Introduction

Discovery Quest is a unique, community based recreational provider for adults with severe and enduring mental illness living in Norfolk. Discovery Quest is an innovative and challenging walking / outdoor based therapy project.

It offers adults who are being treated for mental illness the opportunity to explore, learn and develop knowledge of the Norfolk, Derbyshire and Scottish countryside. This is achieved through a six month walking / outdoor-based therapy programme in which (service users) completed a range of objectives, including walking 350 miles in five months, then in the sixth month walking the West Highland Way over eight days and climbing Ben Nevis.

Discovery Quest is about more than just walking, it stimulates and educates participants in conservation and environmental awareness through the John Muir Award; promotes and encourages healthier lifestyles, reduces the impact of social exclusion, actively promotes the opportunity for social interaction. At the heart of the project is the development of supportive and meaningful relationships.

Following the mid-year report submitted in September 2008, this is our summary report reflecting on the capacity building and service provision of the project through the year.

Discovery Quest has met its National Indicators (found in the Local Area Agreement) as set out below. This report will provide information on the way the indicators have been met during the period 2008/2009.

NI 6 Participation in regular volunteering
NI 119 Self reported measures of people’s overall health and wellbeing
NI 124 People with a long-term condition supported to be independent and in control of their condition
NI 142 Number of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living

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Beliefs and aims of Julian Housing Support

Our Belief

We believe that hope is crucial to everyone’s existence. Without it people cannot engage in life.

Our Aim

To improve the quality of peoples’ lives by focusing on what they feel are their housing and support needs, and by accessing appropriate resources to help meet those needs.

Our Belief

We believe that strengths are something we all have. Everyone has the capacity to grow, to learn and to change.

Our Aim

To build on peoples’ existing strengths and skills in order for them to live as independently as they wish.

Our Belief

We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to enjoy safe and secure housing.

Our Aim

To enable people with severe and ongoing mental health problems to live within the community in accommodation suited to their needs.

Our Belief

We believe that people with severe and ongoing mental health problems have the right to take part in positive & challenging activities.

Our Aim

To deliver first class skill based recreation and education packages that enhance healthier lifestyles for people who are socially excluded.
The Objectives of Discovery Quest

To promote green spaces and the wilderness as an experiential learning opportunity.

To build upon & enhance social and psychological recovery through genuine personal achievements.

To increase the self-confidence and aspirations of all those undertaking the project.

To reduce social exclusion in wards with high deprivation levels.

To reduce the dependence upon health services and prescribed medication.
Walking makes us feel good, and hard walking makes us feel as if we have really achieved something. Having joined JHS I realised that Discovery Quest was something much more than a walking therapy – it is about taking that good feeling and using it to learn and retain life skills that can be shared amongst service users.

It is rooted in the philosophy that underpins all that JHS does – that people need hope, and that in order to inspire hope we work with peoples’ inner resources and strengths rather than trying to address deficits or bits that are missing. It’s hard work and it requires optimism and a worker who recognises their own strengths and abilities. Paul Lefever, manager of Discovery Quest optimises that philosophy and I encourage and support him in his ideas, his optimism and his tenacity to secure a solid future for Discovery Quest.

Our thanks go to the partners below who have made possible the capacity building work this year. The outcomes for service users’ improved health and for social inclusion in the first quarter have been impressive and the prospect of an in depth research proposal is another exciting development for this unique project. I look forward to the continued success of Discovery Quest.

In March of 2008, a report was produced setting out a clear set of performance outcomes for the coming year. The primary outcomes in 2008/09 were to develop the project’s structures and capacity before pressing ahead with further challenging walking therapy programmes. This report follows on with our progress in the areas of capacity building and service provision.

Pip Coker, Chief Executive.
Capacity Building

Aim

- To increase the capacity of Discovery Quest to deliver services.

Objectives

- To recruit a full time Project Manager.
- To recruit a full time Outdoor Activity Instructor (Outreach worker).
- To develop an office base and facilities.
- To produced specific policies and procedures that meets with current Health & Safety guidelines.
- To continue fundraising to establish long-term sustainability.
- To develop the current model of working to encapsulate a wider audience.
- To develop working partnerships with other key organisations.

General Outcomes

- We have improved our capacity to deliver services.
- Specific project policies and procedures have been implemented.
- Our service is available to more people.
- A Service User training package has been further developed, and implemented.
- The project is able to meet National and Local Area Agreements standards more efficiently and effectively.

Roles and responsibilities

Sir Ranulph Fiennes has agreed to be Patron of Discovery Quest.

A full time Project Manager was in post by May 2008 and a full time Outdoor Activity Instructor was in post by September 2008.

A volunteering process has been established, with policy and procedures in place. Active Norfolk are currently advertising volunteer places on their website on behalf of Discovery Quest.

Day to day operations

Office facilities, at the Julian Housing Support base in Norwich, were in place by May 2008.
A comprehensive set of operating procedures, risk assessments and other off-site specific policies are now in operation. These additional policies complement those already in force by Julian Housing Support, and are available to view on request.

Funding

Natural England and Big Lottery have awarded Discovery Quest a grant for £313,000, to be allocated over three years. NHS Norfolk, Norfolk Social Services and Norfolk Community Foundation will provide an additional £88,000. This will enable 160 service users to have access to natural environments in three districts – Norwich, Great Yarmouth and Kings Lynn.

Two other grant applications were lodged. The first grant application was to the Department of Health for £180,000 over three years. The second was to Norfolk County Council for £57,000. Both these applications were unsuccessful.

Membership

In April 2008, Discovery Quest became an additional service provision of Julian Housing Support, who previously provided partnership support to the project. Discovery Quest is now accountable to its Core Management Team, the Management committee and Trustees. The Project Manager receives direct supervision from the Director of Practice Development at Julian Housing Support. This support is invaluable and enables the project to develop strong foundations in order that the project has a greater chance of success.

Discovery Quest is now a member of the Institute of Outdoor Learning, which encourages outdoor learning by developing quality, safety and opportunity to experience outdoor activity provision and by supporting and enhancing the good practice of those who work in the outdoors.

Partnership

Norfolk Wildlife Trust has provided a set of workshops aimed at developing participants’ knowledge of the Norfolk Wildlife and ecology. The workshops were focused on four areas: Coastal, Broadland, Heathland & Woodland. Norfolk Wildlife Trust will provide 36 workshops over three years.

Proposed contribution to research

In conjunction with University of East Anglia, the Norfolk and Waveney Mental Health Foundation Trust is seeking a two-year grant from the Department of Health (Patient Benefit Grant). This grant will enable the Primary Care & Psychological Services, at Northgate Resource Centre, Great Yarmouth, to carry out mix-methodology independent research study into the effects of Discovery Quest’s walking therapy programmes on service users’ lives. The results of the study would be submitted in several peer review journals, with a potential publication date of 2011. The initial bid for funding was returned with positive feedback and a second application will be submitted in the 2009/2010 period.
New ventures

Discovery Quest is currently developing a new project and intends to work in conjunction with Combat Stress, Royal British Legion and local ex-military organisations. The plan is to provide a challenging 9-month walking therapy programme for around 30 ex-service personnel, who are currently being treated for a serious mental illness in Norfolk. The first six months would be a comprehensive training programme, delivered in either the Lake District or Snowdon National Park. The final expedition would be to walk the entire length of the Pyrenees Mountains (GR -11), which is roughly 840 km (520 miles), and climb a staggering 38,000 metres. This would take approximately 46 days. The aim would include each group having a qualified mountain guides and a therapist or clinical psychologist to provide psychological support. The purpose of the venture is a stepping-stone towards readjusting to a healthier civilian life, to re-inspire hope and promote recovery.

So far, the response has been extremely positive. The aim would be to deliver this programme in 2010.

Financial Health

During the 2008/2009 financial year the project has sustained a robust financial model and delivered services within budget. The full expenditure figures can be found in the Julian Housing Support Annual Financial Report for 2008/2009.
Aim

➢ To develop a unique recreational service that is primarily user lead. The service provision will focus on improving physical, psychological, emotional well-being alongside social inclusion.

Objectives

➢ Extended Training & Consolidation Period for Service User Vocational Training Package (SUVTP).
➢ Developing a drop in weekly walking group, supported by the service users who are undertaking the vocational training package.

General Outcomes

➢ Reduce dependence upon ‘health’ services.
➢ Increased physical health.
➢ Increased levels of social interaction.

Service User Vocational Training Package (SUVTP)

Along side the six month walking / outdoor based therapy package, Discovery Quest provides a ‘Service User Vocational Training Package’ (SUVTP). SUVTP is a set of comprehensive national vocational qualifications, which once completed, allow the service user to lead a group of walkers anywhere in the UK, click here for more details.

Specific Outcomes

• Two participants, who completed the whole package and completed the Mountain Leader training, have been recruited as volunteers to the Discovery Quest team. They will be providing support to new participants who engage in the new Discovery Quest 6 month walking therapy programme.

• Two out of the four participants have now been discharged back to Primary Care.

• All participants who undertook the SUVT package noticed a high level of prolonged self-confidence and ability to interact with others.

• All participants who completed the SUVT package developed a high level of physically strength and endurance. They are able to spend longer periods walking (up to 15 miles per day).

• All participants who completed the SUVT package are more confident in undertaking new challenges, and are willing to face new challenges on a regular basis.
Qualifications and Training

SUVTP participants in the last year have gained the following awards and skills. Column C shows the number of participants who have completed their award.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award / Skill</th>
<th>Delivered by</th>
<th>Duration / location</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Navigation Award: Bronze and Silver</td>
<td>Navigational Courses by Pete Hawkins</td>
<td>7 days Peak District National Park</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rescue Emergency Care</td>
<td>Mountainwise and the Health and Safety Executive</td>
<td>4 days Yorkshire Dales National Park</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Mountain Leader Training</td>
<td>Julian Housing Support – Discovery Quest</td>
<td>52 days Snowdon, Lake District, Yorkshire Dales, Brecon Beacons, Western Highlands.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife and Conservation Awareness Skills</td>
<td>Norfolk Wildlife Trust</td>
<td>5 workshops Norfolk</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain Leadership Training</td>
<td>Mountainwise (Mountain Training Board England)</td>
<td>Continuous assessment, varied locations nationwide.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climbing Wall Skills</td>
<td>Mark Archery</td>
<td>6 x 120 minute sessions University of East Anglia Sportspark</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Aid at Work</td>
<td>Easton College</td>
<td>5 days Norfolk</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Discovery Quest drop-in walking group</td>
<td>Julian Housing Support – Discovery Quest</td>
<td>September – March period</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Evaluation

The SUVTP was an intensive and prolonged package, with the primary goal of training and developing participants’ skills to become competent walking/mountain leaders. It appeared to some optimistic, however with the right support, encouragement and hard work it has been successful.

It is important to remember that all the participants who engaged in the training package spent a considerable amount of time receiving support from secondary mental health teams and other mental health organisations in Norwich. Their support ranged from intensive psychiatric input and crisis resolution to long-term community support.

Their personal recovery and rehabilitation has been about ‘rebuilding and developing a satisfying and valued life’. What Discovery Quest provided was a real opportunity to feel included and valued, which has resulted in many positive outcomes.
The SUVTP without doubt played an important role in their recovery. There were some real concerns, halfway through the programme, that timeframe in which the service users completed the Mountain Leader training would take more time than originally planned. The main concern was the ability of the service users to consider others and become effective and competent leaders, e.g. role models. A decision was made to conduct a review, to examine what was currently working, and what development needs were needed. The review was user lead, and the approach used was an open, honest and mature dialogue. The service users with Discovery Quest outdoor activity instructor implemented a workable six-month plan. They requested a back-to-basics approach, with the view to relearning and reigniting the information, this time with more intensive support from the worker. The plan will focus on enhancing their skills and developing confidence and leadership.

The back-to-basics approach was highly effective. This process has resulted in two out of the four participants being in a position to become a member of the Discovery Quest team. They have agreed to become part-time volunteers.

Testimonials

Included here are testimonials from service users and their family members.

“Since Simon has been involved in the project, he has become a different person. Simon now has a sense of purpose, of meaning. He is now engaging freely with people who are not mentally unwell. He is developing a different social network, which is great. Everybody who knows Simon, including other family members have noticed a dramatic change in Simon. He is now happy and a lot more content as a person”.

“Danny has come a long way. Before starting with Discovery Quest, he was very unwell, he lived in his flat, he would not go anywhere or see anyone. We were all very worried about him. Now he is a different person. He has moved into the city, he no longer gets a service from mental health services, he is looking to the future”.

“In March 2006, I left a hospital hostel after staying there for fourteen months. I rarely went any further than the local shops for videos and Guinness. Depression and paranoid thoughts made it seem impossible for me to do anything of any purpose. The hostel was officially a ‘dry house’ but I just hid the empty cans in the bushes near the hostel, and hoped the staff would not see them or smell drink on me. I had no goals, no idea where I was going and an overwhelming feeling that everything was pointless.

With encouragement from my care team, I had started a bookkeeping course, but I felt so nervous that I took the first opportunity to quit after a small disagreement with the tutor.

Julian Housing managed to get me a bed-sit on the outskirts of Norwich. By this point my weight had increased to nearly eighteen stone, due to inactivity and drinking. In my new flat I carried on in much the same way, staying in my bed-sit and drinking alcohol.
With support, I started going to a gardening group, but I only took taxis, as public transport was not an option I felt able to take. I didn’t do a great deal of gardening, as this meant interacting with people. Somebody at the gardening group told me about Discovery Quest. It seemed a good thing to try, to face and be around people.

On the day of the first Discovery Quest walk, I got a taxi to Julian Housing’s main office. I was very nervous and wore headphones to avoid having to talk to other members of the group. But as the weeks went on things got a lot easier. I started to feel less anxious. I got used to using public transport again and the acceptance of the group helped me combat my paranoid thoughts. The need to get fitter made me reduce my consumption of alcohol to the point that I only drank in company and stopped drinking in my bed-sit. Discovery Quest gave me a purpose, a goal. I started telling people I was going to walk the West Highland Way and ‘Ben Nevis’, so I had to do it!

Now, things are very different. I travel on public transport. I no longer wear headphones in public. I have lost over 5 stone in weight. I’ve moved into a flat in the city centre. I go out of my way to visit my family, in their homes.

I am training to become a mountain leader guide with Discovery Quest. I am able to look positively towards my future. I truthfully do not believe all this would of occurred if Discovery Quest had not taken me.”

Two services users also gave a radio interview with Radio Norfolk. This interview is a powerful description of the benefits of the SUVTP upon their life. You can listen to the interview via: http://www.discoveryquest.org/index.php?page=audio

The drop in walking group started on the 30th of September 2008. Discovery Quest received 17 referrals from Julian Housing Support, with a ratio of 70:30 male-female gender mix.

The walking group was to be held weekly throughout the autumn and winter period. During the first 3 months the group maintained an average attendance of around 80-90% of those referred. After the Christmas period participation declined to around 30%, including a core of clients who attended each week. The major contributing factor was the weather - the UK was experiencing the worst weather conditions for 18 years.

Each week, the team would make an assessment on whether to run a group, based on weather reports. Unfortunately, we had to cancel 6 walking groups, which halted the flow of participants.

Discovery Quest considered the options available having examined the emerging needs of the client group, and the obvious safety and comfort issues caused by inclement weather.

Staff and clients decided to finish the walking group in March. Those who participated were invited to start a new group in May.
Summary

- Two service users have qualified as leaders through our training scheme and are now volunteering with the project.
- Two service users have now been discharged from
- The project piloted a drop-in weekly walking group through the winter period.
- The project has a patron, a manager and an instructor. A volunteering programme has been developed.
- An office base has been established, and full operational procedures designed and implemented.
- Funding for the project has been secured, allowing it to be sustained until March 2012.
- The project has been integrated into the Julian Housing Support organisation and has membership of the IOL.
- The project continues in its partnership with the Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

The first quarter of the project has seen a number of important improvements in the project’s capacity and structure. With the continuing support from Julian Housing and others, who believe in the project’s ethics and values, this can only have a positive effect on the project future service provision and outcomes.

Paul Lefever, Project Manager.

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1 Norman & Ryrie (2004).