

## **Case Study: Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP) - Goal 2 – Mental health Skills Project**

The WRAP programme was fully funded by the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme in 2018. Bandon was chosen as the starting place for the delivery of WRAP as there are a significant number of people with Recovery / mild mental health challenges in the Bandon/Kinsale area. Bandon Town itself has a mental health service, Watergate Mental Health Centre, which currently sees a case load of 600.

The West Cork Development Partnership's experience identified a need for a community approach that used a strengths based model to support individuals on their road to recovery helping to manage stress, promote resilience and increase self-esteem while connecting them to peers within their communities.

We endeavoured to find an evidenced based programme and came across WRAP, Wellness Recovery Action Plan. In 2010, WRAP was recognized by the United States Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration as evidence- based practice and listed in the National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices. The Department of Psychiatry at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) released the results of a rigorous study that demonstrated significantly positive behavioural health outcomes for individuals with severe and persistent mental health challenges who participated in peer-led WRAP groups

WRAP is a personal wellness and recovery programme that educates individuals, while empowering them to make the journey back to wellness. It was developed in 1997 by Mary Ellen Copeland whom was searching for ways to overcome her own mental health issues and move on to full recovery. The WRAP programme helps people to 1) decrease and prevent intrusive or troubling feelings and behaviours; 2) increase personal empowerment; 3) improve quality of life; and 4) achieve their own life goals. WRAP helps participants to be aware of distressing feelings and behaviours and helps the individual to create planned responses that will help reduce or eliminate those feelings to maintain wellness. The Programme also helps individuals to create a plan for others to follow when they are unable to make decisions for themselves. It is used by people in all kinds of circumstances, and by health care and mental health teams all over the world to address all kinds of physical, mental health and life issues. (Copeland Center)

The West Cork Development Partnership invested in upskilling a Development Officer through the SICAP programme by providing them with the opportunity to attend the WRAP programme level 1, delivered by suicide or survive. This programme involved the Development officer learning and creating their own WRAP to ensure they have a lived experience of how WRAP works.

The Development officer then completed further Facilitator training fully funded by SICAP and ran by the Copeland Centre in the mental health department in Highfield Hospital, Dublin. This was a 7 week process of training and Accreditation.



*Photo1: Facilitator's graduation*

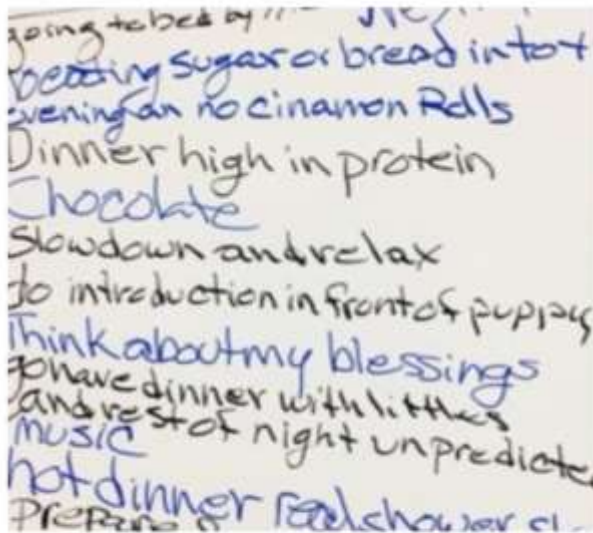
On completion of the accreditation process we started the promotion of the course locally in a targeted way throughout the town. We collaborated on the ground with Local Mental Health Service, Local Doctors, Pharmacists, Drug task force, Family Support Services, Occupational Therapists, Employability and Brothers of Charity to inform each service of what WRAP is, and how it can be of benefit to their clients. This ensures that we receive smart referrals using community development principles to achieve participation with those that are marginalized.

The course was also advertised in our office window, on our Facebook page, the local doctors Facebook pages, as well as the local mental health service noticeboard. This pre development work in outreach ensured that the course quickly gained interest and 8 participants signed up for the first course.

1 Person had seen it advertised via Facebook, 1 has been recommended to do the course by her Psychiatrist. 1 has been referred by their occupational Therapist. 1 person was referred by employability, 1 through SICAP engagement, 1 through publication on Office window. Two had been recommended by the local pharmacist.

The Wrap Programme runs for 3 consecutive weeks: one day per week, Week 1 - 10am -5Pm. Week 2 - 10am-5pm and week 3 - 10am-2pm. It is important that the room feels welcoming. Colourful, with objects for participants to fiddle with on the table, enabling those whom feel anxious to feel free to fidget.

Fruit and lunch are provided through SICAP funding with a focus of self-care, eating well and promoting the benefits of eating with others. The groups starts with the facilitator sharing something personal about their own difficulties of maintaining wellness, this sets the tone and allows for connection as well as giving permission for others to be authentic in sharing.



The facilitator is not delivering the course as an expert with the answers but more as part of the group while holding space for shared learning, giving permission for vulnerability and authenticity. The Key concepts of WRAP are: Hope, Personal Responsibility, Education, Self-Advocacy and Support these are the 5 key components of recovery for people with mental health and emotional difficulties. WRAP's action planning consists of a Wellness toolbox, Daily Maintenance plan, Triggers, Early warning signs, Crisis planning, Post crisis. As the group make their way through the above

topics together, they are identifying their own wellness tools, their own triggers to poor mental health etc...

It's about taking stock and becoming aware of how they feel, this period of reflection allows participants to identify what wellness feels like and what it feels like when things are starting to break down. It is in this noticing that allows us to take action in maintain our wellness. It is being the fly on your own wall. When today is a good day WRAP asks you, what made it good? The answers are everything from "I went for a walk this morning" "I met a friend" "I heard an Abba song and it set me up for the day".

Helping participants identify the things that make them feel good enables them to add these to their wellness toolbox allowing them to use them on a bad day when things are starting to break down. Together the group fill an easel page full of wellness tools. While also Identify things that they MUST do every day to maintain their wellness.

We travel through the journey of wellness together, sharing the things that work for us and identifying the things that do not serve us well. The group share past times, experiences, hobbies and local knowledge. Participants reported an increase in hope from week to week, coming back to the group one male said

"I have restored faith in people from being here, from meeting others that understand me and see things in the same way; I feel met here and have made friends" Participant J.

"I cannot believe that other people feel like this. You think others are happy, you see them with their big jobs and fancy houses and you think they are happy, this makes me realise we are all the same":  
– Participant P.

Clients self-rated their wellness throughout the course, they all moved up in their scaling throughout the programme when checking in the morning, afternoon and just before home. By the end of the course all participants spoke about how they now felt empowered to remain well, they felt like they had tools that were real and usable.

*"I found the course Positive and uplifting, it allowed me to find myself again and hold my power, I found it very good and I look at my wellness tools often and use them when I'm feeling down, I have to remember that I have choices and that there are things I can do "*: Participant G.

*"It gave me an opportunity to stand back from things, break things down and work out clearer pathways. You don't have to be in crisis to take part. I'd recommend it to anyone. It was a real easy course to follow and one thing leads on from the other, even your parting words of "That's a Wrap" stayed with me, it's like yeah! That's it! If I follow all of these steps that I have created myself, it will all come together. I have control, I can be well. It's not complicated but it's not until you break it down within WRAP that it becomes manageable and not overwhelming. I loved the course and found it very empowering not only for me but I could see for others in the group too:* Participant T.

*It was a very good course well worth going to. I was very emotional when I was doing it; I think I could do it again now and learn more from it as I'd be able to take more of it in. It gave me awareness though, that's the main thing. I now know that I need structure in my day to stay well, not working doesn't help but I'm hopeful something will come up now. I suppose back then I learnt the*

*course and now I'm living it. I know I need to make a plan for the day to stay well to stop myself falling into a hole that I know is there, that's the fear, I need to push myself for myself. I don't want my name used as I'm looking for work, I don't want anyone to see me as unwell even though I know that's not what the course is about. Thank you for all the skills.* – Participant L.

“The course helped me increase my wellbeing as it taught me about self-advocacy” – Participant P.

“The course made me realise that burdens and wellness happens for every one of us, it has helped me to focus on reality, I over expect from life and from myself”: Participant J.



Participants left the group with having identified their own wellness strategy to keep them well, identified their own strengths, connected with others in their community. Each leave with a personalised WRAP workbook that they can add to as time goes on. A certificate and an increased sense of hope for the future. They all said that they felt empowered and more connected to their community increasing their self-esteem and hope.

Some participants on the course found it difficult to be engaged in the morning time, with one participant explaining that she is still drowsy from her medication in the morning time; she fell asleep from time to time in the group. She was told that maybe she needed to listen to her body and rest in the morning; however she was determined to attend. It was tricky to manage as she often fell asleep during someone's sharing of a personal story.

Although it only lasted for a few mins at a time it had the potential to be upsetting to those that are vulnerable while sharing their experiences. It also meant that the participant missed bits of the course. We learnt from this and on advertising the second group, participants were asked at registration if medication would make it was difficult to attend in the morning time, this allows for a person centred approach to the delivery. It means that we can run the course from 12 – 5pm and add an additional day if needs occur.

Participants that are in Recovery can find commitment difficult to maintain, so there is quite a bit of drop out as the date of the course date gets nearer. One participant attended the first day and then couldn't make the rest due to her mental health taking a dip. Her Occupational therapist contacted us on her behalf to sign up her up for the second round of the course. A few days before the course began she contacted us and said..

"I can't come, I'm going to do a course in childcare, but I would like to convey how much I appreciate what your company does in terms of support, and I'm thankful to know ye are there, I'm just not able to get there at the moment within myself, I'm unsure if I should do the childcare course or what? I'm just giving myself time, I really don't know". – Participant M.

Another Lady signed up but didn't attend the course due to mixing up the days of attendance. She turned up the day after the course began. She was extremely upset at missing the appointment as she was finding things very confusing. SICAP staff member spent an hour on phone talking to her explaining that as it is not possible for participants to join a group on the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> day, as WRAP is a peer group process and the course is created together. She was assured she will be notified at the next round of intake. The lady rang back 9 times over the 2 days, to talk about joining the next course.

Some participants have expressed an interest in forming a wellness support group going forward. WRAP has another element and can be delivered specifically to support Trauma survivors. Modules include: changing negative thoughts to positive: Trauma Recovery: Suicide Prevention: Peer Support and living spaces and lifestyle issues, Work Related Issues for supporting full mental health recovery. Wrap can be applied to any community from children to older people. WRAP may lend itself in these ways as part of our SICAP programme in the future.

The clients for WRAP can require a lot of support and handholding while attending, it is important for the facilitator to feel comfortable in people's distress. During the course People shared a lot of personal stories of how they lost their wellness. Through gambling, domestic violence, job loss and long term illness. Some of the details can be heavy and that has to be managed by the facilitator within the group to make it safe for everyone. Examples of the type of sharing..

*“ my mam has serious mental health issues, she tried to set fire to the house at night when we were in it, my brother does too, he tried to kill himself after that and is in a wheelchair now, I suppose we all do in the house really, but I’m okay mostly..... I just ignore it and keep myself grand, most days I’m in good form and just play the Xbox or go for a walk. I’m grand. I have my cats, one died this week and that is making me feel not good but I’m grand”*. – Participant M

I got very down and found myself in a very dark place, I ended up in hospital, I had excellent care I’m on the mend now but it hasn’t been easy – Participant J.

### Testimonials of local agency’s re: WRAP



*“Sometimes there can be a stigma attached to the HSE facilities and so having the WRAP run by The West Cork Development Partnership through the SICAP programme, within the community means that there is less of that stigma and there is a social element to it too, not everyone is a HSE service user, that helps people engage in the community. We can use a lot of negative language when talking about illness but WRAP is about wellness and that is very positive.....Aoife Willmott Occupational Therapist (HSE) South Lee adult Mental Health Services*

*“I found the WRAP programme very beneficial to our pharmacy. We often encounter patients who are stressed in their daily lives. It was great to be able to advise them to attend the WRAP programme to learn more about handling their stress and encourage their wellness. Often people feel that they do not require GP intervention but that they "need something". WRAP is a great programme to fill this gap”*. .....Maria O'Connor Fenton MSPI, Supervising Pharmacist, Brooks Pharmacy

*“Employability West Cork delivers a tailor made and solutions focused approach to supporting people back to work. Having the WRAP programme through SICAP, as a resource has been very beneficial to us in our work and for our clients. In one particular case, a client had talked of a number of personal difficulties that although not related to job search would have had a detrimental effect not only on their motivation and confidence, but also in how well they managed the transition to work. The WRAP programme complimented our own work and added strategies and ways of thinking that helped raise the level of resilience in this particular client. This greater sense of well-being would have played a part in their success in gaining employment and in handling everything in the job and outside of it. It was a wonderful meeting we had last when we were able to discuss everything that was better in work and in the rest of their life”*.....Darren Priest Employability Bandon

Special Thanks to all the participants that allowed us to use their comments, Photos and feedback.

References:

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