Mental Health Training for Supported Accommodation Providers

PIR Agency:	Footprints
Date:	2015 – Present
Key issue(s)	It has been identified that the supported accommodation workforce lacks the resources to access mental health training programs currently provided within mainstream networks. The primary barriers to accessing training programs are that the workforce lacks the capacity to pay for training, have staff off site for long periods of time as well as lacking the resources to pay staff while they are attending training.
	Supported accommodation facilities support many individuals in liaison with community and clinical services. The collaboration between these key stakeholders requires the development of common understandings surrounding mental health knowledge and delivery of services.
Main Objective(s)	To provide free, targeted, accessible and relevant mental health training to supported accommodation staff. To achieve this, the PIR team has developed a tailored training package delivered in selected modules to improve accessibility for the workforce.
	A pilot project was developed to deliver the training to Herston Lodge to develop the content of the training and evaluate the impact. Once evaluated, this package will be delivered across the supported accommodation sector.
Summary of Impact or Result	Mental health training was provided to the workforce of Herston Lodge over four modules and across the 2015/16 financial year. Evaluation of these sessions revealed an increase in understanding of mental health diagnoses, identifying behaviours, applying strategies to support individuals, and accessing pathways to other services in the sector.
	Herston Lodge further identified that the training booklets provided a valuable resource for the staff to access after the sessions.
Context	

Supported accommodation providers across the Brisbane metro North provide housing, meals, support to access medication, and liaise with many community and clinical services. Collectively, these facilities accommodate a large population that engage with the service sector.

Recent studies reveal that a majority of the population these facilities support identify as experiencing significant mental health challenges, physical health complications, and intellectual disabilities. The workforce of the supported accommodation providers network plays a key role in supporting many individuals with complex needs to maintain a higher quality of life. By supporting this workforce to access training, they will be empowered to provide a high level of service delivery.

Stakeholders/Partnerships	

Footprints PIR Team Leader and Mental Health Services Manager have had multiple meetings with the president of the Supported Accommodation Providers Association, Damien Negus, to consult, develop and implement the first round of training. Damien is also the manager of Herston Lodge, a leading supported accommodation provider in Brisbane. The pilot project was developed with Herston Lodge to ensure the content was appropriate prior to expanding the training across the SAPA network.

These stakeholders have been in close partnership with the Inner North Brisbane Mental Health Service and the Service Integration Coordinator from the Royal Brisbane & Women's Hospital to ensure that the training delivered meets standards across the sector.

Project Management	

PIR TL met with the Herston Lodge Manager in response to a request for mental health training opportunities.

PIR TL consulted with Herston Lodge staff to evaluate the key barriers in accessing training and to develop the modules that would be most suitable to the needs of the workforce.

PIR TL managed the development of each module and liaised with Herston Lodge Manager to establish a schedule of delivery. Each module is complimentary and collectively combine to match equivalent training through mainstream networks, with specific components relevant to the context of Herston Lodge.

PIR TL managed the evaluation processes which primarily consist of pre and post evaluation surveys identifying key areas of development targeted within the training package.

PIR TL delivered the training booklets and facilitated the practical training sessions to enable consistency across the training package.

Description of Activities	

Consultation

The PIR TL met with the Herston Lodge Manager and SIC to discuss the need, scope and purpose of a training package and to determine how this would best be delivered to the workforce. The key areas identified as past barriers were the length of existing training and the lack of capacity for the workforce to attend off site training. It was agreed that the training would be delivered in separate modules with the content being delivered to the staff online, and in hard copy, with a practical one-hour session to consolidate and augment each module. The staff identified that the most appropriate location for these sessions would be offsite and Footprints was able to provide the training location.

PIR TL met with the Herston Lodge staff to discuss the content of each module to ensure that the training was addressing the needs identified during the consultation process.

Development

Based on the consultation the modules are:

1. Introduction to Mental Health – diagnoses, observations, intervention strategies, and key support pathways.

2. De-escalation Techniques and responding to aggression – Understanding aggression, intervention strategies, identifying and assessing risks, organisational policies, and support pathways.

3. Alcohol & Other Drugs – Understanding the influence of substances, identifying intoxicated residents, intervention strategies, and support pathways.

4. Self-Harming Behaviour & Suicidality – Understanding behaviour, assessing risks, intervention strategies, and support pathways.

The PIR team worked collaboratively to develop each training module. This approach ensured that the content of each module was specific to the needs of the staff as well as being developed to build upon the existing content of past modules. The initial module provided a platform of information that enabled each following module to reference and complement.

Implementation

The initial development had included online access to the modules to enable the workforce to access and learn the content prior to the practical session. There were delays in establishing the online platform, however the staff requested that the pilot continue with existing resources. The first module was delivered in hard copy and the practical session enabled a robust conversation surrounding how this content can be applied to the service delivery of Herston Lodge.

Following this the second module was provided to staff in hard copy, however there have been delays in providing the practical session.

The remaining modules have been developed and delivered with practical sessions scheduled in the coming months.

Project Impact	

Evaluation of the training has revealed an increase in knowledge for those involved in the pilot project. This was measured through pre and post surveys with the participating staff. Key areas in which an impact was measured were the understanding of mental health diagnoses, confidence in responding to individuals, and knowledge of services accessible to support their residents.

Feedback from Herston Lodge also identified that the training booklets provided a continual resource for the staff to reference and requested additional copies of each module.

Lessons Learned	

During the course of the project, there were challenges in administering the practical training components despite the adaptations that were made to deliver the modules in short sessions. This was primarily due to staff illness and logistical issues.

The online component of the training packages was delayed due to challenges in sourcing the most appropriate platform and host for the content. This has been addressed and the modules are being adapted to this alternative form of delivery for the delivery of future training to other facilities.

Appendices	