

CHAPTER I

THE
PROJECT

CHAPTER I – THE PROJECT

1.1. BACKGROUND - WHAT IS THE TRIADD PROJECT ?

TRIADD is a European training project for staff who work directly with people who have an intellectual disability and mental health problems – also known as Dual Diagnosis. It became clear to us, through talking to various members of the Arfie network (Association de Recherche et de Formation sur l'Insertion en Europe) – that meeting the needs of this target group within the usual intellectual disability sector was posing problems to front-line staff and services in more than one country.

1.2. WHAT IS DUAL DIAGNOSIS?

We use Dual Diagnosis as an indexing term in this project to describe a range of issues relating to people with an intellectual disability and mental health problems, but recognise that the term Dual Diagnosis (DD) has different meanings in different countries – and even within countries. Our aim is to increase the recognition that people labelled as having dual diagnosis are not simply patients or problems, but individuals worthy of special understanding.

Approximately 1% of the population have a moderate or severe intellectual (developmental) disability and estimates indicate that around 30-50% of these also have mental health problems and psychiatric disorders. The possible reasons for this are numerous: family rejection, negative childhood experiences at home or in institutions (people with disabilities are four times more likely to suffer abuse, neglect or exploitation than other adults¹) – inability to express feelings and solve problems, inability to make sense of the world and other's behaviour in the same way as those without a cognitive disability. Other factors such as repeated changes in care staff, bereavement, lack of autonomy and so on can, quite understandably, lead to instability, depression and other mental health problems, quite apart from the intellectual disability itself.

The cognitive and communication difficulties inherent in the disability make identification, diagnosis and treatment notoriously difficult to diagnose (diagnostic overshadowing). 'There are many factors that suggest that people with intellectual disability are more at risk of developing mental disorders than the general population. The risk factors for this population include biological, psychological and social factors, as well as relational factors such as parental rejection, institutionalisation, social stigmatisation, social role devaluation and lack of friends'²

Due to the traditional separation of intellectual disability and psychiatric services in most countries, neither the mental disability sector nor the mental health services are geared up to serving this user group, with the result they people with dual diagnosis are often misunderstood and have a poor quality of life. Relatively few practitioners have the skills necessary to assess and devise appropriate therapies for these individuals.

¹ Canadian Mental Health Association

² Prof. Germain Weber, *Compte Rendu du Séminaire Européen: Advances in Mental Health and Intellectual Disability, Vienna 2000*

There is also a lack of training courses for front line staff: 'There is a common need amongst all people working with people with learning disabilities for a core understanding of basic psychotherapeutic principles. At present this is sparsely and inconsistently provided'³ Support staff can therefore be tested to their limits. The Triadd project aimed to take the existing expertise in a number of countries in the field of staff training, to develop it and make it more widely available – basing it on a person-centred approach which considered the individual with a disability as a person in their own right entitled to dignity and quality of life.

1.3. THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

- To bring together existing knowledge and training practices for professionals concerning "dual diagnosis"
- To perform a needs analysis survey amongst care professionals on key elements to be included in future training
- To develop new training packages for professionals supporting this target group
- To advance the availability of continuing training in Luxembourg (promoter's country), where little training exists on this issue
- To offer this new training product to a broad European target group of care workers, other social sector professionals and training institutions
- To offer tele-training to front-line staff on the issues involved in supporting people with dual diagnosis.

How did we achieve these objectives? Key Phases of the Project

We have so far:

- Conducted a survey into staff training needs
- Researched resources useful to staff, not simply clinicians or researchers
- Devised a number of training courses to address these needs
- Set up a web site in English and French offering resources to staff and service providers, such as an interactive case-study message board and resources in other languages (see chapter 2 point 2.7 on the subject of staff and computers).

³ Dr. Roger Banks, 'Psychotherapy and learning Disability – the Present position and options for future development' Dr. Roger Banks, Royal College of Psychiatrist, July 2003.

The web site www.triadd.lu contains the following:

- Presentation of the project and how to be kept informed
- Project partners
- Key words listing: General concepts, Major Mental Health Problems,
- Treatment – medical and therapy, services
- Report in English and French analysing staff questionnaires
- Reports on each training course with programmes
- Evaluation report on each course
- Four case studies with questions for staff, English and French
- Resources and articles
- Links to other web sites
- We are further developing the training courses and resources available in different languages on the website.

1.4. THE TRIADD PARTNERSHIP

The Triadd partnership is made up of service providers, a training institute an information/ consultancy service, a university and two European NGO's from six countries: Luxembourg, Belgium, France, Ireland, Italy and the United Kingdom (see annexe I for full partner details). The Triadd project is co-financed by the **Leonardo da Vinci programme**⁴, the main European Commission instrument for the development of innovative vocational projects.

⁴ See: http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/leonardo/leonardo_en.html