

CASE STUDY

Addressing poverty and stigma in Dundee: a partnership approach to training

When a public consultation exercise revealed that people living in poverty in Dundee felt they were stigmatised by service providers, the Equally Well and Welfare Rights teams at Dundee City Council collaborated on a training package to help services examine and improve their approach to dealing with people.

Equally Well is a Scottish Government-sponsored programme aimed at addressing health inequalities across Scotland. As part of the Equally Well implementation plan, [eight local test sites](#) across Scotland were selected to try out new approaches to reducing health inequalities. In Dundee, the focus is on methods of improving wellbeing.

The roll out of the Equally Well test site in 2013 supported the extension of its approach in all disadvantaged areas in the city. As part of the roll out, [community consultations](#) were carried out in the five other wards that contain Community Regeneration Areas, which built on the findings from the original consultation. All findings were recognised by the local Community Planning Partnership, and the [Dundee Partnership](#), which oversees the implementation of the Fairness Strategy.

Equally Well participated in various consultation exercises to contribute to the recommendations of the [Fairness Commission](#). Increasing access to social prescribing and Poverty Sensitive Practice training are specific recommendations in the Fairness Commission report.

What was the issue?

The community consultation in the Stobswell area by the original Equally Well test site was followed by an event sponsored by the Office of National Statistics. The event was part of the wider work of the test site to identify what contributes to wellbeing for people in Dundee who were particularly marginalised or vulnerable.

One theme to emerge strongly was how people in poverty are treated by others in their community and by service providers. Some people reported that they are stigmatised and feel they have to be tested to qualify for services.

As a result, the Equally Well team decided to carry out some training and awareness work with service providers to help them recognise the role they play in supporting a person's wellbeing.

Derek Miller, Financial Inclusion Officer at Dundee City Council, talks about the reasons for developing the training.



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Derek Miller
Financial Inclusion Officer, Dundee City Council

(Video opens in browser window)

What were they trying to achieve?

Social prescribing is promoted as a spectrum of activity with a specific social prescribing service at one end and simple signposting at the other. The training is an attempt to promote social prescribing approaches more widely with frontline staff.

The approach was about helping people understand what it might be like to not have choices, to be treated differently and to be judged. The awareness session helps people see how clients may feel when treated this way, with the aim of helping services develop and improve their approach.

How did they tackle the issue?

The Equally Well team set out to deliver a robust training programme that could be rolled out across all Dundee frontline staff. They intended that each session would bring together a wide range of partners with differing skills and backgrounds to talk about poverty, increase awareness and reduce stigma.

It quickly became clear that it was too big a piece of work for the Equally Well team to tackle alone; it just didn't have the resources required. It decided that a partnership approach was the best way forward.

So, the council's Welfare Rights Team became involved, working with Equally Well to develop and pilot the project, then evaluate it.

Using the Knowledge Hub to help them collaborate, the teams developed a suite of training materials. Frontline workers in Dundee now have the option of completing an e-learning course and attending a half-day face-to-face session. Some staff members have also attended 'Training for Trainers' to allow them to deliver the session.

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Development of the programme began in September 2015. So far, 12 sessions have been delivered to 145 frontline staff.

Morag Duncan, Senior Money Advisor at Brooksbank Debt and Benefits Advice Service, took part in one of the pilot training sessions and has been involved with the development of a new e-learning package. Listen to what Morag has to say about her involvement with the training.



Morag Duncan
Senior Money Advisor, Brooksbank Centre

(Video opens in browser window)

A My Wellbeing tutorial is included in all the training courses to help participants understand how they might use it to assist service users to access services and activities. The [My Wellbeing web pages](#) are hosted on the Dundee City Council website and are freely available to members of the public.

What obstacles had to be overcome?

The two teams had to look at tools that would help them work together. Sheila Allan, Equally Well Lead Officer at Dundee City Council, said: "It's not always about new things; it's about looking at doing things differently."

The teams found Knowledge Hub (Khub) a useful tool for collaboration. Khub allowed the team to provide and share contacts, statistical information, knowledge and expertise. It enabled members to record all materials and co-ordinate information for the programme. Its library helped the team keep information in one place and accessible for staff working in different locations.

What are the results?

An evaluation of the first six months showed that:

- 93% of participants said their awareness of poverty had increased

"It's not always about new things; it's about looking at doing things differently."

Sheila Allan
Equally Well Lead Officer
Dundee City Council

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- 91% said their awareness of in-work poverty had increased
- 66% of participants said the training had raised their awareness of the stigma of living in poverty
- 78% said they would be more poverty sensitive in their work
- 91% said it has increased their awareness of how to signpost people in poverty to sources of support.

Comments included:

- “Despite the figures being hard to hear, it was good to hear accurate information as opposed to what we hear in the media.”
- “I had no idea that so many were in poverty in work.”
- “I previously, and naively, thought poverty was generally associated with people who are out of work.”
- “It has made me more aware of how easily it could happen to anyone.”
- “Through my work I have awareness of such stigmas but it was helpful to review this in a group setting.”

You can [read the full evaluation](#).

Any lessons learned?

The training package had to be opened wider than initially intended to be the most effective and make the most impact across Dundee City.

This now involves staff across various council departments, partner organisations and communities across the city.

What are the next steps?

The Strategic Group will look to improve the targeting of the sessions scheduled for 2016.

A new session has been included in the 2016 programme to offer support to service providers and community members who can then use the materials with their own target groups. This will allow a programme that focuses on other client groups e.g. young people. It will also help develop the training and facilitation skills of others and help them develop confidence in using and adapting the materials.

Further information

The e-learning training package is hosted on the Dundee City Council website and is available to anyone. You can also access the e-module on the Improvement Service [Access2Learning \(A2L\)](#) free e-learning platform.

The Improvement Service can provide a range of advice, support and training around the KHub. This could be anything from a simple enquiry to requiring a bespoke training package around the use of the KHub. For further details, visit www.improvementservice.org.uk/knowledge-hub.html