

Emergent roles: voluntary occupations, social entrepreneurs

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- Social enterprise is one of the approaches which is being proposed to address changes in health and social care policy. Community based initiatives such as social enterprises are often presented as a solution to issues such as an ageing population or widening disparities in health. However, the altruism of volunteers is not enough by itself to sustain a project; not enough attention is paid to the need for careful management and very good communication skills.
- How can occupational therapists prepare themselves to meet these new demands?
- What kind of occupation based initiatives might social enterprise approaches be able to offer?

The workshop

- We will begin with an overview of social enterprises involving volunteers and some examples of projects in Wales and Yorkshire which involve occupational therapy input.
- Small groups of 4-5 first discuss voluntary experiences and social enterprises, and identify key needs that they can agree to develop a model social enterprise project outline for.
- Through groupwork and guided discussion the workshop will explore some of the presentation, planning, development and sustainability issues which occupational therapists may need to address in setting up social enterprises. The learning outcome will be that participants will develop a critical awareness of social enterprise issues.

'social enterprise' is a term which is used very differently in different countries.

Anything from a community based organization to a charitable form of corporation - as long as it is a 'business'.

In the US a non-profit organization endowed and controlled by a philanthropist may be a social enterprise; in the UK a new form of social enterprise called a community interest company has become significant in health care. Many of the former hospital trust organisations are developing into these.

A more traditional understanding of social enterprise is a co-operative or a collective, even these terms can cover a wide variety of organizations, from wholefood distributors to supermarket chains, publishing organizations and building firms.

Examples of social enterprises in the UK health clients might be involved in include:

....city farms, horticultural projects, some vocational rehabilitation organizations, community organizations producing media services or servicing contracts from local industries.

Many occupational therapists, having trained straight from school have little experience of these kinds of organization. Because they are community based and often non-profit there is a tendency to look at these organizations uncritically. But more and more people are looking at them as a means to organize occupation based interventions there is a need to understand them better.

Greenthumbs



- *Greenthumbs* is a horticultural project for older adults. It runs allotments near to a city centre park. Participants can attend one or two days a week, working in groups or alone in a variety of spaces in a development that spans several allotments. These are subdivided into a greenhouse and potting shed, areas for relaxation, raised beds, vegetables and fruit so that there are tasks to be accomplished in every season. Meals are prepared on site using a camp stove in a large shed which is also used for education about horticulture.
- Approximately 100 adults attend the facility, with a range of physical and mental health conditions over 5 days a week with capacity for 20 people per day 5 days a week. 4 staff, 2 of whom are volunteers, run each day of two sessions. *Greenthumbs* is dependent on a variety of local grants to sustain its activities, ranging from local council support to charity funding, but a new source of income might appear to be recent personalized budget monies, which participants pay for attendance, at £30 per session.

Kreative Krafts



- *Kreative Krafts* is a project for physically disabled adults which produces a range of household ornaments from recycled objects (e.g. pegs) and products for the garden made from natural wood (wooden bowls, light pulls, bird houses, garden furniture, etc). It is based in a former council works depot, and has received grants from the local council to sustain it.
- *Kreative Krafts* employs 20 people who attend for anything from one to five days. Its products are sold directly from the premises, on line, and also at local markets as well as through a preferential arrangement with a local DIY/Bricoleur. The products are well designed and attractive, the participants are proud of the quality of the things they make which have been developed to make construction relatively easy but to allow them to focus of maintaining their skills. These products have sold well. *Kreative Krafts* employs a couple of technical instructors, a part time administrator, and a small number of volunteers. Although people work for different lengths of time, all participants, volunteers and paid staff are members of the co-operative.
- One of the problems for *Kreative Krafts* is developing its market in the local community by extending its range of goods, or widening its market beyond the local community, as there is no room at its site and no resources to expand.

Education for all



- An inner city area has traditionally been the home for a growing proportion of refugees, people denied asylum, asylum seekers and other migrants. Many different nationalities and cultures are represented, but a number of minorities in this diversity are relatively small. The local council and other organizations have tried to develop projects to address some needs but due to the many different issues amongst the people of this area it is difficult to establish priorities. There are many unaddressed health needs and mental health issues in particular given the experiences people have had, but in many communities people are reluctant to come forward and address them.
- A group of former teachers and adult educators have set up a 'co-operative learning community' using church halls and other community spaces. *Education for all* offers a programme of 'community learning' to teach not only English (you can substitute your own language) as a foreign language, but also to encourage people to value their own resources and develop courses for others, for example teaching about their own culture, customs and crafts. This project has the support of a number of community leaders, but relies heavily on good will and donations (for example of stationery). It may be able to satisfy curriculum requirements to establish a more formal approach to learning but doing so will affect its current ability to be flexible in learning.
- The numbers involved vary, although there are 12 ex teachers and college lecturers co-ordinating the project, 3 of whom are migrants with educational experience in their country of origin. Links have been made with primary care services to provide a network for people who may need to be socially engaged but who do not want to be stigmatized as having mental health problems.

Work for life



- A small vocational rehabilitation project, work for life has premises in an office block in a medium sized town. It provides short catch up courses in literacy and numeracy, preparation of curriculum vitae and computer literacy skills over a 6 week period. The aim is to provide a specialist service to people who would formerly have entered condition management programmes, and place them with local firms.
- *Work for life* is a community interest company – it has a board of directors and operates like any other company except that as it works for the ‘community interest’ the surplus it makes is put back into the company. The service receives payment from government benefits agencies on the basis that its ‘participants’ (people identified from the claimants for unemployment relief, usually who have been out of work for a year and appear to have extra needs, such as mental health issues) will be removed from the unemployment register and find work within a year of being referred. The money *Work for Life* receives is an advance against the benefits which it is anticipated their work will save. *Work for life* employs a small number of administrative staff and ‘trainers’. The trainers deliver the courses and go out to visit the ‘participants’ in their work places.
- Currently there are 60 ‘participants’ who are expected to be with the company for 6 months to a year until they find work. If they do not return to work after a year *Work for Life* will incur financial penalties from the government.