



Review of Adults Service

Introduction

Umbrella successfully secured funding from Lloyds Bank Foundation to review our adult services. Vanessa Boon from Energise was contracted to lead on the review with support from Rhian Barlow, Adult Services Coordinator.

The review looked at internal data, national research and information collected from other agencies including mapping of local service provision. The views of young adults, their parents, staff, volunteers and Trustees were gathered through surveys, focus groups, observational visits and one to one interviews.

What the Review Found

Strengths

The Adult service is highly regarded, particular strengths include:

- providing a safe and enjoyable space for young adults
- strong safeguarding
- reliable, flexible service, with a good range of activities
- building social skills, confidence and empowerment



Young Adults:

“Somewhere to come and be yourself and learn to be polite and make friends”

“I am more confident and I am working in a charity shop now”

“Umbrella helped me a lot to get ready for moving home to my own place”

“I can relax here and have fun and learn about healthy eating and try new things and I met my boyfriend at Umbrella!”

“Mum used to cry and nag me to go but now I love it and it makes me feel more normal doing things for myself. I used to be by myself but now I have friends”

“Really good activities and things I never did before”



Parents and Carers on Umbrella Adults' Service strengths

"It gives a positive inclusive group identity where our kids can be themselves and have fun without judgement"

"Raises all our expectations of what can be achieved – stretches, empowers and surprises us"

"Gives my daughter friends and new role models to copy who stretch her abilities – the extra stimulation has transferable outcomes at home and life skills"

"Helps with life skills like shopping, food prep, getting the bus, going out and about safely and socialising"

"Umbrella are very good at allowing young adults to mix with activities of their choosing. Other providers I use are more focused on one area i.e. dance/drama"

Services are delivered by a loyal, dedicated team delivering services that they care about.



Staff and Volunteer views on Umbrella Adults' Service strengths

"Umbrella is a fantastic place to work/volunteer and has helped me grow as a person exponentially in my time here, helping me become more confident and even relate more than I already did to those with special needs"

Areas for Improvement and Development

The review found that the service has become 'a victim of its own success', in particular:

- Umbrella house is too small and limits the activities that can be offered
- parents and carers want activity rotas more in advance to help them plan ahead.

Suggestions for development include:

- options for sleepovers and events that give young adults a fun night out as well as enough time for the parents and carers to enjoy an evening out too
- more activity sessions, and fewer meals out, moving outside familiar comfort zone of activities
- greater flexibility in timing of sessions, in particular to avoid rush hour traffic
- more matching of young adults, so groups of young adult with similar interests and abilities meet
- improvement in administration, moving away from a paper-based system to using technology, for example, to manage bookings, which is very time-consuming
- Improving evaluation, so that the success stories are captured and publicised, helping in staff morale, marketing and evidence for commissioners and funding applications
- Giving greater clarity on the service offer, moving away from reacting to demands to planning ahead and setting manageable parameters for service provision There is a danger of 'trying to be all things to all people' and a need to clarify what the

Umbrella adults' service offer is, with clarity on boundaries and when to signpost to other services or help parents and carers

- helping young adults to navigate dating and loving relationships and help towards more volunteering and employment outcomes.
- Developing social enterprise(s), or community projects that offer work experience e.g. an annual festive crafts fair fundraiser, running a pop-up café, art gallery, cake sale, fashion show, making a film, putting on a talent show, etc with young adults taking on roles in marketing, planning, customer service, fundraising, handling monies, etc with the support of the Umbrella team.

Internally, some front-line staff feel that the Trustees, senior and admin support colleagues do not fully appreciate the challenging realities of their role. Operational staff and volunteers would benefit from a deeper insight into the pressures upon admin and management colleagues. Employees and volunteers identify that team meetings, training, job enrichment and career development are particular areas for improvement.

Opportunities for Development

Umbrella has a long track record, good reputation as an established charity and a trusted brand. There is very limited provision for adults locally, creating a high demand for Umbrella's services and the opportunity for expansion of current services There are opportunities for services which offer:

- a venue providing a wider range of services geared specifically towards adults, with larger spaces for activities like sports and dance, a home skills area, meeting access needs and increasing capacity to offer services to more people
- stepping stones towards independent living such as a 'taster home'
- volunteering and work experience opportunities with a social enterprise community café run by disabled adults being a popular idea
- qualifications to enhance sense of achievement and future prospects
- supported sleepovers, trips and holidays for young adults providing enrichment and greater independence, whilst giving parents and carers a break too
- support services for parents and carers to help them navigate the system and support their loved ones with new challenges and chapters of adulthood



Parents and Carers on gaps in local provision:

"I think there is a deficit in services to adults with learning disabilities - lack of employment opportunities, appropriate housing and reducing care support"

"Apart from Umbrella adult services there is not much in the way of local service providers involved with adults"

"A big gap in services all round for higher functioning young people on the autistic spectrum"

"A dating type agency would be the most pleasing thing to be developed by Umbrella in my son's case"

"Evening care so that carers can have an evening out"

“I’d like to see allotments, with adults growing food and preparing it for a community café, getting work skills and help getting work in charity shops”

“Many services close for holiday seasons and bank holidays but we really need continual services especially at demanding times of the year”

“I want to see them go on camping trips, holidays, more variety of activities with transferable skills”

“I think it should be around independent living and s employment opportunities”

There is demand for a service beyond the current 18-30 age group served, with continuity of friendships and activities alongside help with new chapters of life e.g. moving away from parents, independent living, dating and relationships, dealing with changing support networks as parent/carer capacity changes.

Conclusions

- The Adults’ Service offers a vital and valued service which delivers outcomes including improved wellbeing of disabled young adults and their families as well improved life skills, confidence and social participation. There is clear demand for expanding current services and diversifying to new services
- Capturing and marketing success stories and outcomes is an area for improvement
- The service is overstretched and needs greater staffing and venue capacity. Resources are needed to develop the service, specifically to:
 - implement the recommendations of this review
 - demonstrate outcomes and evaluation
 - nurture strategic partnerships to deliver new services
 - identify new appropriate venues to deliver services
- Investment in technology could achieve administration efficiency savings, reducing paperwork and enabling direct booking over the internet
- Umbrella cannot be all things to all people and its strengths lie in being an empowering, enabling service, therefore new services would be best developed through partnership working rather than attempting to lead on delivery to meet all local needs
- Umbrella can also play a role in lobbying for and stimulating development of new services to address unmet local needs

Next Steps

A plan will be developed and put into place to further develop and improve the service.