

INTRgr8

Integrating NGO partners with Totara House Early Intervention in Psychosis Service to improve social recovery and physical health outcomes for Totara clients by having dedicated Community Support Workers and an Active Links Worker embedded into the team at Totara House

Reason for Development of Project

Developed in conjunction between Totara House, Emerge Aotearoa and Comcare Trust as a way of streamlining the allocation of specifically skilled Support Workers to Totara House with the aim of improving social recovery and physical health outcomes for our clients, promoting a holistic approach to the recovery journey.

Indications

Previous problems with CSW provision:

- Community Support Worker skill level was inconsistent leading to an inconsistent level of care provided.
- Communication between the Case Manager at Totara and the Community Support Worker was inconsistent due to a lack of information sharing.
- Training was not specific enough in Early Intervention in Psychosis creating disadvantages when working with this group.
- The referral process to access a Community Support Worker for our clients seemed inefficient.

People living with mental illness are at greater risk of chronic health conditions

Despite a number of initiatives to improve the physical health of our clients including the implementation of the Equally Well initiative, the physical health outcomes of Totara clients remained poor and it was difficult to engage our clients in community fitness activities and healthy lifestyle programmes.

The importance of employment in recovery

One of the biggest predictors for long term recovery following a first episode of psychosis is social functioning and social inclusion, and whether clients are able to return to employment or education. Unfortunately social recovery outcomes have historically been hard to achieve with this population, who face many challenges with their mental health and social situations. Although we would often make good progress in helping someone progress in different aspects of recovery (e.g. symptom and personal recovery), we did not have any specialist vocational support to help clients get back into either work or education.

Method

The pilot began in July 2017 with the appointment of dedicated CSW input from Emerge Aotearoa, and the appointment of Active Links Worker input from Comcare Trust into Totara House. There is also an Employment Consultant from Creative Works (part of Emerge Aotearoa) who is providing dedicated employment support to Totara clients (established in July 2016).

Achievements:

Improved communication/partnerships

Integrated staff have access to Totara In-Service Teaching Sessions, and useful resources at Totara, such as the Oxygen manuals, on different aspects of working in Early Intervention in Psychosis.

Integrated workers attended the national Early Intervention in Psychosis Training Forum held in Christchurch in November 2017. They were also involved in presenting aspects of the projects e.g. the Active Links role in promoting the Equally Well initiatives and development of the Totara House healthy choices cookbook, the role of the Employment Consultant within Totara House; and cultural approaches to working with young people with psychosis.

Community Support Workers, including Active Links Support Workers now attend weekly meetings at Totara with greater discussion focus on 'whole' recovery. They support clients at Totara groups, with the aim of accessing activities/ groups in the community.

Improvement for clients

Gym and cooking group sessions are currently being run at Totara House on a regular basis by our Active Links Worker who is also linking clients into community activities, such as gym sessions at YMCA, increasing participation in community activities which can continue post discharge. Totara gym equipment has been provided through a donation from Comcare.

Totara Healthy Eating Group has been developed with our CDHB Dietitian and our Active Links worker with a healthy cook book resource.

Specialist Vocational support is now offered to our clients and is provided by an Employment Specialist



Next Steps

- Collate survey responses and identify improvement actions.
- Develop supervision/support group for the integrated staff.
- Adapt written job plans for the integrated staff.
- Identify ways to develop the vocational support in line with the IPS model (Individual Placement Support).
- Develop Peer Support into Totara from MindBody (part of EA) which we hope to establish over the next 3-6 months.
- Roll out the healthy eating group programme with Active Links with SWHS Diabetes support.
- Identify/develop targeted outcome measures for integrated workers to use with clients to measure vocational, social and health outcomes.

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