

Community Reinforcement Approach and Family Training

Evaluation briefing

Community Reinforcement Approach and Family Training or CRAFT is both a training programme and a service approach used to support carers of substance users. CRAFT is an eight week training course which uses role plays and other behavioral skills-training exercises delivered either on a one-to-one basis or in a group situation. CRAFT has been demonstrated both here and elsewhere to be effective at getting reluctant users into treatment, helping them stop their substance use and improving the health, well being and fortitude of their carers.

Introduction

This is an evaluation of CRAFT delivered by PROPS North East in Newcastle upon Tyne and North Tyneside. It was carried out by Barefoot Research and Evaluation, an independent social research organisation based in Newcastle upon Tyne, between July 2011 and March 2012.

We have separated the findings into distinct areas: impact on carers; impact on substance users; organisational impacts; cost saving benefits; and conclusion.

Impact on service users

From focus groups and semi structured interviews with course participants, we have found that CRAFT has had the following impacts:

- Improved self confidence and self esteem: this occurred on a number of different levels, from increasing participants' self belief and motivation to reducing isolation. Using CRAFT's techniques and methods was reported by carers to significantly improve their feelings of confidence and positivity.
- Increased knowledge of management and communication techniques: the course increased the technical knowledge of participants which in turn added to their array of techniques that can be used to manage the behaviour of the substance user. This ultimately improved relationships in the family.

- Increased happiness: participants reported that the training has made them generally happier and this has been due to the impact the course has had, both in terms of giving them a more positive outlook and reducing their stress levels.
- Improved self reliance and decreased support needs: as a result of the combination of increased management tools and techniques, increased self esteem and confidence and self belief, participants needed less external support, including support from PROPS North East.
- Improved understanding of the self and others: this led to positive behavioural changes on both levels. Participants reported a major impact of CRAFT has been improving their understanding of their own behaviour and the behaviour of others.

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I'd been going round in circles for ages and now I feel like I can see a path out of it ... it's like I've been carrying a big weight but not now". Carer

- Brought families together: there is evidence to indicate that CRAFT is repairing previously broken relationships because of its impact on changing the behavior of the carer which is in turn having positive effects on the substance users' patterns of behaviour.
- Improved health and well being: many carers who were interviewed reported better health as a consequence of participating in CRAFT. Although much of this difference was seen in their mental health; feeling less anxious, less depressed, better able to sleep and even less suicidal, there were also reports of better physical health.
- Increased productive activity, including employment activities: there were a number of reports which related to carers recommencing productive participation in the local community. Carers reported returning from sick leave to their jobs, feeling able to look for work and joining or starting community activities.

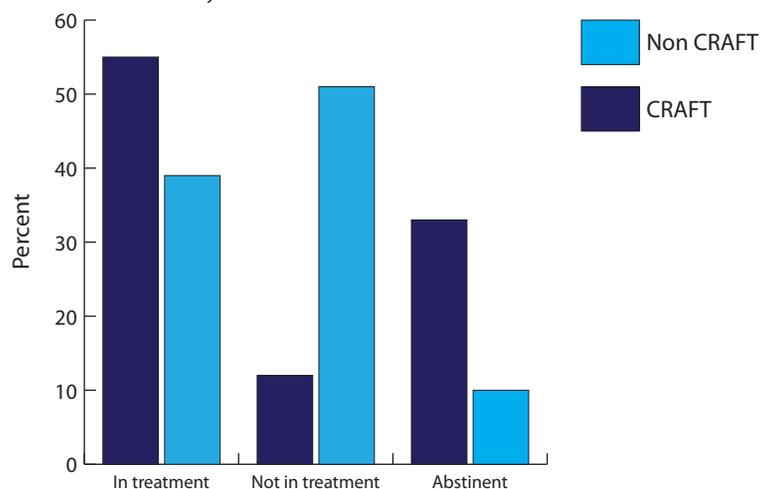
Impact on substance users

CRAFT was found to have important impacts on the substance user, including reducing substance use, getting reluctant users into treatment and helping the user progress better through existing treatment.

As can be seen from the figure on the right, more substance users whose carers have participated in CRAFT have either stopped their substance use or are in treatment, compared to users whose carers have not participated in CRAFT: 33 percent

of CRAFT users have stopped their substance use compared to only 10 percent of non CRAFT users; and 55 percent of CRAFT users are in treatment, compared to only 39 percent of non CRAFT users (only 12 percent of CRAFT users are not in treatment compared to 51 percent of non CRAFT users).

Users in treatment and abstaining - CRAFT and non-CRAFT, 2009 to 2012



Substance users' behaviour and attitude to treatment changed because of their carer participating in CRAFT. It was reported that many users are now progressing well through their treatment, whereas previously they may have been 'stuck' or not making progress. With those substance users who were in treatment, CRAFT was said to improve their responses to that treatment.



Operational impacts

CRAFT has had considerable impact on the organisation and the offer of support. Ultimately, CRAFT makes the organisation more effective at achieving its aims. Although PROPS North East has been delivering aspects of CRAFT for many years, CRAFT puts constituent parts such as functional analysis and positive communication into a logical and coherent structure which allows carer progression; it frames and provides a structure to the intervention. This has made it easy to integrate CRAFT into practice.

CRAFT also changes the relationship between the support agency and the carer, moving from a general support and listening service to a more focused and directed progressive service. Importantly, CRAFT shortens the intervention time by providing people with the tools they need to manage their own situation, thus reducing the number of visits needed to be made by Family Intervention Workers.

On a different operational note, many practitioners reported enjoying using CRAFT as it allows them an appreciation of their own impact. One Senior Practitioner said “it is really enjoyable to deliver CRAFT because you can see the things that you are doing with families start to change things and that is really gratifying”.

Cost savings

There are cost saving implications to the use and application of CRAFT. This primarily relates to cost savings related to problematic drug use. If we use the Home Office standard measure, which estimates that an individual problematic substance user is responsible for economic and social costs equivalent to approximately £44,000 per year, we can see there are significant financial benefits to using CRAFT. As CRAFT has resulted in a number of problematic substance users stopping their substance use, we arrive at an annual cost saving directly attributable to CRAFT of £924,000.

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I crawled in here, I started crying and I couldn't stop ... now, the difference is unrecognisable, I don't worry about anything, I don't get into arguments any more, I'm confident, happy”. Carer



Regardless of the financial figure arrived at, we can be certain that as CRAFT is proven both here and elsewhere to be effective at encouraging substance users into treatment, keeping them there and helping them stop, it will save the public purse money. Whether this is in reduced A&E admissions, reduced Police call outs, reduced custodial sentences or reduced absences at work, the cost savings attributed to CRAFT are clear. These cost savings will accrue to Drug and Alcohol Action Teams, Community Safety Partnerships, Health and Well Being Boards, the health service, local authorities, the National Offender Management Service and private and public sector employers.

Conclusion

This evaluation has provided rich narrative evidence from carers and frontline professionals backed up by quantitative data to indicate a range of significant impacts. We can conclude by making following statements:

- CRAFT is first and foremost a tool which is effective at improving the lives of carers. It does this by giving them techniques to manage difficult situations. This results in many benefits to the carer including increased self confidence and esteem and improved health and well being.
- CRAFT also has many impacts on the substance user. If we compare CRAFT and non CRAFT interventions, we see that CRAFT is four times more effective at getting substance users into treatment and three times more effective at helping substance users stop their substance use.
- The benefits of CRAFT spread into the local community and there is evidence to indicate it contributes to a strengthening of the social fabric by improving and increasing positive

communication and reducing community tension.

- PROPS North East have developed an area of expertise in CRAFT over three years which has developed from staff time investment and a commitment to excellence – becoming accredited practitioners and trainers.
- CRAFT has a number of cost saving implications to local and national services. These arise from a reduction in the number of problematic substance users in the community.
- CRAFT has a number of service implications, improving both the quality and efficiency of the service. In relation to the latter, CRAFT shortens the intervention time of the support agency and either for those already in treatment, moving substance users through treatment or encouraging those not in treatment to start treatment.

This fits in with the Government's Social Justice agenda which says where problems arise, concentrating interventions on recovery and independence, not maintenance, should be the priority. This is exactly what CRAFT has been shown to deliver. CRAFT ultimately makes PROPS North East an even more effective organisation and by making the the service better, the benefits are felt by all stakeholders. These include the carers, substance users, local communities, commissioners and funders.

We think CRAFT should be used across the region to build resilience amongst families affected by not only substance use but also imprisonment and other problem behaviours. Just as the Government recommends, focusing on recovery and independence, not maintenance.

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I was a victim ... but no longer”. Carer



For more information on the evaluators, Barefoot Research and Evaluation, see: www.barefootresearch.org.uk

More information on PROPS North East

PROPS (Positive Response to Overcoming Problems of Substance misuse) North East is a charity that provides support to families and carers of substance users living across the North East, with headquarters in Newcastle upon Tyne. They provide individual and family support to assist carers in addressing a wide range of issues relating to health, social, economic, relationship and legal difficulties. The organisation's history and experience in delivering this type of service is unique, in that the project was founded by carers and has evolved successfully to date as a result of carer involvement.

PROPS North East offers support services for individuals, families and communities across the region. They also provide accredited CRAFT training and professional support.

For more information or for a copy of the full evaluation, contact:

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