

Helping the Helpers Programme

Initial insights into the “Helping the Helpers” pilot group work programme

The Helping the Helpers (HtH) programme was developed using a trauma-informed and community-led approach and had the goal of enhancing the resilience of those working in frontline roles during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through ten weeks of strength-based and solution focused group-work sessions HtH aims to:

- Help people self-manage their mental and physical health
- Enhance awareness of strengths, skills, abilities and resilience
- Empower people to envision their preferred future
- Encourage and engage in steps towards their preferred future

Approach to evaluation

The evaluation findings were based on evidence gathered via an online focus group.

Goals of evaluation

Twelve individuals from various frontline organisations across the local community met online for two hours a week using zoom. The goal of the evaluation was to capture initial feedback from those who attended the pilot of the HtH programme. Discussions were structured around the following questions:

- What went well?
- What could have gone better?
- What aspect of the learning was most relevant to participants roles?
- If there is anything participants might think about or do differently as a result of attending the sessions?

In conclusion

Overall participants have found the HtH group-work programme to be a valuable experience and reported benefits within both their personal and professional lives. Some useful suggestions were made as to how the programme could be strengthened going forward.

Further evaluation is required to strengthen our understanding of the impact of this training programme in relation to its intended learning outcomes. In addition, insights into the effectiveness of the HtH train the trainer course will also be captured.

Main Findings

Benefits of participating in HtH:

Shedding new light on the importance of self care and maintaining a work-life balance for front-line workers.
A positive influence on their professional life through the provision of practical and actionable tools (e.g. feeling better able to support clients).
Strengthening relationships between like-minded people and organisations within the community.

Lessons learned:

The key strengths were having the community at the centre, the facilitators delivery/creation of a positive group atmosphere, the opportunity to develop a strengths-based mind set.
Some participants suggested that the programme should be longer or include a refresher session to allow more time to get grips with the content.
More time in breakout rooms and to participate in role play scenarios was also noted as a potential improvement.

Next steps?

A key aim of this work was to ensure the model had a sustainable legacy. By co-producing a train-the-trainer course with the frontline workers the intention is these individuals will be upskilled to disseminate the group work programme to their own teams. In doing so, we hope to leave behind a network of committed and upskilled individuals who are capable of passing on these tools and supporting others to strengthen their resilience.