

Promoting Personhood and Citizenship Amongst Individuals with Learning Disabilities: An Occupational Therapy Approach

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Abstract : Background: Agendas continuously emphasise the need to increase work based training and opportunities for individuals with learning disabilities. However research and statistics suggest that there is still significant stigma and stereotypes as to what they can contribute, or gain from being part of the working environment. Method: To tackle some of these prejudices an Occupational Therapy based intervention was developed for learning disability service users working at a social enterprise farm. The intervention aimed to increase positive public perception around individual capabilities and encourage individuals with learning disabilities to take ownership and be proud of their individual personhood and citizenship. This was achieved by using components of the Model of Human Occupation to tailor the intervention to individual values, skills and working contributions. The final project involved making creative wall art for public viewing, focusing on 'who works there and what they do'. This was accompanied by a visitor information guide, allowing individuals to tell visitors about themselves, the work they do and why it is meaningful to them. Outcomes: The intervention has helped to increase mental well-being and confidence of learning disability service users "people will know I work here now" and "I now have something to show my family about the work I do at the farm". The intervention has also increased positive public perception and community awareness "you can really see the effort that's gone into doing this" and "it's a really visual experience to see people you don't expect to see doing this type of work". Resources left behind have further supported individuals to take ownership in creating more wall art to be sold at the farm shop. Conclusion: the intervention developed has helped to improve mental well-being of both service users and staff and improve community awareness. Due to this, the farm has decided to roll out the intervention to other areas of the social enterprise and is considering having more Occupational Therapy involvement in the future.

Keywords : citizenship, intervention, occupational therapy, personhood

Conference Title : ICDD 2016 : International Conference on Disability and Diversity

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : February 25-26, 2016