



An In-Depth Analysis of a Piece of Work, Planned and Developed by the Student, Demonstrating its Links to Policy

Introduction

This analysis will focus on the planning and delivery of an activity, prepared and developed in an educational and informative manner, where young people were invited to engage in art and craft, during their stay in hospital, as part of a project highlighting down syndrome and the importance to ensure that people with down syndrome felt included and valued, as much as all other children and young people visiting the ward.

The decision to run this project came following a complaint made regarding a patient's sibling, who had down syndrome, whereby a family member felt that the individual had been unfairly treated by a staff member, due to lack of knowledge and understanding.

Art and Craft was chosen because this is a therapeutic activity which allows children and young people to develop holistically, as explained by Raghuram (2024), Carr (2022) argues, a therapeutic approach is vital in Youth Work, it allows us to build relationships and show empathy.

Research

The author took this opportunity to research down syndrome and hold conversations about what could be done as a means of raising awareness, and informally educating staff, patients, and visitors about the importance of making everyone feel valued. It was agreed that a board would be designed to highlight down syndrome, and children and young people on the ward would be invited to partake in art and craft activities, helping to shape the board.

The author researched down syndrome to raise awareness. According to Down Syndrome UK (2022), sunflowers are used to show children and young people that everyone is different and will grow at their own pace. They highlighted that World Down Syndrome Day is celebrated on the 21st of March.

Risk Assessment and Planning

The author then conducted a Risk Assessment of the areas where the project's work would be carried out, factors that were considered were the use of paint, glue, and scissors, which were the materials and tools that the children and young people used throughout this project. The age and abilities of the children and young people were also considered, along with the young people who would be partaking in the project from their bed rather than in the playroom.

Once this Risk Assessment had been completed and agreed by the Manager, the author prepared the materials that would be needed. The author discussed ideas with various children, young people, and team members

about what might look effective. It was agreed that sunflowers would be used as the main feature, given their representation and their bright colours which would catch the eye, this enabled young people to be expressive and participative, in line with the Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes (Youth Work in Wales Review Group, 2022) (YWWRG).

Practice

The author set the space up with the required materials, understanding that Risk Assessing would continue throughout, as under pinned by the National Youth Agency (2023). All children and young people were able to partake in the playroom, which made it a little easier to manage. There was a steady flow of children and young people throughout the day, that were happy to create sunflowers, using different materials. Some young people were happy to ask questions about the project, this opened conversation about down syndrome, becoming an informal but educative conversation, supporting the five pillars of youth work: YWWRG (2022). The author was pleasantly surprised at the engagement and curiosity of the young people, all children and young people seemed to enjoy the project and were happy knowing that their work would be displayed.



Displaying

With support from colleagues and input from some young people, the board was designed to display the artwork that had been created along with facts about Down Syndrome. Together, we were able to display a bright and colourful board, inviting staff, patients, and visitors on the ward to develop their knowledge about Down Syndrome. The author believes the board raises awareness and shows an understanding that anyone with Down Syndrome has the right to be accepted and respected, as explained by Down's Syndrome Association (2021), which supports Sapin's (2013) theory, that all young people should be respected.

Not all the artworks could be displayed on the board, however, the rest were displayed in the playroom.



Conclusion

The author believes that in raising awareness for Down Syndrome, it's a way of advocating for the young person and their family. Carr (2022) acknowledges that when working with young people, we should adopt Rogers (1957), three conditions, which he refers to as core, he describes them as unconditional positive regard, empathy, and congruence, a means of accepting an individual wholeheartedly without judgement. Harrison and Wise (2010) have similar opinions when acknowledging the worth of all young people.

Going forward, the author recognises that raising awareness that further staff training would be beneficial and Youth Work skills could be used to promote this, by involving young people and inviting them to appear in a short film to raise awareness on Down Syndrome. Cameron and Moss (2011) understand that collaborating in project work can be positively engaging and reflective, while Hart (1992) argues that young people should be involved in movements affecting them, as displayed in Hart's ladder of participation.

The author enjoyed developing skills to include empathy, advocacy, leadership, communication, teamwork, and creativity.



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