



R E S E A R C H D I R E C T O R Y



Foreword

This Research Directory documents all the research projects that have been conducted within COPE Foundation between 2000 and 2005. As can be seen projects have spanned diverse fields and the projects contained within this directory highlight the active participation of staff from all disciplines in researching and critically evaluating their work with clients.

Each project which is conducted within COPE Foundation has been rigorously monitored by an active Research Ethics Committee who evaluate all proposals prior to their being conducted. The researchers involved are also bound by the principles of best research practice as laid out in the COPE Foundation policy document Codes of Ethics and Principles of Good Research Practice. The Research Committee ensure that best practice is maintained and upheld at all times throughout the project lifespan.

Following completion of the projects recommendation are put forward by the researchers and where possible and appropriate these recommendations are implemented and monitored. It is the intention of the Research Department that these recommendations contribute positively to our knowledge and understanding of the nature of intellectual disability and will consequently improve the quality of life of our clients and help them to fulfil their full potential

As can be noted from the directory contents, many projects have been published in peer-reviewed journals and have also been presented locally, nationally and internationally to ensure dissemination of findings to as wide an audience as possible.

I hope that this directory will prove to be a very valuable tool for all those engaging in research into intellectual disability in the future and look forward to continued growth of our knowledge and expertise in this field.

I salute the researchers who have shown the foresight and motivation to critically evaluate their work and how they do it.

Maura Nash
Chief Executive
January 2006



Research Department

The Research Department is based at Bonnington House, Montenotte, Cork. The objectives of the Department are to promote the research profile of COPE Foundation, and to encourage an eagerness among staff to engage in research activities across the organisation.

The Research Department also aims to ensure that COPE Foundation is a centre of excellence in the field of intellectual disability studies by encouraging projects which contribute to our understanding of the needs of people with disability, the improvement of services and a better quality of service for our clients.

A growing collection of journals and valuable resource materials relating to intellectual disability are also housed in the Department. These are available for loan or for consultation by staff engaging in, or interested in pursuing a research project.

Many research projects large and small have been supported and carried out. They span a broad range of disciplines in the field of intellectual disability. Findings from these projects are presented at the COPE Foundation bi-annual Research Seminar.

These seminars are attended by staff, management and other professionals working in the field of intellectual disabilities nationwide.

The Research Department also presents its findings nationally and internationally.

Research News is the quarterly newsletter, which chronicles the ongoing projects of the department and provides reviews of recent conferences and other events relevant to intellectual disability research. Findings are also published in peer-reviewed journals relevant to intellectual disability.

The Department has recently published its policy document on conducting research within COPE Foundation and its Research Strategy for 2006-2010. These documents are a starting point for anyone considering carrying out a research project within COPE Foundation. It also contains a proposal form and other materials, which are necessary to complete before submitting a proposal to the research committee.

The door of the Department is always open for anyone who would like to discuss a research topic or just visit to discuss their ideas.



The Ageing Process in People with Learning Disability: A Comparison Study of People With and Without Down's Syndrome.

Longitudinal Study Ongoing

Author(s): Tierney, Edel
Julianne Adamson, Jenny O'Meara,
Suzanne Graham, Rosemary MacHale,
Mari O'Mahony, Sara Lewis

Department: Research Department

Abstract:

Due to increasing life expectancy, adults with a learning disability and especially those with Down's Syndrome are suffering from age related illness and conditions. Failure to monitor health and functional abilities of ageing persons regularly with a battery of suitable tests over a lengthy period of time may lead to inadequate provision of services, and the inability of carers to meet changing needs and plan services adequately. The objective of this study is to monitor and document the health status and abilities of a group of ageing individuals in COPE Foundation. Additionally it is proposed to compare the ageing patterns of clients with and without Down's Syndrome. It is hypothesised that clients with Down's Syndrome will be more susceptible to the effects of ageing as demonstrated by their performance on a battery of tests over a 10 year period. Preliminary data analysis is presented from this longitudinal study.

This information will be crucial when designing and evaluating services for and in the future.

Key Words: Down's Syndrome, Ageing, Cognitive Processes

A Survey of Problem behaviour Among the Client Population of COPE Foundation.

2000

Author(s): Desmond, M., Fitzgerald, M., Quinlan, D. Smith, M. & Tierney, E.

Department: Nursing, Psychology and Research Departments.

Abstract:

This survey was undertaken to examine the extent of problem behaviours being presented by clients throughout COPE Foundation. The focus of the study was the prevalence of problem behaviours as perceived by staff. The entire client population of COPE Foundation was surveyed (N=1210). Problem behaviours were assessed using a research schedule developed by the research team. This questionnaire examined the presence and/or absence of 48 problematic or challenging behaviours. Categories of behaviours examined were Dangerous to Self, Dangerous to Staff, Dangerous to other Clients, Destructive to Property, Disruptive, Absconding and Non-Physical Problematic Behaviours. Behaviours were assessed by four scales; Yes/No: The behaviour did/did-not occur, a five point frequency scale, a five point severity scale and a 5 point management difficulty scale. In addition to this the survey also included a copy of The Checklist of Challenging Behaviour (Harris, Humphreys & Thomson, 1994). Demographic variables examined included, levels of disability, age, gender, residential status and day placement. The survey schedule was completed by frontline staff who were most familiar with the client.

Results of the survey indicated that of the total client population, 59.9% (n=721) were reported to display at least one problem behaviour. The behaviour categories which were cited to occur most frequently overall were Non Physical Problematic Behaviours and Disruptive Behaviours. The most frequently cited types of behaviour were reported to be psychological disturbance, pesters, wanders and argues. Results of the study were examined in detail and analysed according to levels of disability, gender age, residential status and day placement. It also gives an account of the least problematic behaviours (among those clients who presented problem behaviour) and looks briefly at the findings from the Checklist of Challenging Behaviour.

Generally, findings concur with studies in the literature, but methodological issues make adequate comparisons difficult. Implications of the findings are explored and recommendations for future research are made

Key Words: Problem Behaviour, Challenging Behaviour, Survey, Behaviour Checklist



The Relationship Between Memory Skills (Auditory and Visual) and Reading and Spelling Ability for a Sample of Children with Specific Learning Disabilities

2000

Author(s): Atkins, M. & Tierney, E.
Department: Psychology and Research Departments

Abstract:

A review of the literature has revealed that a relationship exists between Auditory Sequential Memory skills (ASM), Visual Sequential Memory skills (VSM) and reading and spelling ability. The most consistent research finding is that individuals with reading difficulties have difficulty recalling sequences of letters and numbers when presented in an auditory-verbal format. The present study examined the relationship between ASM, VSM, and reading and spelling ability for children with specific learning disabilities. Memory skills were assessed using the Aston Index. Reading ability was measured by the Young Group Reading Test and spelling ability was assessed by the Schonell Graded Spelling Test. These children were receiving full-time remedial tuition in St. Killian's School. The results of the study noted that a significant positive relationship existed between ASM and reading/spelling ability, i.e. lower scores on ASM were related to lower scores on reading and spelling and consequently higher scores on ASM were related to better developed reading and spelling abilities. This was also the case for VSM. When the relationship between Auditory Sequential Memory skills, Visual Sequential Memory skills and age was examined it was very interesting to note that while visual sequential memory skills increased with age for the sample studied, this was not the case for auditory sequential memory skills. These results suggest that these children with specific reading/spelling disabilities have particular deficits in auditory memory skills. It was also noted in the study that almost a third of the children had attended a speech and language therapist, the professional most frequently attended outside the school. This finding again highlights the auditory-verbal difficulties children with specific learning difficulties may experience. Other variables were also included in the study, e.g. IQ, medical conditions, history of family literacy difficulties. The above results are discussed and suggestions for preventive measures and intervention strategies in the area of specific literacy disabilities are given

Key Words: Memory Skills, Reading, Spelling, Specific Learning Difficulties

Publication: Atkins, M. & Tierney, E. (2004) Memory skills and specific learning difficulties. *Reach Journal of Special Needs in Ireland*, 17(2), 81-92



A Repertory Grid Study of Siblings Perspectives of Family Members Coping Styles in the Presence of a Sibling with an Intellectual Disability.

2000

Author(s): Dineen, C.

Department: Psychology Department

Completed in Part-Fulfilment for PSI Dip. in Clinical Psychology

Abstract:

The aim of this study was to explore sibling's perspectives of personal and family coping styles when a family member has a learning disability. Kelly's (1955) repertory grid technique was employed to explore the sibling's constructs in relation to family members' coping styles. This method helped elicit an insight into family members' coping styles as perceived by the siblings. Each sibling construed family members' different efforts to manage demands they perceived as existing for them. Such demands related to situations involving the child with a learning disability. This technique also illustrates how the dynamics change as the sibling construe these family members in different triadic combinations. The Adolescent Coping Scale (Frydenberg and Lewis, 1993) was also completed by the twenty participating siblings. This scale was utilized to explore sibling's personal coping styles in relation to both general and specific concerns. The specific concern which siblings were asked to consider was; 'any situations, issues or events that I have to cope with in relation to my sibling with a learning disability'. It offered a means of exploring whether siblings construals of coping styles used in relation to situations involving their learning disabled siblings were representative of those utilized generally.

When analyzing the repertory grid data, the constructs elicited and perceived by siblings as the most preferred way of coping were used to divide the siblings' grids into separate groups. For example, when the triad Self, Mum, Dad was presented, Group A consisted of siblings who construed themselves as coping in the most preferred way while siblings in Group B construed themselves as using the least preferred way of coping. The focused grids were then further categorized into groups (according to elicited constructs) which related to siblings' preferred ways of coping when presented with the remaining three triads. The Adolescent Coping Scale data was transferred to individual and group Profile Charts. These charts provided a graphic illustration of different coping strategies used in response to both general and specific situations.

Key Words: Siblings, Repertory Grid, Coping Styles, Adolescent Coping Scale



Patterns of Leisure and Recreation use of Adolescents with a Mild Learning Disability.

2000

Author(s): Buttimer, J. and Tierney, E.

Department: Psychology and Research Departments

Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to investigate the leisure and recreational use of teenagers over the age of 16 years with a learning disability attending full-time special educational provision. Two samples participated in this study. Sample one were students attending a second level school for pupils with special educational needs. The second were parents of these students. A total of 34 student and parent response forms were used in the final data analysis. Information and data were obtained via an adapted version of the TRAIL Leisure Assessment Battery (TLAB) for people with cognitive impairments (Dattilo & Hoge, 1997).

Analysis of the data revealed that the majority of students were engaging in passive, solitary activities with high dependency on other family members. There was some disagreement between parents and students with respect to choice of activity and participation with others. The results indicated the need for a home-school based supported leisure programme with an emphasis on the development of leisure and friendship skills.

Key Words: Leisure, Recreation, Adolescents, Intellectual Disability

Publication: Buttimer, J. & Tierney, E. (2005) Patterns of leisure and participation among adolescents with a mild intellectual disability. *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities*, 9(1), 1-18



Needs and Future Service Requirements of Former COPE Foundation Clients.

2000

Author(s): Grant, P. and McCloskey, D.

Department: Social Work Department

Abstract:

This study was undertaken as anecdotal evidence from former clients suggested that they were experiencing difficulties in many areas of their lives.

While many appeared to be glad that they had left a specialised intellectual disability service, such as COPE Foundation, many were reporting difficulties in accessing mainstream support services, for example, FAS, CERT, counselling, local authority housing, and further education.

As no agency has a statutory responsibility for this group, they tended to return to COPE Foundation looking for supports.

The main issues former clients raised were in relation to accommodation, health, recreation, coming to terms with disability, further education and employment.

The level of support being requested was such that it was decided to undertake a research project to more specifically identify the current status, needs, and future service requirements of COPE Foundation's former clients.

This report gives a brief overview of the literature in this area, it describes the research methodology in detail, and looks at the findings of this research project under the headings of :

- Accommodation
- Health
- Social and Recreational needs
- Image of COPE Foundation
- Education
- Employment

Implications of these findings are discussed and recommendations are made with regard to the future service requirements of these individuals.

Key Words: Former Clients, Service Delivery, Mainstream Services, Satisfaction



Euro Awareness with People with Intellectual Disabilities

2001

Author(s): Sinead Browne

Department: Research Department

Funded in part by the Euro Changeover Board of Ireland (ECBI)

Abstract:

In 2001 The Euro Changeover Board of Ireland made grants available to non-governmental organisations to meet the costs of activities aimed at promoting awareness of the Euro among the public or among significant sectors of the public. Included as a significant sector were people with special needs, including people with disabilities and people with low levels of literacy. COPE Foundation received funding under this programme in order to provide Euro training to people with intellectual disabilities. In total 424 clients received training, across all services within COPE Foundation.

To evaluate the training clients were tested on their knowledge of the Euro, recognition of coins/notes and awareness of value of the Euro before and after training took place.

A training schedule was drawn up which consisted of six elements or stages. Each session was pitched to suit individual ability levels. Video and games were also used to as training materials.

This report discusses the findings of the Euro Awareness training programme and makes recommendations for future training.

Key Words: Euro Changeover, Currency Training



Euro Awareness and Training with Adult Clients of COPE Foundation

2002

Author(s): Sinead Browne

Department: Research Department

Funded in part by the Euro Changeover Board of Ireland (ECBI).

Abstract:

This report details the activities carried out under the remit of Euro Awareness Training within COPE Foundation from June 2001 to February 2002; a time-frame which represents Phase 2 of the Euro Training Project. Phase 1 of the project took place from January 2001 to May 2001 and is documented in a previous report (see Browne, 2001).

An approximate total of 500 clients of COPE Foundation received training in the use of the Euro. An educational video on the Euro was made in participation with a group of clients. The project was evaluated qualitatively. These training activities, their impact on the clients and implications for future such training are discussed.

Key Words: Euro, Awareness Training, Educational Video, Qualitative Analysis



Continuing the Successful Integration of Preschool Children with a Mild/Moderate Learning Disability into Local/ Community Preschools

2002

Author(s): Burns, D.

Department: Rainbow Lodge Pre-School

Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to examine what 'supports' and 'resources' are required to continue to successfully integrate children with a mild and moderate intellectual disability into community pre-schools. The study involved 28 participants, made up of 14 parent representatives and 14 pre-school teachers. The children involved attended both 'special pre-school' in conjunction with 'inclusive mainstream community pre-schools'. The questionnaire sought to elicit information and data of a quantitative and qualitative nature, through the use of a 28-item questionnaire. Information such as pre-school teachers attitude, pupil to teacher ratio, pre-school teacher qualifications, parental views on how special pre-schools can assist their children, what supports have been made available and what if any are the benefits for intellectually disabled children in the mainstream pre-schools. Analysis of the data also revealed that there can be a number of variations within the community pre-schools, including children with other disabilities being present at one time, different pupil to teacher ratios and years of teaching experience. However, the results revealed a positive attitude from both pre-school teachers, mainstream peers and their parents towards intellectually disabled children being present in these community pre-schools, it also revealed that there are a number of benefits for all with this 'inclusive' pre-school education. The results however indicate the definite need to work collaboratively with the community pre-school teachers giving them further support, advice and information on how best they can enhance their own pre-school programmes, whilst maximising the benefits of early intervention for all involved in this inclusive pre-school enrolment.

Key Words: Community Preschool, Mainstreaming, Mild and Moderate Intellectual Disability, Inclusive Education



Evaluation of Home Support: A Pilot Scheme for Pre-School Attenders

2002

Author(s): Daly, M.

Department: Community Nurse

Abstract:

This study evaluated the provision of a Home Support Pilot Scheme for Pre-School Attenders with special needs and their families. It looks at the benefits derived for the individual children and their families. The differences encountered during the schemes' implementation have been identified.

Three separate questionnaires were designed to be completed by Parents, Pre-School Co-ordinator and Home Support Worker. Four families participated in the evaluation.

Overall results revealed that this scheme has been worthwhile. However, for this scheme to be viable in the future, more resources would be needed for organising staff and parent training.

Key Words: Home Support, Pilot Scheme, Community



Parents Perceptions and Experience of the Early Intervention Service Within COPE Foundation.

2002

Author(s): McSweeney, M.

Department: Nursing Department

Abstract:

The main aim of this study was to examine parents/guardians' views of the existing Early Intervention Service for Children (Birth-6 years) within COPE Foundation.

A postal questionnaire was sent to 29 families of children with intellectual disabilities who currently avail of COPE Foundation's Early Intervention Service (Birth -6 years age group). Twenty-one (72%) families in total responded to the questionnaires. Overall, attitudes towards service provision were mixed. Eight (38%) families felt the organisation did provide a comprehensive service. Seven (33.4%) families did not agree and felt the service was not comprehensive, six families (26.6%) were unsure. Qualitative data submitted by participants highlighted the areas of the service which proved satisfactory, and areas of the service which clearly required improvement.

Since the commencement of this study, COPE Foundation has made significant number of changes in its Early Intervention Service, which have addressed a number of the participants' issues/concerns. From the findings of the study, however, further service improvement is required and a number of recommendations are made in how to achieve this.

Key Words: Early Intervention, Parents Perceptions, Postal Questionnaire



Sibshops: An Evaluation of An Interagency Model

2002

Author(s): D'Arcy, F., Flynn, J., McCarthy, Y. and Tierney, E.

Department: An Interagency Project carried out between COPE Foundation, Brothers of Charity Cork and Enable Ireland Cork.

Abstract:

Cork Sibshops is an interagency programme developed by COPE Foundation, Brothers of Charity Services and Enable Ireland in participation with an adult sibling and a parent in Cork. These three agencies provide services for adults and children with intellectual and physical disabilities. The Cork Sibshops programme is based on the model developed by Don Meyer, Director of the Sibling Support Project, Seattle, Washington and has been running since 1998. Sibshops are run on a group-work model, where a group of siblings (usually aged between 8-14 years) come together to share information about their brothers and sisters with disabilities and to have fun. Each participant attends Sibshops on a Saturday morning, once a month for four months. The structure and content of the Sibshops follows the model developed by Don Meyer.

In the third year of Sibshops in Cork, it was decided to conduct a research project to evaluate the effectiveness of Sibshops in meeting its aims. These are to reduce isolation, to meet other siblings, to have opportunities to share their experiences of having a family member with a disability and to learn about the implications of disabilities and services available. Interviews were conducted with eighteen children prior to attending the Sibshops between February and May 2001. Follow up interviews were also conducted five months later following attendance at the Sibshops. Quantitative and qualitative data were extracted from the semi-structured interviews and analysed using SPSS and content analysis. The Piers Harris Children's Self Concept Scale was also administered pre and post Sibshop attendance. These findings are discussed. Information from this project also provides the inter-agency group with valuable information regarding the effectiveness of Sibshops and the value of such a model in enabling siblings to discuss their experiences.

Recommendations are made to enhance practice with regard to organisation of Sibshops, the content of Sibshops, staffing and structure of the programme, and how to maintain effective inter-agency links.

Key Words: Siblings, Sibshops, Evaluation, Interagency, Interviews

Publication: D'Arcy, F., Flynn, J., McCarthy, Y., O'Connor, C. & Tierney, E.
(2005) Sibshops: An evaluation of an Interagency model.
Journal of Intellectual Disabilities, 9(1), 1-5



An Exploration of Supported Employment within COPE Foundation

2003

Author(s): Browne, S. and Nash, P.

Department: Research Department and QDS (formerly HELP Industries Industrial Division)

Abstract:

This study set out to explore the issues surrounding Supported Employment within COPE Foundation from the perspectives of 3 different groups of stakeholders;

1. Clients in supported employment,
2. Parents / family members of clients in supported employment, and
3. Employers who offer employment to clients of COPE Foundation

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 25 supported employees, 10 of their parents or family members, 10 employers of supported employees and with 7 support staff from COPE Foundation. These interviews were tape recorded, transcribed, and analysed.

A number of benefits of supported employment and a number of difficulties or needs were identified from the analysis. Supported Employment as illustrated by the experiences reflected in this document appears to be a positive experience for all concerned. The benefits of supported employment reported in the literature section of this report seem to be replicated. The future of supported employment as an option in a learning disability service seems certain. The difficulties and the needs identified are reflective of needs and difficulties experienced by people with learning disabilities in all areas of their lives. This research reinforces the need for training in personal development, language and communications, life and social skills and functional academics to continue across the lifespan of people with learning disabilities. It also clearly illustrates the potential of people with learning disabilities to be gainfully employed, with varying needs for support.

Key Words: Supported Employment, Training, Semi-Structured Interviews



Work For All

2003

Author(s): A Participatory Project

Contact: Tierney, E., Mullane, J., Sheehan, J and Buckley, V.

Department: Research Department, COPE Industries- Mallow, Avondhu Development, Kaleidoscope Drama Company and Frameworks Community Video Productions.

Funded by the European Year of People with Disabilities (in conjunction with the NDA)

Through the model of Participatory Action and Learning, service users with an intellectual disability initiated the project through consultation with fellow service users, employers, staff members and a local video production team. Discussion involved all service users. The aim of the project was to produce a video, which interviewed participants with a learning disability/intellectual disability who are currently employed in the community, those in sheltered employment and employers in the community. A partnership approach was employed. A video was produced and was presented to potential employers and business people in the North Cork region. It is perceived that this will create new employment opportunities for individuals with a learning disability/intellectual disability in the North Cork area.

Key Words: Participatory Research, Video Production, Employment



Investigating Symbolic Play in Children with Down's Syndrome

2003

Author(s): O'Toole, C.

Department: Speech and Language Therapy

Abstract:

Understanding the relationship between preverbal skills and language development has important implications for identifying communication delay/disorders and for early childhood intervention. In the case of children with Down's syndrome it is well established that symbolic play is associated with the emergence of language. However the exact nature of this relationship remains unclear, as many previous studies have addressed functional play and not actual symbolic play, which is felt to have stronger links to language development. This study examined how two preverbal symbolic skills- symbolic play and symbolic comprehension- were related to language development and nonverbal cognition in a sample of 21 children with Down's syndrome. When effects of chronological age were partialled out, symbolic play and symbolic comprehension were significantly correlated with each other and with expressive and receptive language, but not with nonverbal ability. The association between language and symbolic measures was strongest in the younger children but started to dissociate with increasing age and language development. The data support the proposition that language becomes more domain specific as a result of experience and development (Karmiloff-Smith 1998). The results from the symbolic comprehension experiment revealed that the children found gestures easier to understand than miniatures or substitute objects used as abstract symbols to represent other objects. The findings indicate that tests of symbolic functioning offer valuable contributions to assessment and intervention in children with Down's syndrome and to understanding disorders of language and communication.

Key Words: Down's Syndrome, Symbolic Play, Understanding of Symbols, Language Development, Assessment, Intervention.

Publication: O'Toole, C. and Chiat, S. (in press) Symbolic Functioning and Language Development in children with Down's syndrome. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*



Volunteering in COPE Foundation: Antecedents, Experiences and Consequences of Volunteering

2003

Author(s): MacNeela, P. O'Meara, J. and Tierney, E.

Department: Research Department; Carried out in Conjunction with DCU School of Nursing.

Abstract:

This report presents interim findings of a study of volunteering at COPE Foundation conducted jointly with the School of Nursing, Dublin City University. The aim of the study was to identify the current place of volunteering in COPE Foundation. Volunteers comprise an important resource for groups in the voluntary sector in Ireland. Regardless of their current level of reliance on volunteer resources, voluntary groups generally have volunteering roots, arising through social action (e.g., the Simon Community), religious influences (e.g., the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul), concern over a particular issue (e.g., the Samaritans), or through mutual needs and interests (e.g., parents' groups developing into organisations to assist children with a learning disability). These roots are likely to help shape the culture of the organisation (e.g., common goals, norms, and communications). As funding sources become available to support the achievement of organisational goals, the organisation generally becomes less reliant on volunteers. As a result the role of volunteering varies considerably across organisations.

This report explores these relationships in a cross section of voluntary bodies across the country, including COPE Foundation.

Key Words: Volunteers, Organisational Culture,

Report: MacNeela, P. (2003) *Individuals and Organisations: An exploration of the Volunteering Process in Health and Social Care Groups*. School of Nursing, Dublin City University



Preparation for Independent Living

2004

Author(s): Flynn, J.
Department: Research Department and Social Work Department

Abstract:

This research project was undertaken as a response to the results from a needs analysis of former clients of COPE Foundation (see Grant and McCluskey, 2000). A grant was received from the Education Equality Initiative, which aimed to address the gaps in provision for specific marginalized groups. The grant supported a three-year project (2001-2003) which aimed to; equip persons with a mild intellectual disability with the skills required to live independently, provide the necessary supports to do so and to provide a wider choice of living arrangements for the target group.

The target group were former clients with a mild intellectual disability, who had expressed an interest in living independently, but who felt they lacked the necessary skills and in particular those who had requested some support in the area of employment, personal issues, accommodation and independent living skills. Six men and seven women attended the project. They ranged in age from 25-40 years.

Classes were held from October 2001 until September 2002. These classes covered such topics as Independent Living Training (NPTC module), Literacy (NPTC, NALA modules), Safety and First Aid, Relaxation and Stress Management, Social and Recreational Skills, Health and Nutrition, Euro and Budgeting and residential stays and weekends away. Contacts were also made and maintained with other community groups.

Participants were involved in the planning and the development of the course. Evaluation was carried out through questionnaires completed after each class. Pre and post interviews were also completed with participants. Feedback was collected from the tutors and parents/significant others through interviews and questionnaires. Qualitative and quantitative data was used to evaluate the project. This information may be used to influence policy on provision of services for the target group.

Key Words: Independent Living, Education, Life-Long Learning, Education Equality Initiative, Former Clients, Programme Evaluation

A Plain/Simple English Version of this Report is Also Available.



Improving Handwriting Skills of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties. Is Occupational Therapy Intervention Effective?

2004

Author(s): Worrall, A. and O'Shea, E.

Department: Occupational Therapy Department

Abstract:

Handwriting is one of the most complex skills we learn and teach. It requires not only motor control but also sophisticated sensory, perceptual, motor planning and cognitive functions, and the integration of these functions. The focus of this study was to determine the effectiveness of an occupational therapy intervention devised by the researchers on functional performance in handwriting and also to explore the relationship between traditional product-orientated educational methods and process-orientated methods used in occupational therapy. It has been established that an appreciation of the multiple factors that contribute to handwriting acquisition is important to providing effective remediation (Cornhill & Case-Smith, 1996) and that a combination of approaches is more successful than a single approach. The current study involved integration of multiple theoretical perspectives based on evidence from previous research.

The final sample consisted of 10 students from St Killian's School for Students with Specific Learning Difficulties who were randomly assigned to an occupational therapy intervention group (experimental) or a control group. The experimental group then received 3 sessions a week of occupational therapy intervention for 8 weeks. The control group did not receive direct occupational therapy intervention and continued with traditional teaching. Both groups were assessed pre and post intervention using a modified version of the Ealing Occupational Therapy Service Handwriting Checklist and other measures. Analyses of the results demonstrate statistical significant improvement in biomechanical/ergonomic components of handwriting, and although no other area showed statistical significance there was a trend towards improvement in quality of handwriting over time, speed of writing and student self evaluation. While some changes were noted in the control group, the experimental group made the most gains showing that occupational therapy intervention is effective in enhancing handwriting performance for students with learning difficulties.

Key Words: Handwriting Learning Difficulties, Occupational Therapy, Intervention



A Comparative Study: Staff Perceptions of Bereavement and Learning Disability and the Experience of Bereavement among Adults with a Learning Disability.

2004

Author(s): Rosemary MacHale, Psychologist in Clinical Training,
Department: Psychology Department

Completed in part-fulfilment for PSI Diploma in Clinical psychology

Abstract:

The aim of the present study was two-fold. The first purpose was to examine the concepts of death among adults with intellectual disabilities. The understanding of death of 34 adults with intellectual disabilities ranging in age from 19 to 57 years with a mean IQ of 54 was assessed using the Concept of Death Assessment-Adapted (CODA-Adapted). Results indicated that adults with intellectual disabilities generally had a good understanding of the concepts of death. Findings revealed higher functioning adults with intellectual disabilities demonstrated a more developed understanding of the concepts of death than lower functioning adults with intellectual disabilities. The second aim of the study was to examine staff perceptions of understanding concepts of death and the grieving process for adults with intellectual disabilities. Staff perceptions were gathered from 42 participants with a mean age of 40.7 years using on the Index of Social Competence (ISC) and Staff Attitude Questionnaire (STAQ). Results suggest that staff had accurate perceptions of the participants' ability to conceptualise death with staff recognising the emotional impact bereavement could have on adults with intellectual disabilities. Staff responses on the STAQ revealed a general lack of confidence in supporting bereaved individuals with intellectual disabilities through the grieving process. Further analysis was carried out to examine possible variables influencing death understanding in adults with intellectual disabilities. The results were discussed in light of previous research in this area and, in particular, the issue of low staff confidence in providing bereavement support was highlighted. Suggestions for future research with the CODA-Adapted were presented and the clinical implications of both service user and staff bereavement training programmes were outlined.

Key Words: Bereavement, Staff Perception, Interviews, Concept of Death, Index of Social Competence, Staff Attitude Questionnaire



Evaluation of the Three-Day Training Course 'Understanding and Responding to Challenging Behaviour'

2004

Author(s): Tierney, E., Quinlan, D. & Browne, S.,

Department: Research Department and Nursing Department

Abstract:

Training staff in appropriate ways to deal with challenging behaviour has been documented to improve emotional reactions, increase staff confidence and reduce the negative impact to staff who work with clients who display challenging behaviour.

The objective of this study was to evaluate a three-day training course entitled 'Understanding and Responding to Challenging Behaviour'. The impact of training on participants' attributions about and emotional reactions towards challenging behaviours were measured. Perceived self-efficacy and thoughts about challenging behaviour were also measured.

The participants in this study were staff from intellectual disability services in the Southern Health Board Region (N=49). Participants completed a postal questionnaire prior to and 3 months after attending the training course. This questionnaire was adapted from Hastings and various authors (See Hastings & Brown 2002).

Findings indicated that training significantly increased staff's perceived self-efficacy and reduced negative thoughts relating to incidents of challenging behaviour. However, staff's attributions about the causes of challenging behaviour did not change significantly following training nor did it reduce their negative emotional reactions to challenging behaviour. Although there was no change in negative emotional reactions following course attendance, there was a significant negative correlation between perceived self- efficacy and depression/anger and fear/anxiety. This finding implies that developing perceived self-efficacy in staff who work with challenging behaviour will reduce feeling of depression/anger and fear/anxiety. In addition, focusing on reducing worries/thoughts about challenging behaviour can reduce the stress associated with these thoughts.

When designing training programmes in the future, content could focus on developing staffs' positive rather than negative aspects of their work with clients with challenging behaviour. Focusing on the positive rather than the negative aspects of their work may serve as an adaptive function for staff.

Key Words: Staff Training, Challenging Behaviour, Attributions, Perceived Self-Efficacy, Emotional Reactions, Thoughts/Worries

Publication: Tierney, E. Quinlan, D. & Hastings, R. (in press) Brief Report: Impact of a Three-Day Training Course on Challenging Behaviour on Staff Cognitive and Emotional Responses *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities; Special issue on Staff Training.*



An Evaluation of the COPE Foundation Drop-In Club

2004

Author(s): McCluskey, D

Department: Research Department

The Drop-In Club commenced in May 1998 in response to former clients' request for the provision of a Social Club. Many of these former clients, who had taken the option of supported/open employment, had found themselves becoming increasingly socially isolated. They had lost contact with previous friends from COPE Foundation. The Drop-In Club was set up in response to this expressed need by former clients. It was anticipated that the Club would facilitate people to form and strengthen friendships that would continue outside of the Drop-In-Club.

The Club offered a venue for friends to meet and chat. Light refreshments were available. In addition structured activities e.g. discos, cinema visits, ten-pin bowling and bingo were organised. The Club also offered the opportunity for former clients to avail of social work support and advice.

This study, 'An Evaluation of the COPE Foundation Drop-In-Club' presents a profile of Club Users and explores the extent to which the Drop-In-Club supports Club Users in their everyday lives. In addition the study presents the Club Users opinions about the type of service which they require. The study has been carried out six years after the Drop-In-Club was originally set up.

Key Words: Former Clients; Drop-in Club, Leisure and Recreation



Early Intervention Family Support – Pilot Project

2004

Authors: Rees, D.; Burns, D.; Kirkpatrick, V.; Daly, M.; and Tierney, E.

Department: Psychology, Speech and Language, Early Intervention and Research Departments

Abstract:

The purpose of this pilot project was to investigate a more comprehensive service to children with an intellectual disability between the ages 0 – 6 using existing resources. This was achieved by promoting parental involvement in the overall assessment, plan and delivery of service.

Five families and four Key Workers from diverse professions participated in the one-year project. Key Workers undertook to develop a collaborative working relationship with the family based on understanding and shared purpose. Key Workers facilitated collaboration between all persons from multiple disciplines and organisations involved in the care and education of the family. All persons involved worked toward common goals formulated according to the needs of the child and his/her family.

Families benefited from Key Worker involvement in diverse ways. The family focused service delivery is a move away from the child centred approach. It promotes 'inclusion' where local services are accessed and the community serves as a resource for the family.

Key Words: Intellectual disability, Early Intervention, Child and Family Centred Service.



'Same but Different': Living in the community with an intellectual disability.

2005

Author: Flynn, J.

Department: Social Work Department

Research Completed in fulfillment for Masters in Applied Social Studies
University College Cork.

Abstract:

This study presents the lives of twelve adults living in the community with an intellectual disability in their own words. It aims to assess how social policy expressed through the disability services, social services, education and employment services support their right to the same opportunities as the non-disabled population. COPE Foundation ran a Preparation for Independent Living Project for three years to meet the needs of adults with an intellectual disability living in the community (Flynn: 2004). The findings of that project highlighted that the needs of this cohort group were not recognised or met within mainstream or disability services.

The developments occurring within social policy in Ireland are outlined particularly regarding mainstreaming of training and employment support, the development of a National Intellectual Database, the proposed Disability Act and the Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill 2003; raising the question as to their relevance to people with an intellectual disability living in the community. There is a description of the development of the intellectual disability services in Ireland. The definitions and classification of disability currently in use that control access to services are outlined. The models of disability, which have nationally and internationally influenced attitudes and services, are critiqued.

Research methods used within the disability community are outlined and critiqued particularly the use of Quality of Life Scales. The study also discusses the function of social workers within the disability sector and their use of research to uphold principles of practise in relation to the rights of people with disabilities.

Key Words: Social Model, Definition of Disability, Independent Living, Rights, Social Policy, Research Methodologies Social Work and Research
A Plain/Simple English Version of this Report is Also Available.



An Evaluation of the Quality of Life of Clients with Severe Learning Disabilities in Small Group Homes

2005

Author(s): Dalton, C. and Williams, J.

Department: Nursing Department

Abstract:

There has been considerable controversy regarding whether or not people with moderate/ severe learning disabilities should live in small group homes in the community. Some authors, for example Menolascino & McGee (1991) suggest that even people with the most severe of learning disabilities can live in the community, if the appropriate supervision & developmental opportunities are in place. Others such as Elis et al (1989) argue that residential care is more suitable for people with severe learning disabilities as they require an enriched programme in a sheltered environment.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the outcome following a move from a large residential setting to small group homes within the community.

The authors measured the outcome for clients in terms of change, either positive or negative in behaviour and overall quality of life. A quantitative, longitudinal study with descriptive elements was undertaken using "the Adaptive Behavioural Scale" (Nihira et al 1993) and "Compass Quality Of Life Tool" (Cragg and look 1992).

The authors propose that this study is of importance and benefit in providing research based evidence of the appropriateness of and future planning of group home settings for people with severe learning disabilities and challenging behaviour.

Key Words: Quality of Life, Residential Vs Community Living, Behaviour



Parents' Perceptions of Respite Care Facilities Within COPE Foundation For Their Child With A Learning Disability.

2005

Author(s): McSweeney M.

Department: Nursing Department

Abstract:

COPE Foundation currently provides valuable respite care facilities to school aged children with Learning Disabilities and their families. Aims of the study were:

- To examine parents'/guardians' views and perceptions of the existing respite care facilities for their child with a Learning Disability within COPE Foundation.
- To highlight existing respite care facilities for children with Learning Disabilities within the organisation.
- To gather data on other respite care facilities to assist in developing the service provided by COPE Foundation and
- To enhance the capacity of families to meet the special needs of children with Learning Disabilities.

The information obtained from the study will be utilized to further develop respite care facilities for children with Learning Disabilities within COPE Foundation.

The anticipated benefits of the research study to COPE Foundation include the provision of a valuable respite care facility for families of children with Learning Disabilities which is flexible, accessible and truly responsive to family needs, enhanced job satisfaction for team members and promotion of the image of the organisation.

Anticipated benefits for service users include, the provision of a caring, home-like environment, and a comprehensive, flexible service to assist families in meeting the special needs of their child.

Anticipated benefits of the project include an increased awareness of the needs of families with a child with Learning Disabilities.

It will also help to focus work efforts to ensure that a mere client sitting-service is not being offered.

Key Words: Respite Care Facilities, Parents Perceptions, Flexible Service



Learning Language and Loving it: An Approach to Collaboration between Speech and Language Therapists and Educators

2005

Author(s): Kirkpatrick, V. and O'Toole C.

Department: Speech and Language Department COPE Foundation
And Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences School of
Clinical Therapies University College Cork

Professional opinion converges on the sensible proposition that the needs of children can best be served by close inter-professional cooperation and in the joint planning and delivery of service. The Learning Language and Loving It programme aims to involve teachers and childcare providers in early language intervention. The programme is based on sound research and was designed to address the language needs of all children within an educational/pre-school setting based on a model of prevention, intervention and enrichment. By providing Early Childhood Educators/Teachers and therapists with the information, support and opportunities, to create enriched, interactive environments that support social language and literacy development, we can offer the children a quality interdisciplinary service. This study examined the impact of the Learning Language and Loving It course on the teachers' and therapists' language and interaction styles using a standard rating scale. In addition attitudes towards collaborative working practices in COPE Foundation were examined using a questionnaire. Both measures were administered before and after the course. Sixteen teachers took part in eight workshops addressing language and social interaction development in everyday classroom activities in addition to up to 6 individual video feedback sessions. It is anticipated that this study will provide valuable information which will improve both the quality of services provided to clients and as well as early childhood special education and collaborative working practices.

Key words: Collaboration; Language and Social Interaction; Early Childhood Special Education.



Exploring Bereavement Experiences and Bereavement Support Practices of Clients and Staff in COPE Foundation

2005

Author: Carol Buckley- Lynes.

Department: Social Work Department.

Abstract:

In the field of learning disability, bereavement has been addressed in a number of different ways. Sometimes this has been done by means of running bereavement support groups, and by individual counselling or by tailoring interventions to meet the particular needs of the client group. There has also been a vast variation in terms of service delivery in this area. It was against this background that this project was initiated. The aim of the study was to explore bereavement support services for clients and staff in an intellectual disability setting. A model of service delivery is presented. Discussions with staff have revealed that there is a lack of confidence, not in recognising bereavement, but in supporting clients through their bereavement. Staff have indicated they would like some training in this area. Staff have also indicated that a framework from which to work would be helpful. It is against this background that this research study was conducted.

Key Words: Bereavement Practices, Supports, Staff Training, Intellectual Disability.



A Comparative Study of the Impact of Person Centred Planning on Choice and Decision making for Adults with a Moderate Intellectual Disability.

2005

Author: Paula Kelly

Department: School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork

Project completed in Fulfilment of MSC in Learning Disability Studies University of Birmingham

Abstract:

This study sought to investigate the impact of a person-centred approach on the perceived opportunities for adults with a moderate intellectual disability (ID) to exercise choice. A comparative survey design was utilized to measure choice availability within two similar service sites under the remit of a single care provider in the Irish republic. One site has a system of planning called person-centred planning (PCP) in place and the other uses a more traditional approach. A convenience sample of 10 subjects were chosen in each service site (n=20). Choice availability was measured using The Choice Questionnaire, (Stancliffe & Parmenter, 1999) which has demonstrated good psychometric properties. Results indicate that adults with a moderate intellectual disability have few opportunities to exercise choice. No significant findings were reported when summative scores for the Choice Questionnaire were compared across sites. However, trends were observed whereby those in the PCP site consistently report greater choice availability than those in the comparable site. The researcher acknowledges the limitations posed by the poor sample size and thus recommends that a larger study be conducted to investigate these trends further. Comparison of summative scores for the Choice Questionnaire for the sub-groups within sites highlights that those who live at home have greater opportunities to exercise choice when compared with those who live in staffed hostels irrespective of approach to planning.

Key Words: Person Centred Plan, Choice, Decision Making, Choice Questionnaire

School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork



Physical Activity Patterns of Adolescents with Mild Learning Difficulties

2005

Author: Niamh O'Connor

Department: Leisure Recreation and Physical Activity Department.

Project completed in part fulfilment for the Degree of Bachelor of Science in Sport and Exercise, University of Limerick.

Abstract:

The aim of the research study was to assess the physical activity patterns of 15 adolescent males (aged 14-18 years) with mild learning disabilities, through BMI and heart rate monitoring. Body Mass Index (BMI) was recorded by calculating height and weight of the subjects. Heart rate data was collected on three weekdays and one weekend day for a period of 12 hours. Data was recorded every 5 seconds for these 12 hours.

The results of the study found that these Irish males aged 12-18 years with a learning disability have extremely low levels of physical activity much lower than those required to confer a health benefit. The recommended levels put forward by the International Consensus Conference on Physical Activity Guidelines for Adolescents which state that adolescents should strive towards accumulating 30 minutes or more of moderate (140bpm) to vigorous (160bpm) levels of exertion on most or preferably all days of the week. The ominously realistic conclusion is that the Irish adolescent males with learning disabilities are just not accumulating these levels of exercise. Results show that this population are exceptionally sedentary in behaviour. Also, findings show that sustained blocks of physical activity for lengths of time over 20 minutes, at a moderate intensity are most definitely not a feature of this population's physical activity manner. Results also highlight that the majority of participants involved in this study are in the normal category of BMI (18.5-24.9kg/m) (53%). More worrying is the fact that 40% of the participants are in the overweight/obesity categories.

Vital steps must be taken in combating the widespread health problems, which is associated with lack of physical activity and a sedentary lifestyle in Irish male adolescents with learning disabilities.

Key Words: Physical Activity, Adolescents, Exercise, BMI, Lifestyle



Primary Caregiver Attitudes to Sexuality for People with Intellectual Disability: A Quantitative and Descriptive Pilot-Study.

2005

Author; Elaine Drummond,
Department: School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork.

A Dissertation submitted to the School of Nursing and Midwifery in fulfillment for the award of the Degree of Master in Nursing UCC

Abstract:

This pilot-study sought to investigate the attitudes of primary caregivers (PC) to sexuality for people with intellectual disability (ID) who attend two-day service sites within one service provider organization in Southern Ireland. A thorough review of the literature indicated that whilst attitudes towards sexuality for people with ID have become more open in the past three decades, considerable barriers remain for those with ID in experiencing their sexuality positively. In effect they remain socially excluded from wider society in that they are powerless to access their full rights with respect to intimate personal relationships and sexuality education.

The researcher adopted a quantitative and descriptive study design in exploring these attitudes through the use of a self-administered postal questionnaire. Attitudes of a sample of PCs (n= 45) were assessed in parents, siblings and staff of adults with ID attending rural and urban day services. Attitudes were measured by the SAQ-ID which was adapted from the GSAQ-LD originally developed by Karellou (2003), the instrument demonstrated good internal consistency and test retest reliability.

Results indicated that age, level of education, marital status and religious attendance significantly influenced attitudes of PCs' in this pilot-study. PCs' who are younger and have a higher level of education tend to hold more open attitudes to sexuality generally and for people with ID specifically. Respondents tended to discriminate between groups, and PCs' who were single (n = 12) were likely to discriminate less than their non-single counter-parts. A clear relationship was also found between attitudes and religious attendance where more open attitudes are associated with lower levels of religious attendance.

The overall conclusion drawn is that an inclusive approach where the views of all stakeholders are represented is the only way forward in addressing the sexuality needs of Irish people with ID.

Key Words: Sexuality, Attitudes, Primary Caregivers, Pilot Study, Personal Relationships



An Exploration of Person Centred Plans Within QDS

2005

Author: Sinead Browne and Pat Nash

Department: Quality Developmental Services (QDS)

Abstract:

The objective of this study was to examine the Person Centred Planning (PCP) system in QDS with particular reference to Supported Employment and Training. The participants in the study were clients of QDS. Their PCPs were examined and compared against their situation at least six months after their PCP had been completed. A sample of these clients was interviewed and the interviews were analyzed qualitatively.

Findings indicated that most of the requests found in PCPs had been dealt with at the time of the study. However the client's lack of recall of the PCP process or understanding of it points to a deficit in the PCP system within QDS. The PCP system could be further developed by focusing of clients understanding of it and enhanced participation in it.

Key Words: Person Centered Planning, Supported Employment, Training, Interviews, Intellectual Disability.



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