

CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Facilitating Development of Education Resources for Intellectual Disability Services through a Community of Practice

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According to the The Irish Longitudinal study on Ageing (TILDA) Intellectual Disabilities Study (IDS)Wave report 2014 osteoporosis and falls related injuries are a significant health concern for people with an intellectual disability (ID). The research reported on those over 50 years of age with 70% having reduced bone density and 33% of falling each year. Audit of one service provider demonstrated comparable numbers. Despite these numbers there was no education resource to inform health and social care staff, families, carers and people with an ID of these facts and on measures required for their prevention and management.

In 2014 Forever Autumn Community of Practice (FACOP) (www.foreverautumn.co) collaborated with ID service providers St Michaels House, Ballymun and Daughters of Charities Disability Support Services in North Dublin to build on the work already commenced and develop an education resource on bone health and falls awareness. A multidisciplinary approach was taken with evidence of teamwork across nursing, medical, dietetics, physiotherapy, and service users to inform the content.

The aim of the education resource is:

to provide information on bone health and falls awareness with a specific focus on exercise and nutrition for people with an ID.

to raise awareness of reduced bone mineral density and risk of falling in this population.

to improve outcomes for future safety and well being.

The targeted audience is all service providers, health and social care staff workers in ID services, people with an ID, family members and carers, volunteers and support workers

The resource was developed over a 12 month period through engagement with members of the target population www.happybones.ie

Through engagement with an Educational Technologist to design and develop the content, the suite of resources is available on an open online platform and has been accessed to date over

4500 times. It has been implemented as an education resource on bone health and falls awareness by a number of service providers. Service users and their families were actively involved in the development of the educational resources.

The FACOP maintains and regularly updates and adds to the material on the website and currently has seven service providers from ID services as members.

The material is developed in a format that makes it easily transferable - on line through website, eBook store, and YouTube – including 3 short videos in which service users feature Paula’s Story, Having a DXA scan, Best Foot Forward - Chrissies Story or in printable material – Happy Bones book and easy read leaflets which can be used interchangeably or independently

Happy Bones has been adopted in ID service providers within the FACOP and has generated a lot of interest both nationally and internationally. The programme has resulted in an increased awareness of the importance of good bone health, falls awareness and falls prevention strategies among all age groups. This has been evidenced in an increase in the number of people with an ID being referred for investigation for osteoporosis.

This initiative is an example of collaboration and integration working in practice. Service users’ engagement was paramount in the development phase of the education resource. Through their new knowledge, the service users initiated the promotion of the resources at a sports event and health fair within their organisations. This facilitated sharing of their learned experiences with their peers in order to promote a healthy active lifestyle to achieve strong bones. It demonstrates how this collaboration across service providers to support each other can be achieved.

This project highlights the value and merits of a Community of Practice in supporting health and social care staff in their daily work with individuals with ID.

Keywords: bone health; osteoporosis; falls; intellectual disability
