

ENGAGE SERVICE - EVALUATION REPORT

POLICY BACKGROUND

The pattern of day service provision for people with learning disabilities is slowly changing. Centre-based day services and centre-based respite services have been the dominant service models since the creation of unified Social Work Departments in the early 1970s. At present, there are 157 Centres for people with learning disabilities in Scotland with a total of 8,567 attendees. On average across Scotland, there are 26 places per 10,000 population.

The pendulum is swinging however towards alternative services which are flexible, person-centred, community based and committed to principles of social inclusion. 'The Same As You?' - the Scottish Executive's review of services for people with a learning disability - is one of the key drivers of this process of change.

Recommendation 15 of the 'Same As You?' report says:

"Local authorities and health boards should both examine what they provide and develop more modern, flexible and responsive services which support people in the community through employment, lifelong learning and getting them involved socially. Day healthcare services for people with learning disabilities should be mixed with those in the community"

We view the Engage service as an important pilot. We believe that there is potential over time to expand the service within Dumfries and Galloway. We want to learn from our experiences in Dumfries and Galloway and ensure that this learning helps the development and the management of similar services across the country.

We routinely evaluate all our services through internal audit systems and through input from our Quality Team. We have however carried out a more structured evaluation of the Engage service. The evaluation aims to measure outputs and outcomes and covers the first year of operation of the service.

SERVICE OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Engage service are:

- to provide a community-based day service for people with learning disabilities offering options in education, leisure and employment
- to maximise access to integrated settings and mainstream facilities
- to provide a flexible service with the opportunity to try out different opportunities and to vary support as needs change
- to link and liaise with all stakeholders including families and other service providers
- to maximise volunteer and informal support and to encourage the establishment of 'Circles of Support' for each service user
- to ensure that risk assessments achieve the right balance and make possible new experiences without compromising safety and security
- to use person-centred approaches to ensure that support is planned and delivered in a way which respects choice
- to evaluate the effectiveness of the service and the level of stakeholder satisfaction with the service

This service operates in the Dumfries area and in Annandale and Eskdale. Staff were recruited during the winter of 2003 and support began during the spring of 2004. Initially, the service employed three full-time Support Workers with management input of 14 hours from a Service Manager responsible for other Richmond Fellowship Scotland services.

As it became clear that the service was attracting significant numbers of referrals, additional funding was negotiated with Dumfries and Galloway Council. In January 2005, two part-time Support Assistants were appointed. The total staffing complement in the summer of 2005 was therefore 4.46 FTE:

Service Manager	0.4 FTE
Support Workers	3.00 FTE
Support Assistants	1.06 FTE

One Support Worker and one Support Assistant work in the Annandale and Eskdale area; two Support Workers and one Support Assistant work in the Dumfries area. However, the workers in these two 'sub-teams' cover for each other during periods of

sickness or annual leave. The size of the service (25 to 30 service users) means that all the workers know all the service users

The service has continued to use sessional hours at varying levels averaging about 20 hours per week over the period of the study. These sessional workers do not work exclusively for the Engage service and were originally recruited to work in the Active Service (a 'sister' service with similar operational approaches providing support to older people with mental health difficulties).

In the autumn of 2005, the service reorganised the staffing complement within the existing budget in order to create a part-time (25 hours) Service Manager post with exclusive responsibility for the service.

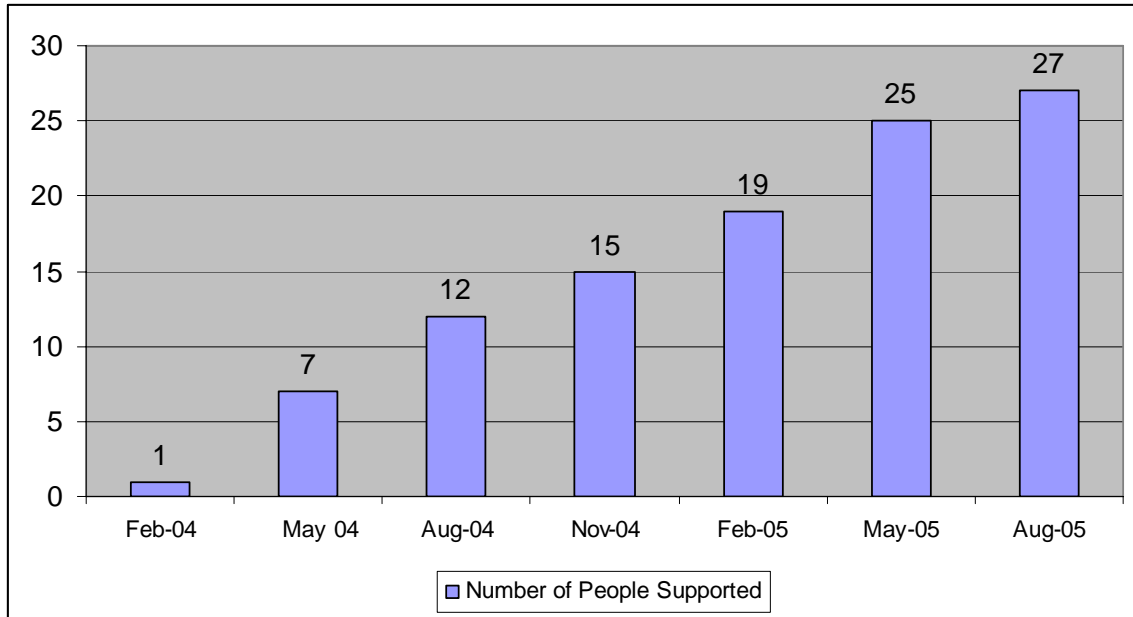
OUTPUTS OF THE SERVICE

1. Number of people supported

Over the period from February 2004 to August 2005, the service supported a total of 27 individuals: 17 from Dumfries and 10 from Annandale and Eskdale. Only one person stopped receiving support from the Engage service during this period.

59% of the people supported by the service were living with their parents or with other members of their family. 27% were living alone in their own tenancy or home. The remaining 14% were living in small group homes sharing with others with a learning disability.

The growth of the service in terms of the number of service users is charted below.



Comment

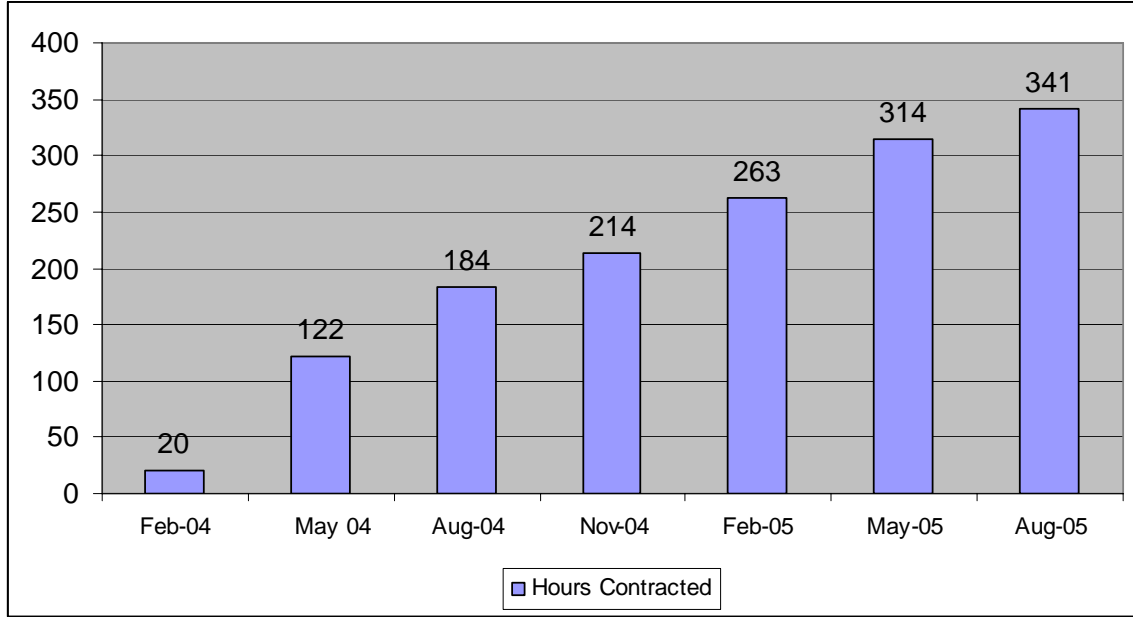
The service experienced no difficulty in attracting referrals and most people have been able to start receiving a service within 6 to 8 weeks of the referral.

The service has not rejected any referral.

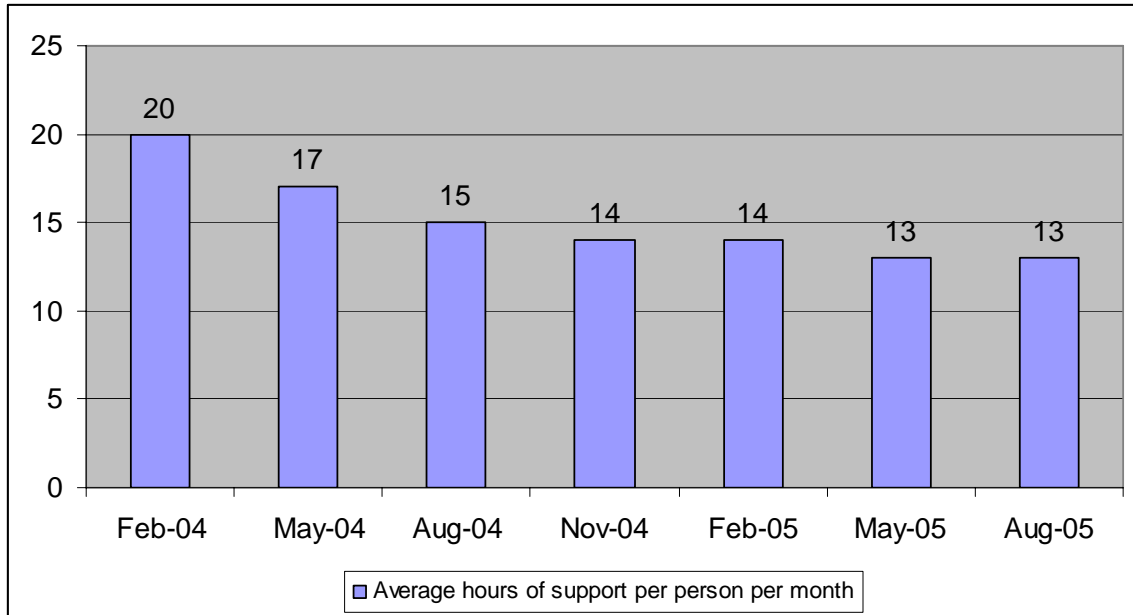
The service has aimed to provide support of some kind to every person referred.

2. Hours of support

The growth of the service in terms of the number of hours of contacted support per month is listed



Average hours of support per person per month



Comment

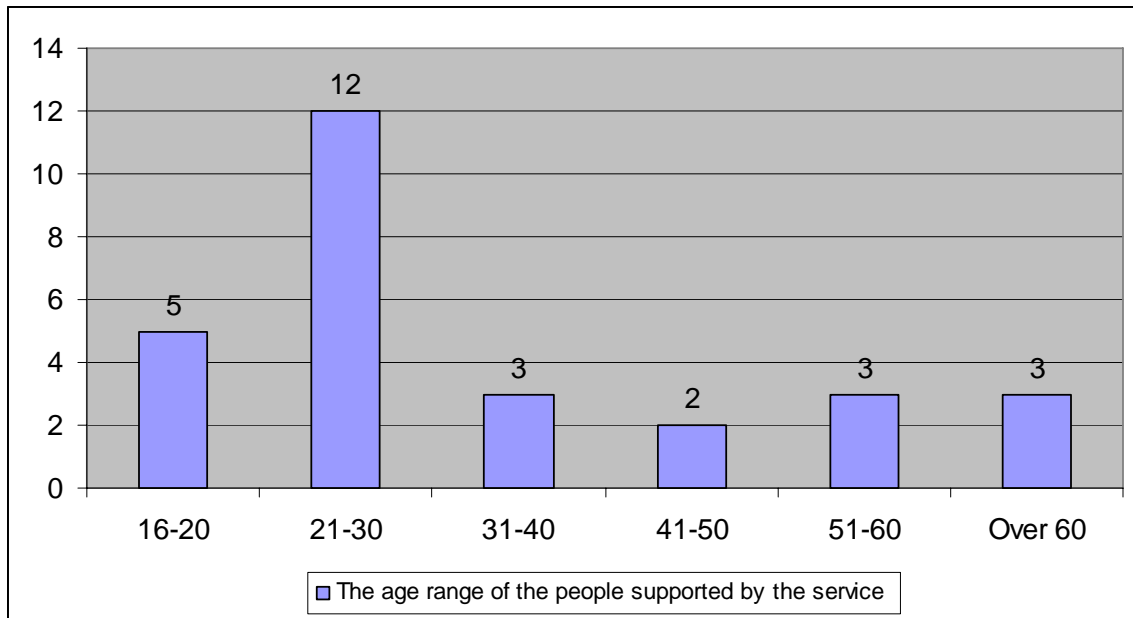
The average number of hours of support has fallen gradually over time. Most of the people offered support during 2005 have been offered small packages of support, typically one or two hours per week.

The service aimed to maximise the number of people that could be offered support with the resources available.



Kenny enjoys a game of snooker at his local club

3. Age Range of people supported

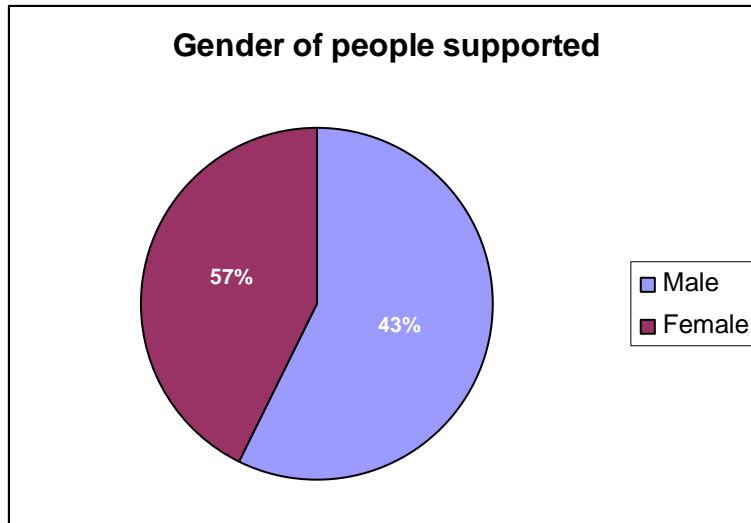


The service hoped to target young people in transition between educational services and adult services. This is a group who may have clear ideas about the kind of lifestyle they wish to lead and who may not be attracted to Centre-based services. The option of being able to design a customised support package built around individual interests and preferences may be particularly relevant to this group. The service aimed to draw on experience of similar work elsewhere in the country where initially sceptical parents have been won round.

Comment

61% of the people supported by the service were under the age of 30. The service has attracted referrals from a younger age group with 'lifestyle aspirations'. Many of this younger age group are still living with their parents but seeking ways to become socially independent.

4. Gender of people supported



Comment

At one stage, all workers in the service were female.

The appointment of two male part-time workers (one support worker and one support assistant) at the beginning of 2005 has provided more options in finding compatibilities of interest between workers and people supported.

5. Source of referrals

The agreement with Dumfries and Galloway Council was that all referrals should come from Care Managers employed by the Council's Social Work Department.

Virtually all referrals have come from four Care Managers – two working in the Dumfries area and two working in the Annandale and Eskdale area. The flow of referrals has been steady and has matched the capacity of the service to provide support. The service has not considered any widening of the referral network e.g. to primary healthcare professionals or to self-referrals.

In order to equalise workloads and achieve logistical efficiencies, some people referred from Annandale and Eskdale have been supported by staff attached to the Dumfries 'sub-team'.

Comment

The profile of the people referred to the service and the expectations of the nature of support have been determined by a relatively small number of social work professionals.

6. Typology of referrals

The service was clearly targeted at people with a learning disability.

Three of the people supported by the service were regarded by staff as also having mental health difficulties – two with a schizophrenic condition and one with an obsessive/compulsive condition. Staff were aware of medication regimes for these service users and liaised with social work and healthcare colleagues in monitoring mental health.

Four of the people supported by the service were regarded by staff as being on the autistic spectrum. The service accessed specialist external training to help awareness and understanding of autism and Aspergers Syndrome.

Four of the people supported by the service were permanent wheelchair users and another person was an occasional user. A number of others – especially the older service users -had mobility problems. All staff had completed Moving and Handling training. Risk assessments related to the degree of physical disability were completed for all activities.

Nearly all the people supported by the service could express their wishes and choices through language. Two service users lacked speech but could convey their wishes through movement, action and expression.

Comment

The service was well targeted and took appropriate initiatives to provide supervision and training to staff in supporting need related to mental health, autism, physical disability and communication.

7. Timing of support

The Engage service was intended to live up to its name and to engage with people in the ways they want at the times they want. The service has not been restricted to conventional working days or conventional working hours. The service has been prepared to provide support in the evenings and at weekends.

5 of the people supported by the service were supported in the evenings and two were supported during the weekend. This support made it possible to participate in activities like evening meals, carpet bowling, a gym programme and social and sporting activities at an Ex-Serviceman's Club.

Staff spent about 25% of their overall working time providing support in the evenings or at weekends.

Comment

The service has been able to deliver on the aim of providing support at the times that people want.

Expectations change slowly. Service users, families and referring workers may continue to request support during 'working hours' in the belief that they have no right to a more flexible service.

8. Staff retention

The service depends on the quality of the relationship between the person receiving and the person providing support. Continuity in these relationships is crucial to the success of the service.

Only one member of staff has left since the service began.

Comment:

Continuity in the service has been good.

Staff have shared knowledge appropriately about the people they support so that colleagues can provide substitute support during periods of sickness or annual leave.

Comments by service users in Satisfaction Questionnaires and Social Inclusion returns, confirm the importance of the relationship with staff.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE SERVICE

The evaluation aimed to establish what the various stakeholders wanted from the service at the point of referral.

Staff in the Engage service thought that sometimes there were three different sets of expectations of what the service should provide. The respective expectations of the service users, the family members and the Care Managers were not always congruent. On a few occasions this created difficulties for the workers in the service who had to mediate to resolve divergent expectations.

When a new referral to the service was planned, an Engage staff member and the Care Manager normally arranged a joint meeting with the prospective service user in their own home. Family members also often came to this meeting. The Engage worker explained how the service worked and emphasised that the programme would be designed around the choices and interests of the service user. A follow-up meeting, again in the home of the service user, looked at how activities could be matched to interests and planned the details of the support programme.

21 of the people supported by the service completed a simple expectations form at the point where the service was about to begin. All but one of these forms were completed by the person receiving support – generally with some help and explanation from Engage staff. The remaining form was completed by the mother of the person receiving support. Engage staff reported that some of the people referred to the service found it hard to come up with ideas about how the service might help them.

36% of those who completed the questionnaire thought they would need support from a worker at all times. 50% expected a rather higher level of self-determination with a worker providing input only when needed or requested. The majority of people referred to the service expected continuing support rather than a bridge to self-sufficiency. Only 14% entered the service with the expectation that they would do things on their own after an initial period of learning.

There were similar responses to a question on expectations of the duration of the service.

72% expected that they would use the service “for ever” and a further 17% anticipated service use of a few years. Only one person anticipated a relatively short period of use of the service measured in months rather than years.

In practice, the turnover of service users has been very low with only one person choosing to disengage from the service.

At this point of first contact, most people had broad rather than specific aspirations of what they might get out of the service:

- To help me to meet different people
- To get me outside
- To help me get out and about and join in activities that I would otherwise not be able to do
- To help me fit into the community
- To help me go out and meet people socially; to improve and develop social graces (parent)

Some were explicit about the way the service might help them with difficulties in their life:

- Fill in my time so I don't drink

Some were quite clear about the things they wanted to do;

- Social support with male supporter to go to pictures, carpet or green bowling, snooker at Blue Bell, pool, dominoes, cards, gardening, Mossburn Animal centre, make pots at Dalton Pottery

In terms of wider life aspirations, most aspirations were again broad rather than specific:

- To live with my family and to be happy
- To enjoy life

- To get on with my life

Some wanted to pursue specific interests or to have a wider social life:

- To do lots of walking
- To explore more of what is available in my district
- To go on a boat trip and to go camping to Brighthouse Bay with my friends
- To lead an active social life and to up my confidence
- To socialise more

Some clearly wanted to become more independent through working or having their own home:

- To have my own home
- To get a waitressing job
- A job – forestry, gardening or voluntary work

Comment

Expectations were very varied.

Some service users had very clear and specific expectations of what they wanted from the service. Others had broader goals to do with confidence and social contacts.

The questionnaires indicated that service users welcomed the service and saw the relevance of a service with an emphasis on social inclusion.

OUTCOMES

1. Satisfaction

The service aims:

- To evaluate the effectiveness of the service and the level of stakeholder satisfaction with the service

We measured whether the people receiving the service (and, in some instances other stakeholders such as family or care managers) considered that their expectations of the

service were met. We asked all stakeholders for feedback after six months of support from the service using a standard questionnaire.

21 satisfaction forms were completed for 14 different service users. 16 of the forms (76%) were completed by the service user (with some evidence of assistance from workers or family members). Four forms were completed by parents – two of these in addition to the form completed by the service user. One form was completed by a Care Manager.

People were asked to rate the Engage service across a variety of categories. Responses were scored from 1 to 5 with 1 for awful, 2 for poor, 3 for average, 4 for good and 5 for excellent. Exceptionally high satisfaction ratings were recorded across all categories.

The highest satisfaction rating (4.9) was achieved for the category of “choosing the right worker for the person getting support”.

Another very high rating (4.8) was achieved for the category of “being reliable in providing support when promised”. This is an impressive achievement given the small numbers of staff in the service and the geographical territory that the service is expected to cover.

Ratings were also extremely high in the categories of:

- Getting started efficiently and promptly (4.6)
- Being flexible in times of support (4.6)
- Helping people to fit into their communities (4.6)
- Providing information (4.4)
- Offering lots of choices of activities (4.4)
- Working well with other organisations (4.4)

Even criticism was qualified. One parent giving a low rating for ‘choice of activities’ commented “...through no fault of Engage, just Dumfries having poor facilities”

3 service users had completed satisfaction questionnaires after six months involvement with the service and again after 12 months involvement. Comparison of these two questionnaires indicated a small increase in satisfaction levels over time.

We asked in the questionnaire about a typical 'day in the life' before involvement with the Engage service. The responses were poignant chronicles of loneliness and isolation:

- I stayed at home, only going out on my bike, as I live in a very isolated area
- Would spend long periods of time in (his) bedroom doing puzzles and jigsaws (parent)
- Sitting at home with Dad or going a walk in wheelchair
- He had a lot of spare time (parent)
- Staying at home or going to Adult Resource Centre
- I was more lonely before
- Sitting in or wandering around the shops, window-shopping alone
- Nothing - sat in Nithsdale House doing nothing – I wanted to be lazy

We also asked in the questionnaire about a typical 'day in the life' after the involvement of the Engage service. The responses were encouragingly positive:

- Busy
- Full of activities
- Something to look forward to
- A lot better
- Getting out and about in Dumfries – shopping, using library facilities and I can now travel independently from Sandyford to Lockerbie and back – now I have more freedom
- On days of support, getting out and about and meeting people and engaging in activities like swimming and horse –riding
- Go to snooker, have a walk around shops, go to local art group, take photos
- Engage gives H a friend to go out and about with to visit places H would not otherwise go to (parent)Has greater access to activities and increased confidence with support (parent)
- Really good – can do a lot more now than I could before and more confident

19 respondents (90%) considered that the service had met their expectation. No respondent said that the service had not done so.

There have, of course, been problems along the way. The Satisfaction Questionnaire asked what the worst things were about the Engage service. Most respondents could think of nothing wrong but there were some criticisms:

- Travelling on the bus to get support
- Sometimes too many different people support me
- Not enough time
- Meetings are arranged then H changes her mind and doesn't feel able to cancel so Engage time is wasted (parent)
- Too many old women in it (!)

2. Diversity of day opportunities

The service aims:

- To maximise access to integrated settings and mainstream facilities
- To provide a flexible service with the opportunity to try out different opportunities and to vary support as needs change

Staff in the Engage Service are expected to design an activities programme around the specific interests and preferences of each individual.

We asked in the expectations questionnaire whether people supported in the service wanted to do things on their own or together with other people with a disability or together with other people without a disability. No-one wanted to do things exclusively with other people with disabilities and 31% wanted do things on their own. The remaining 69% wanted to do things together with other people without a disability in mainstream settings. Quite a few people ticked two or three boxes to show that they wanted a balance in their lives between spending time on their own and spending time with other people irrespective of disability.

The service has supported access to an impressively diverse range of activities including:

- Dog walking at the Canine Defence League
- Swimming and jacuzzi at the Gretna Garden Hotel
- Horse Riding at R.D.A. Annan

- Arts and Crafts Group in Dumfries
- Computers at Annan Library
- Driving lessons
- Pool and snooker at the Ex-Servicemen's' Club in Annan and in other settings
- Gym workout at Newington Leisure Centre, Annan
- Golf driving at Hammerlands
- Indoor bowling the Ice Bowl

Some people needed 'taster' experiences to work out what they enjoyed doing. Engage staff have tried to 'ring the changes' and find alternative activities. One service user was supported to attend an Art Group initially but now prefers to go swimming.

The Satisfaction Questionnaire asked about the effect of the Engage service on the range of interests of the person receiving support. Responses were scored from 1 to 5 with 1 meaning things had got much worse, 2 meaning things had got a little worse, 3 meaning things had stayed about the same, 4 meaning thing had got a little better and 5 meaning things had got a lot better. The mean score was 4.6 on this rating scale - the highest rating among the five indicators of effect.

3. Social Inclusion

We aimed to measure the extent of social inclusion achieved by the service both in terms of accessing mainstream activities and in terms of the resulting friendships and relationships. We used two methods:

(i) In the **satisfaction questionnaire**, we asked what impact the Engage service had on the lives of the people receiving support. We asked about the impact on friendships and relationships and about the impact on range of interests. We again used the five point scale with a score of 1 meaning things had got much worse, 2 meaning things had got a little worse, 3 that things had stayed pretty much the same, 4 that things had got a little better and 5 meaning things had got a lot better.

17 out of 20 respondents thought that their range of interests had improved either a little or a lot and the average rating was 4.6

14 out of 20 respondents thought that things had got a bit better or a lot better in terms of friendships and relationships. The average rating was 4.2

(ii) We also used a **Social Inclusion Questionnaire** to measure the extent of social inclusion of the people supported by Engage. The questionnaire involves self-assessment across 20 life domains with a theoretical maximum score in each domain of 5 leading to a theoretical maximum overall score of 100. Typical scores for averagely sociable people with an average number of interests are in the 50 to 70 range. The average score for the people supported by Engage was 37 ranging from a low of 17 to a high of 56.

The list below ranks the 20 domains by score. Each domain can be scored from 0 to 5. The highest ranked domains in the list are those with scores that suggest high levels of social inclusion. The range column indicates the range of scores of the individuals who completed the questionnaire.

Domain	Score	Range	Ranking
Shopping	4.0	1 – 5	1
Eating Out	3.5	2 – 4	2
Transport	3.2	1 – 4	3
Use of medical services	3.0	1 – 5	4
Holidays	2.9	0 – 5	5
Staying in touch with friends	2.5	0 – 5	6
The pub	2.1	0 – 4	7
New technology (computers)	1.9	0 – 5	8
Managing money	1.8	0 – 4	9
Neighbours	1.7	0 – 5	10
Hobbies and interests	1.5	1 – 4	11=
Politics and national issues	1.5	0 – 2	11=
Watching sport	1.5	0 – 5	11=
Cinema and theatre	1.4	0 – 5	14=
Playing sport	1.4	0 – 5	14=
Lifelong learning	1.0	0 – 4	16
Paid or voluntary work	0.9	0 – 4	17
Community issues	0.6	0 – 4	18
Religious activities	0.5	0 – 5	19
Community centres	0.3	0 – 2	20

Comment:

Many of the people supported by the Engage service were living with parents. As a consequence, they achieved relatively high scores on the domains for shopping, holidays, eating out and interaction with neighbours through being part of a family activity.

The rural nature of the catchment area for the service meant that some facilities (cinemas, theatres, Community Centres) simply did not exist locally.

New technology was beginning to influence lives. Many people supported by the service used mobile phones and this influenced scoring on the 'keeping in touch with friend' domain. Almost half of the group were using PCs for leisure, communication or learning purposes.

Religious activities were important for only two out of the group who completed social inclusion questionnaires – a comment on the secular nature of Scottish society today.

Lifelong learning was significant for less than a half of the group and only one sixth were involved in mainstream learning opportunities.

Less than a quarter of the group were involved in work of any kind and most did not aspire to work.

Across virtually all domains, there was a wide range.

In general, the responses to the social inclusion questionnaire indicated that the people supported by the services had achieved a degree of social inclusion in their communities. Scores were low however in some key domains such as employment, lifelong learning and community involvement.

Most people supported by the service thought that the service had helped them to extend their interests and activities and to make new friendships and relationships.



Glen regularly attends his local bingo club

4. Employment

The service aims:

- to provide a community-based day service for people with learning disabilities offering options in education, leisure and **employment**

We had hoped that a proportion of the people referred to the service would be interested in work or volunteering opportunities. Staff were expected to identify and support opportunities of this kind. We had hoped we would be able to refer people on to local employment organisations such as the HOPE service and to work in partnership in identifying work opportunities.

8 of the people supported by the service (30%) also had employment of some kind.

Three people were involved in voluntary work:

- One service user worked in a Charity Shop
- Another helped his uncle to deliver furniture
- A third helped at Mossburn Animal Sanctuary

Four others were getting work experience of varied kinds through employment services of various kinds:

- One person supported by the service had a three day a week job as a handyman at a local Nursing Home. When offered the opportunity to work four days per week, he was able to accept this and drop the day's support from the Engage service.
- Another worked in the Dumfries Tourist Information Centre
- Another worked four days per week in a horticultural project carrying out gardening work and woodland management
- Another was working a couple of sessions per week clearing tables in the local pub

All of these people were receiving limited income for their work tied to Benefit Disregard thresholds.

Only one person was in 'open' employment – this was a part-time cleaner's job at a local school.

Being able to travel independently is crucial in a rural area like Dumfries and Galloway. One young man was being helped by the Engage service to take driving lessons (his support worker sat in the back of the car and helped the young man to understand what is required of him. If he passes the driving test, he is likely to find employment and to move on from the service.

Comment:

Involvement in employment has not increased significantly during the period of the study.

Although 30% of the people supported by the service had work of some kind, many of these work experiences were unpaid or offered income restricted to Benefit thresholds. Few people aspired to progress to full-time work or greater financial independence.

Government initiatives to move people from Incapacity Benefit into employment may increase resources in this area.

5. Indicators of well-being

If people are leading a more fulfilling and more socially inclusive life, we would hope that there would be resultant changes in their general well-being.

The Satisfaction Questionnaire asked about the effect of the Engage service on the confidence and on the independence of the person receiving support. Responses were scored from 1 to 5 with 1 meaning things had got much worse, 2 meaning things had got a little worse, 3 meaning things had stayed about the same , 4 meaning things had got a little better and 5 meaning things had got a lot better.

The mean score for confidence was 4.4 on this rating scale (the second highest rating for indicators of effect) and the mean score for independence was 4.2.

Comment:

More formal testing would be needed to prove whether confidence and independence have actually improved.

The feedback from the satisfaction questionnaire indicates that most people thought there had been a positive effect on confidence and independence as a result of their involvement with the Engage service.

The casestudies attached to this report clearly illustrate the progress made by some individuals.

6. Brokered support

The service aims:

- To maximise volunteer and informal support and to encourage the establishment of 'Circles of Support' for each service user

We hoped that the service would 'broker' additional hours of support by:

- working with some people who have natural friendships or the same interests in twosomes or in small groups
- trying to establish support networks for the people we support users either in specific settings or more widely so that staff employed in the Engage Service could gradually 'disengage' and take on more of a background role. Family members could become part of these support networks.
- deploying students on placement to complement the work of service staff. We have had very positive experiences of using students from nursing courses at Bell College and social care students from Dumfries College.
- working with volunteers using the 'word of mouth' and other informal recruitment methods pioneered by the Active Service.
- encouraging self-sufficiency at all times and setting up gradients of increasing independence that reduce or eliminate the need for support from staff.

We asked about 'brokered hours' in feedback from all stakeholders.

Here are some examples of how the service has been able to broker additional support:

- JM was helped to increase his work at a Nursing Home from three days a week to four
- DH became involved with the Scottish pool team and in wider activities to do with snooker and billiards as a consequence of being supported in his sporting interests
- NE was supported to travel independently and now helps at her day service
- JM became involved in the Special Olympics
- BM goes independently to the local gym to do ladies circuit training after support to attend for the first few times

- BD has been encouraged to work with his uncle delivering furniture and support in learning to drive is likely to result in employment and no further need for support



Jodie on Hetty in Annan

7. Impact on other services

We expected that the service would work closely with Adult Resource Centres (ARCs) in Dumfries and Galloway with the expectation that some people would benefit from a combined programme.

4 people supported by the Engage service also attended the Annan Adult Resource Centre or the Dumfries Adult Resource Centre. 3 of these people attended ARCs 5 days per week.

The Engage service provides support:

- to help one young man establish social contacts in his home town of Moffat (the ARC's he attends are in Dumfries and Annan)
- to provide support to another young man on a Friday night (he either goes to the Gym or to an Ex-Serviceman's Club)
- to another young woman on the days when she does not attend ARC

Comment:

The Engage service has worked in partnership with Adult Resource Centres to provide a package of support for some people.

Service users, their families and Care Managers have viewed the Engage service as complementary to the Adult Resource Centre programme.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Engage service has provided support to nearly 30 people with learning disabilities in Dumfries and Galloway. Monthly hours of support have increased steadily to a total of 341 hours in August 2005.

The service has provided relatively small packages of support – an average of 13 hours support time per person per month. The service has aimed to provide some support to every person referred.

The service succeeded in targeting people in the younger age groups – 61% of service users were under the age of 30. All service users had a learning disability and many had additional difficulties or disabilities.

The service aimed to be completely flexible in the nature, the time and the location of support. About 25% of support time was provided in the evening or at weekends. An impressively wide range of activities and resources were accessed by the service.

The logistics of delivering support of relatively short duration to service users scattered across a rural area meant that only 60% of staff time was occupied in direct service delivery.

Feedback from the service users, from their families and from professionals indicated a high level of satisfaction with the service. 90% of respondents considered that the service had met their expectations. 85% thought that their range of interest had improved and 70% thought they had more friendships and relationships as a consequence of receiving support.

30% of service users were involved in some kind of work or volunteering activity. The service helped several individuals to take initiatives to increase working hours or employment prospects.

The service had hoped to be complementary to Adult Resource Centres and established good working relationships with them.

CASE STUDY ONE

GERRY'S STORY

Gerry is a 19 year old with Aspergers Syndrome. Gerry feared unfamiliar places, found eye contact difficult and would not engage in conversation. He was referred to the Engage Service just over a year ago. We were asked to help Gerry with his self-esteem and his nervousness around meeting people and going to new places.

Gerry expressed an interest in the local gym, so we began by taking photos of the reception, changing rooms and equipment. We then called in for a look around and then after a few visits I supported Gerry for 'a work out'. I support Gerry twice weekly and for two hours on each occasion. The first hour was 'changeable' doing different things; the second hour is always the same: snooker at his local club.

After about 3 months Gerry expressed a liking for golf so we drove down to the driving range and Gerry enquired about membership and cost. By now Gerry was confident around his support worker and would engage fully in conversation. Over the next 6 months Gerry began going to the local library to learn how to use computers, at first he required me to sit with him and show him what to do and how to do it. I would then leave Gerry for very short periods, these periods of time increased until Gerry was using the computers for over half an hour unaccompanied. Three months after he first used the Library I saw him showing a stranger how to sign on and search the internet!! This was a big step forward for Gerry.

At about the same time he started working 2 days a week with his uncle delivering furniture. Being able to earn some money for himself was another boost for Gerry though I believe he would not have been confident enough to hold down a job had we not supported him for the 9 months prior to the job offer.

In the last few months Gerry has began learning to drive and for the first 3 or 4 lessons he requested I sit in the vehicle with him, which I did. I knew Gerry was nervous but after a few weeks I challenged him to try one lesson without me, he did and now 'goes it alone'. He now goes to the library unsupported to find out information, he walks down the street for a paper or to place a bet at the local bookies; he is still a very shy person

but he will engage in conversation with most people and will even start conversations. Eye contact is still a little difficult for Gerry but I believe this too is getting much better.

If Gerry is successful with his driving I can see his self-esteem and confidence rising to the point that The Richmond Fellowship Scotland can move on, leaving Gerry a much stronger and capable person.

Greg Hargreaves, Support Worker

CASE STUDY TWO

KAY'S STORY

Kay is a young lady, aged 23, who lives in an isolated rural location, about 26 miles from Dumfries. She has Marfan Syndrome and grand mal epilepsy. Her social skills need to be built up and she could be vulnerable if approached by strangers. She attends a day service - an alternative to an Adult Resource Centre – for three days per week. This meant that her mother had to drive her to the centre of Dumfries where she was picked up by staff from the day service and then return for her about 4 pm.

Her Care Manager felt that it was a high priority for Kay to learn to use public transport. It would increase her confidence and independence and help her to access other activities in Dumfries. I worked out a timetable for the buses which pass by her door in her home village. The first stage of the journey is to Lockerbie – the bus leaves at 1.00 pm and reaches Lockerbie about 1.23 pm. I accompanied Kay on this bus for about 12 weeks until I felt she was confident enough to travel on her own and knew how to deal with strangers. The next stage was to meet Kay in Lockerbie so we could get the bus to Dumfries – a fine margin as the bus leaves Lockerbie at 1.30 pm. and arrives in the town centre of Dumfries at 2.05 pm. We stuck rigidly to this routine, going back on the 4.05 pm Lockerbie bus, and gradually Kay learned which bus to get on and which stance to stand at. Her day service made sure she got on the correct bus at 4.05 pm and Kay's mother met her off the bus at Lockerbie as there are only five buses a day to and from her home village.

It took about 6 months before I felt Natalie was ready to travel on her own from her home village to Dumfries and back. We liaised with the day service staff who agreed to meet Kay off her bus in the town centre. Unfortunately things did not go to plan the first few journeys as Kay decided to get off the bus at a different stop and wandered through Dumfries by various different routes putting the day service staff in a state of alarm. As she had always got off the bus at the same stop for six months I could not understand why she had done this, but her Care Manager decided she now had more freedom and was testing the boundaries of this freedom. Fortunately Kay came to no harm. Kay is also a bit forgetful and has left her bus pass and purse on the bus at times – her mother has now put her bus pass on a key ring attached to her bag.

Kay has settled down now into her travel routine and there have been no further problems. She is starting on an arts and crafts session at the end of September in Dumfries supported by myself which has proved very successful and has brought out Kay's talent for drawing. In her support plans I had to incorporate a plan in the event of Kay not reaching the designated bus stop in Lockerbie i.e. allow ten minutes then telephone her mother to confirm Kay got on the bus at her home village, then if she still has failed to turn up inform her care manager or duty social worker immediately.

I feel planning independent travel for Kay has been a great success and has opened up opportunities for her which didn't exist before.

Margaret Gracie, Support Worker