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PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS: DO WE NEED 24/7 OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SERVICES?

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Adults with mental health problems are one of the most stigmatised and socially excluded groups in society (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004). Burchardt et al (2002) describe social exclusion as non-participation in key activities of the society in which a person lives.

It is widely recognised Occupational Therapists can contribute to social inclusion in the lives of people with mental health problems, however, are we available when community activities take place? How can an Occupational Therapist working 9-5pm Monday to Friday assist with a client's pre-work morning routine or support clients to attend a sports club on a Saturday or adult education courses in the evening?

To meet the needs of clients who are more empowered than ever Occupational Therapy needs to go where it has not gone before. This presentation describes a bold initiative to address the occupational needs of clients in a Mental Health Rehabilitation Unit. The Occupational Therapist's hours were changed to allow Occupational Therapy assessment, group and individual service provision early mornings, evenings and weekends.

Although it was anticipated this would be a successful change to the Occupational Therapy service, evaluation with clients, Occupational Therapists and the Service Manager revealed unexpected benefits for the service and workplace. Positive outcomes of this strategy included enhanced inter-professional team working and a more attractive workplace with flexibility in working hours.

This presentation will highlight strategies and options to provide clients with services that facilitate inclusion and occupations in their normal times of being.

References:

Burchardt, T., Le Grand, J. & Piachard, D. (2002) Degrees of exclusion. In: J. Hills, J. LeGrand & D. Piachaud (Eds.) *Understanding social exclusion* (pp. 30-43). New York: Oxford University Press.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2004) Mental health and social exclusion. *Social Exclusion Unit report*. London: ODPM