

National Disability Workforce Project

Pilot Site Report

Workforce Capacity Building

Lower Great Southern Community Living Association Inc

Workforce issues targeted:

The Lower Great Southern Community Living Association (LGSCLA) set out to achieve three main goals. These are as follows;

1. To increase the profile of the organisation within the local community to improve attraction rates for new staff. Promoting the organisation as an employer of choice is anticipated to positively influence broader community perceptions about the support worker role as a career choice for people.
2. To redesign the Coordinators role by reducing the range of administrative tasks undertaken and increase client contact and support worker supervision.
3. To develop formal systems and processes to ensure increased informal supervision for support staff and implement formal supervision.

Our assumptions:

Please use this section to outline your initial assumptions.

- A lack of clarity and direction for Coordinators can filter down and have a negative impact on up to 120 support staff
- The Coordinators role has become more reactive than proactive due to external stressors such as workforce shortages
- The Coordinators role is too broad and includes a range of administrative tasks that may be better placed within other roles.
- The future industrial landscape for LGSCLA may be very different with the introduction of new awards or being named respondent to existing awards
- Direct care staff may perceive support work as a stop gap between other jobs due to few opportunities for career advancements.
- Some of the people attracted to work in direct care positions may not be suited but labour shortages result in them securing employment.
- The high turnover of staff can damage the reputation of the organisation.
- When the organisation was established in 1991 it was appropriate to have a low profile, but the need for this has changed. The result is the organisation has a high profile within the disability sector, but a low profile within the Albany community. This can add to the challenges associated with attracting and retaining good staff.
- Many direct care positions are filled with unskilled workers which increase the need for the organisation to have robust training programs and strategies to identify specific training needs.

Strategies trialled:

We set out to raise the profile of the organisation as an employer of choice with a community awareness campaign that identifies the benefits and positives of working in the disability sector, but in particular working for the LGSCLA.

- Five public information sessions were held that provided information on the LGSCLA, this history of LGSCLA and services for people with a disability, the support worker role, training available and the benefits and value of support work.

Redesign the coordinator role to reduce the range of administrative tasks and to include more training, supervising, mentoring and coaching roles for support staff.

- The Coordinators job description was reviewed and amended to reduce the range of administrative tasks undertaken and increased responsibilities around client contact and staff supervision were added.
- Two new roles were created. The first was the Accommodation and Respite Manager to ensure increased supervision for Coordinators and to free up the Executive Officer (EO) to focus on the key components of the EO role.
- The second role created was the Service Agreement and Contract Officer (SACO) position. Key tasks of this role include data entry for staff rostering on TRACCS to improve data collection for reporting requirements and reduce the amount of time Coordinators spend on administrative tasks. Managing staff employment contracts and initial recruitment documents are also key components of the SACO role.
- A two day model coherency workshop was held where Coordinators, the EO and a family member of a client evaluated the coherency between what the organisation states it does and the actual service that is delivered. The aim was to increase Coordinators awareness of the skills required by support staff and organisational systems to improve service delivery.

Improve quality and level of formal supervision for support staff

- Coordinators received three days of training in managing staff, leading teams and supervising, mentoring and coaching. Information gathered at these workshops will be utilised in the review of the supervision policy.
- Regular formal and informal supervision was introduced for Coordinator and the Accommodation and Respite Manager.
- A review was begun of the supervision policy but this has not been completed.

Strengthen and build upon relationship with GS TAFE for competency based training (on job assessed)

- Continued to enrol staff in traineeships for Certificate 3 and 4 in Disability Work with two intakes each year.
- Liaised with TAFE and other private training providers to increase the range of training provided.
- Improved our induction and orientation process for new staff and created a diary for new staff that includes all buddy shifts, three probationary meetings within the first three months of work, one key contact person for all work related queries and orientation and other training events.
- The skill audit of staff was started in May 2009 and has not been completed yet. The information from this will inform planning for future training and pay levels.

How we measured the impact of our strategies:

Strategy 1

- Data was gathered on the number of people attending the information sessions and how many people were employed as a result of attending one of these.
- Data was also collected on staff retention, ie how long staff remained employed.

Strategy 2

- Coordinators documented how they spent their time over a four week period and this information was collated into a pie chart. Categories included home visits routine, home visits problems, team meetings, phone, office, other, family support and training. Coordinators provided the same information in April 2009 and the data was compared.
- Data was collected on staff attraction and retention rates and graphed to show trends and allow for analysis with other external events.

Strategy 3

- A baseline survey was conducted on staff supervision during 2007/2008 and this was compared with supervision during 2008/2009.

Strategy 4

- Data was gathered on the training provided and the number of staff attending.
- Evaluation sheets were added to staff training and orientation events.
- Skills audit for support staff was commenced.

Conclusions:

- That we can improve some of our regular data collection to assist with workforce planning for the future. Specifically the office survey needs to be refined and categories of time spent rationalised around Job Descriptions. The difference between Master Roster tasks which are core Coordinator tasks and daily changes which are administrative needs to be delineated.
- Another potentially valuable source of information is the exit interview. Very few people choose the exit interview. It is noted as an option on the 'Notice of Resignation', but should be recommended to people. The exit survey should be refined to capture specific information and this information should be collated and organised.
- That raising the profile of the organisation as an employer of choice has been beneficial and has resulted in improvements in many of our HR practices and systems.
- Coordinators have a reduced range of administrative tasks but are spending more time on administration and HR related tasks. This finding was contrary to expectation. A potential reason for this may derive from the success in staff recruitment, which places an administrative burden on Coordinators in terms of organising new workers. Once again this is a core Coordinator task and needs to be measured separately to other admin tasks.

- Staff supervision has improved for office based staff but formal supervision for support staff has not been implemented. With the creation of new roles within the office procedures for implementing supervision during probation have been refined.
- Induction and Orientation for new staff has greatly improved.

Implications:

This is the first step in a much longer project that the LGSCLA is committed to. We have realised the importance of testing our assumptions and the need for an evidence based approach to decision making.

The LGSCLA will continue to refine our data collection processes and develop clarity around what data is collected and its purpose. The findings will continue to inform policy development and recruitment and retainment strategies for the future.