Context: College Student Mental Health

- Significant increase noted in students disclosing a mental health difficulty upon entry to college (AHEAD, 2015).

- Students reporting mental health difficulties experience greater difficulty engaging in their student role, which in turn can lead to lower rates of retention within college (Collins & Mowbray, 2005) and greater difficulty progressing into the workplace (Mechanic, Bilder and McAlpine 2002; NDA 2014).

The Student Journey: An Opportunity to Learn and for Recovery?

- College can be an opportunity for recovery from an individual perspective through the development of personal self-management skills and strategies, the instilling of hope, and serves as a natural playground for social inclusion.

- College is perhaps the one time where an individual's work, leisure, social groups, accommodation and support services are based in one location, (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2011) all presenting opportunities for learning through experience and personal reflection

The Unilink Self-Management Programme

- Based upon individual's definition of recovery.

- Content specific to the student role with a flexible format to fit around the student role and academic structures.

- Collaborative, individual format that moves at the individual's pace.

- Provide a format for firstly facilitating engagement, and then consolidating learning based upon engagement.

- Enabling individuals to reflect upon occupational engagement as a means to develop self-monitoring / self-management

The Research
Mixed Methods Study Comprised of Student and Staff Strands

Student Strand:

- Qualitative: Interviews pre post and follow up to engagement in the programme.

- Quantitative measures: SF-36v2 Quality of Life measure (Ware et al., 2007), Brief Symptom Inventory (Derogatis 1975; 2004), College Student Experience Questionnaire (Pace & Kuh, 1998)

- Audit of workbooks

Staff Strand:

- Interviews with the Occupational Therapists.

- Audit of case notes and reflective diaries

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The University of Dublin

Preliminary Findings from the Student Qualitative Strand

Emerging Themes from Student Interviews pre and post programme

View of programme:

- Personal Definition of Recovery

- Ways I manage my health and well-being

- Things that can hinder my engagement in my student role

- How I recognise that I am not engaging in my student role

- My practical strategies

Preliminary Findings from the Student Qualitative Strand

Emerging Themes from Student Interviews pre and post programme

1. Personal Definitions of Recovery

Pre: Sense of movement 'getting back to an ideal state'; 'from being ill or being sick'; 'just getting things back in some kind of order'.

Post: Awareness, looking back and realising what has happened and responding.

'Recovery is like seeing the problems and work towards a solution'

'Recovery is just being aware, of ok, things aren't going great at the moment and take from the list of responses and start that way'

Preliminary Findings from the Student Qualitative Strand

Emerging Themes from Student Interviews pre and post programme

2. Ways I manage my health and well being

Pre: Routine, exercise, diet, social contact, sleep, music, staying on top of work, taking time to myself, support 'meeting with OT'.

Post: Application of these strategies, variety within each of the ways (i.e exercise), awareness of engagement, getting on top of academic work but also incorporating leisure.

'Balancing the work' 'Not doing too much work';

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3. Things that can hinder my engagement in my student role

Pre: Mood, anxiety, diet, poor sleep, workload & approach to work.

Post: 'All or nothing approach, perfectionism, not moving on from one assignment to another

Increased awareness reported of these factors

'…, before I might have ignored it, so it's good to be aware of that now, because I know I'm O.K., in fact, I know I can sit back and relax cause I was completely neglecting it kind of'

4. How I recognise that I am not engaging in my Student Role

Pre: Not always recognise; sometimes need others to point it out

Post: Better at recognising; still perfecting; use of journal to record how feeling;

5. My practical strategies

Pre: Talk to someone, try to restructure things; stop and think before acting.

Post: Seeking support from family, friends and support services; going through strategies recorded on the card / notes; taking a reasonable approach to things.

Preliminary Findings from the Student Qualitative Strand

Other Emerging Themes from Student Interviews

View of programme:

- Flexibility

- Individual focus Vs Benefits of group format

- Application of the approaches in real life

- Self-Direction

- Therapeutic Relationship

- Understanding of diagnosis

- Follow up to the programme – check in meetings.

Preliminary Findings from the Staff Interviews

1. Clinical Reasoning in using the programme

2. Format of the Programme

3. OT – Student Interaction

4. Occupation-focus

5. Recovery Focus

Conclusion

1. The appropriateness of self-management approaches with students in higher education.

2. The personal definition of recovery as a basis for working collaboratively.

3. Occupation-focused and Occupation-based approach in facilitating development of self-management of student role.

4. The specific focus of learning to self-manage the individual's student role – focus upon role as well as personal strategies.

5. The need for flexibility in the programme to fit the student's role and to allow for application within the student's real-world contexts in order to make the strategies his / her own.

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Questions

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