



Summary Report – Constance Owens (Liverpool) Award for Service Development

Introduction:

Vicky King, an Occupational Therapist from Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Children's Occupational Therapy Service received the Constance Owens (Liverpool) award in 2018 for a project entitled "Young people's views matter: development of a Young People's Council".

The award provided financial support to develop a Youth Council for young people with additional needs who utilise the therapy services within Hackney Ark. The aim was to develop a sustainable and enjoyable way of collecting young people's views to help design our services, particularly for those preparing to transition into adult teams.

Project Activity

The "Hackney Ark Captains" have met three times so far, with more planned in the future. 15 young people between the ages of 13-19 have attended the meetings, and have given their views on a variety of topics ranging from the design of service flyers to their thoughts about staff training.

The award enabled provision of professionally designed advertising, enticing refreshments, administration support and voucher rewards for our most dedicated Captains. The Captains have designed their own rules for membership and are currently developing their mission statement. They helped to decide where and when to have the meetings; aiming for a termly meeting in a community venue, so far including an inclusive youth club, sport club and accessible garden café. The council now also has the support of other MDT professionals (Physiotherapy, SLT, CAMHS and Youth Health Outreach) who have been invaluable in providing their expertise.

The Captains have provided insight into their lives and how best to support them in therapy services. They have helped to explain the pressures they face (for example at exam seasons), and how best to reach out to them in the community to maximise engagement

(for example suggesting a social media page). Their feedback has been incredible, from the seemingly small things e.g. "there's nothing for us to read in the waiting rooms", to the hilarious e.g. "let's put a Dr Who cut out in the therapy room!" to the deeply insightful e.g. "why don't adult services know all this [health information] about me already, why do I have to worry about it when I have exams?". It has been particularly valuable to have members who are over 18, who can use the benefit of hindsight when reviewing service design.

Along the way there has been several learning points; for example understanding that the young people often have too many commitments to attend regular council meetings, instead requiring a change of day each time; personalising the invite with a focus on what they will gain from being a member; being realistic about how many topics the young people can consider in one meeting; and the importance of pizza!

Hackney Ark Captains are indebted to the Constance Owens trust for their generosity in supporting this award. The council will continue to run for the foreseeable future fostering an important sense of empowerment and self-advocacy that the Captains can take with them into their future.