback is presented in relation to responses to each of the questions and direct quotes from participants are included in inverted commas.

Feedback from the 'One Good Adults' Group

What is your reaction to this proposal?

In theory, most participants felt that this was a good idea. They were very conscious of the struggles that young people are having with their mental health during the pandemic. Those working in communities experiencing disadvantage already experience high levels of adversity in their lives and the pandemic has exacerbated these challenges.

Who might be interested in getting involved with this initiative?

There were varying opinions in this regard. Some suggested parents, particularly those with children who have experienced mental health difficulties. Others suggested that sports coaches and members of local sports clubs would be interested in this initiative. Some others suggested college students, particularly those who are studying social/health sciences.

However, some participants felt that there would be very little interest in their local area for people to volunteer to participate in the 'One Good Adult' initiative. This was due to a combination of factors, such as the complexities and responsibilities surrounding the topic of mental health, communities experiencing significant challenges in relation to mental health arising out of environmental factors as well as Covid-19. Additionally, some of the participants stated that it would be difficult to recruit young people in the 18 + age group, with the necessary interest and skills, from their cohort of young people.

One group of youth workers also suggested that it would be very important to develop criteria for prospective participants (both adults and young people) to help ensure the quality and safety of this work.

What would encourage people to become involved with this initiative?

Sufficient information in advance clearly outlining the amount of time and level of commitment required for this work – both in terms of attending training and delivering workshops into the future.

A reassurance that anyone delivering workshops would be sufficiently trained to manage/address any challenging issues potentially arising during the delivery of workshops, e.g. disclosures of suicidal ideation, parental frustration about challenges re accessing mental health services, including Jigsaw.

The opportunity for youth mental health champions to co-deliver with a professional youth worker in the initial stages until the young person is confident and competent in their delivery.

Formal recognition of the time and effort put into this work, for both young people and adults. While it was recognised that formal academic accreditation may not be viable, many participants suggested that a certificate of participation from Jigsaw – outlining the time, commitment and skills attained would be welcomed.

The satisfaction of giving something positive back to local communities and the knowledge that this work would support people during challenging times.

What might be some of the blocks with regard to this initiative?

Fear around the responsibility of addressing the issue of mental health in a public setting.

Concerns about having enough knowledge about the complexities of mental health.

Added pressure in this regard, as a result of living in communities where workshops would be delivered, and then being seen as a 'mental health expert'.

Challenges around establishing and maintaining the limits of confidentiality as a peer educator and a resident in the local community.

Concerns about receiving disclosures in relation to mental health challenges and potential suicidal ideation and the ensuing concern about responding appropriately as well as trying to ensure that disclosures are followed up appropriately.

A lack of confidence on the part of potential participants to deliver a workshop in a public setting.

A lack of experience and/or skill to deliver a workshop.

What could help to address these blocks?

Highlighting to individuals their existing experience and / or skills that they may not have recognised. This was seen as particularly relevant for young people who are in leadership roles in youth services, sports clubs etc.

Targeting people with experience of volunteering in a youth group/sports club/community group in their area.

A reassurance that the training potential participants would receive, and the materials that they would deliver, are pitched at their level, i.e. training and materials that are not overly theoretical, are easy to understand, practical and relevant at local level.

Being very clear about language, terminology and the purpose of this work, i.e. it is not counselling/therapy or any kind of a mental health intervention.

Being very clear about the role and related responsibilities of these champions/advocates

- What exactly are they being asked to do/what is their role?
- What are the related responsibilities/What is beyond their responsibilities?
- What is the level of commitment involved beyond the initial training?

Ensuring that any training delivered builds confidence and capacity on the part of both adults and young people.

What areas should the proposed training programme address?

The basics in relation to mental health – Definitions, what supports/harms mental health, defining mild to moderate mental health issues

Confidence building

Technological aspects of delivering training

Setting up a room in preparation for delivery of a workshop

A basic understanding of group dynamics

Clarifying with a group the purpose of the session and the role of the presenter

Dealing with difficult questions and challenging issues, especially in relation to disclosures around mental health, signposting to services, thresholds for services, referral protocols and waiting lists.

The basics of a T4T

Any training, workshops and accompanying materials should take account of literacy difficulties

There was almost unanimous agreement that this training and subsequent delivery should not take place online for a variety of reasons including the digital divide, exhaustion from zoom, security issues, administrative issues (who's account would be used, scheduling issues etc.) as well as the inadequacy of the online experience to develop the competencies required for this work.

What would be required to support this work?

A structured and resourced network and support structure for the adults and young people involved – where experiences and learnings (both positive and negative) could be shared and processed and where expertise could be accessed as required.

Very clear messaging about the purpose and content of the workshops to be delivered in community to avoid setting up unrealistic expectations.

Other comments

It would be important to start with small steps to encourage people to get involved.

Jigsaw and Mental Health has massive connotations 'Jigsaw Mental Health is scary'.

What does mild to moderate mental health actually mean?? Who will Jigsaw actually see in their services?

Discussions on mental health can become blurred with mental illness and some of the messages can be interpreted as patronizing – e.g. 'If you are feeling depressed get out and go to the gym'

Most participants expressed concerns about the peer education approach for both adults and young people – putting an additional responsibility on them if they live in community and are seen as a resource for mental health concerns – there would need to be great clarity around boundaries.

Some of the youth workers stated that the 'One Good Adult' piece could be delivered by youth workers.

With regard to the signposting piece, there is a lot of frustration in community about the lack of services to address high end mental health issues and the length of time on waiting lists. Adults and young people delivering these workshops would need to be prepared to address questions about looking for referrals for young people and the challenges in this regard. People may feel that they need to have an answer to these questions and they need to be supported to deal with these issues. Prospective peer educators could leave workshops carrying a lot of pressure following disclosures about mental health as well as the issues re lack of services and waiting lists.

'It's a big responsibility to stand up in a room and talk about mental health, particularly for a young person'

Young people getting involved from a youth organisation would need to have a youth worker supporting them in this – questions then arise in relation to how would this would square with the worker's commitments under UBU (SLAs with the ETBs)

Any face to face workshops delivered would have to address something more than what is already readily available online, e.g. from existing Jigsaw or Spunout materials

The target groups for these workshops would have to be clearly defined

'Is this the best time to be looking at rolling out this piece of work – in the midst of a pandemic when waiting lists are so long?'

Feedback from the young people

What is your reaction to this proposal?

In general, the young people participating in the focus groups were unanimous in their support of the proposal. They felt that this is a good time for this work to be happening with the impact of the pandemic on young people's mental health. They also stated that young people would be more receptive to listening to messages about mental health from other young people rather than from adults

'We wouldn't feel like we are being talked down to if it's another young person'

'You need to be able to relate to the person delivering the workshop'

Who might be interested in getting involved with this initiative?

Participants stated that this could be of interest to college students, particularly those studying social/health sciences, psychology or youth work and also to people involved in sports clubs. Some participants also stated that this would be of interest to people who have experience of mental health issues. The group from Scouting Ireland thought that Scout Dens would be a good setting to recruit people to become involved, either as participants or as attendees for workshops, particularly those with experience in leadership roles. Schools and sports clubs were also seen as useful settings to publicise this work. Some of the young people also stated that this would be of interest to parents who had experience with their young people's mental health issues. Young people also referred to the use of social media to spread the message about workshops.

What would encourage people to become involved with this initiative?

A formal recognition of participation and delivery, such as a Certificate of Participation. This would be useful for young people for their CV's and accessing employment, particularly in related fields of study and employment.

The knowledge that this is about contributing to community and this could make a positive change for people in communities.

The opportunity to meet other young people from across the Dublin South city area.

A reassurance that young people would deliver in pairs.

An encouragement for groups/pairs of friends to become involved.

Targeting young people with existing experience in delivering workshops/training to other young people, e.g. the scout groups and some of the young people in the youth service have delivered short pieces of training/information to their peers.

‘The knowledge that you are helping people and the opportunity to give something back’

What might be some of the blocks with regard to this initiative?

Nervousness and/or a lack of confidence on the part of participants about speaking in public and delivering workshops to groups of people

‘The responsibility involved if you know a young person is in trouble with their mental health’

The fear of being judged when talking in public about mental health

‘You could be seen as being soft standing up talking about mental health’

Lack of time and competing demands from school/college/work

What could help to address these blocks?

Being able to deliver in pairs.

Some young people stated that it would be easier to deliver to groups where they did not already know anyone.

Having access to really good training.

What areas should the training address?

There was again almost unanimous agreement that all of the training and subsequent delivery would need to take place face to face. The 20 hours’ proposal (for the initial training Programme) was seen as reasonable. Some felt that the training would work well on Saturdays, while others felt that evenings would be better to take account of young people with weekend jobs.

Feedback on specific content was as follows:

The training programme should be interactive, with lots of group work activity.

‘Not too much PowerPoint in the workshops’

The basics around mental health

The impact of technology and media on mental health.

‘An understanding that people are and feel differently about different things’

Skills in presenting and speaking in public

Warning signs for young people’s mental health

‘How to recognise the warning signs if something is wrong with your mental health’

Knowledge on how to handle a disclosure in relation to a mental health issue

Knowledge on where to signpost a young person with mental health difficulties

What would be required to support this work?

A network for the young people involved to keep in touch, share experiences and challenges

Access to a trained worker who can support the young people delivering, especially if they have to cope with challenging issues

Other comments

‘Sell the message that this is for your community and will help make a change’

Conclusions:

Overall, there was a widespread welcome for this initiative from both groups involved in the consultations. In theory, this work was viewed as important and necessary, particularly in relation to the ongoing and future impact of the pandemic. Both groups of young people were very enthusiastic in terms of their support and interest in the proposal, particularly in relation to the opportunity to give something back to their communities. It is worth noting that many of the young people who participated in the focus groups were third level students and/or were young people who are involved with a youth organisation and had obviously benefited from that participation in terms of their confidence and skills. Some of them expressed an interest in becoming involved with this initiative in the future and they would certainly bring a great deal to this work.

The adult group of youth workers were more cautious and concerned about this work. Concerns were expressed about the assumptions that could be made when workshops are advertised in the name of Jigsaw and Mental Health. While the youth workers and sports volunteers were clear that this work focuses on mental health promotion, they were less confident that this emphasis would be clear to the wider community. One service in particular had experienced significant challenges in relation to accessing referrals for young people with significant mental health issues, including suicidal ideation. They expressed frustration about waiting lists as well as a perceived lack of clarity regarding the criteria for accessing Jigsaw's own mental health services. Specifically, concerns were expressed about:

- The possibility of disclosures being made to young people about mental health issues and suicidal ideation.
- The responsibility, for both adults and young people, attached to delivering workshops on the complex topic of mental health in communities already experiencing significant challenges in this regard.
- The possibility that people attending workshops in community could vent some of their frustrations in relation to experiences around lack of services, waiting lists etc.
- The need for access to ongoing expertise and support re the delivery of workshops.

The volunteers from the Local Sports Partnership were more optimistic about the roll out of this initiative and stated that they believed that there would be good support from sports clubs and schools (in terms of accessing parents) for it.

It is worth noting that it was challenging to recruit participants from the wider community for the consultation. The pandemic was a significant factor in this regard. The possibility that restrictions may continue for some time to come will impact the future of this initiative, particularly given that the majority of respondents stated that the initial training and subsequent delivery of workshops need to take place face to face.

Overall the feedback indicates that:

- Criteria will need to be developed for adults and young people who might participate in this initiative in the future.
- All training delivered and community workshops would need to be delivered on a face to face basis.
- There are significant concerns about the level of responsibility attached to delivering workshops on mental health in community and the message about mental health promotion may be misinterpreted in communities.
- The signposting piece may give rise to frustration in communities where challenges have been experienced in relation to accessing services.
- There is a very clear need to put a comprehensive support structure in place for the 'One Good Adults' and Youth Mental Health Champions, as they progress through the phases of this initiative. Jigsaw would have to consider the potential and capacity for this.

There is also a need to reflect on the following questions:

- What level of commitment is expected from these champions/advocates in terms of delivery of workshops in community? How does the level of commitment balance out with the time required to become competent and confident in delivery?
- Some 18 year olds are still in school – are they potentially part of this initiative or is this group part of the 'Schools initiative'?
- Many of the young people who participated in the consultation, who were recruited through youth organisations, are third level students – does this overlap with other initiatives?
- What capacity exists within Jigsaw to support this initiative on an ongoing basis – in terms of a support network and expert guidance?
- Who is answerable if incorrect information is delivered at a workshop? This links to the wider question of quality assurance? How will this initiative be monitored and evaluated? Will organisations in community have the time and capacity to do this? How will information/statistics/challenges be relayed to Jigsaw?

This report will be completed after the focus group with YAP on March 30th.