Facilitating Social Participation for People with Communication Disability in Coffee Shops and Restaurants: Exploring Multiple Perspectives

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BACKGROUND

- Communication impairments can include difficulties with communicating due to stroke, brain injury, neurological illnesses, hearing loss, intellectual disability or stuttering.

- A survey of 155 catering students in Ireland found that they lacked awareness of communication impairments (Guinan & Carroll, 2015).

- Focus groups with people with communication impairments in Galway highlighted issues they faced when ordering.
EXPLORE FUNDING RECEIVED

NUIG Speech and Language Therapy students and staff, speech and language therapists and people with communication impairments from Galway designed and delivered the Communication Awareness Programme (CAP).

It is a training package for catering staff which aims to:

• Enhance their ability to facilitate customers with communication difficulties by learning strategies
• Understand the personal perspective from people with communication impairments.
ENACTUS NUIG SUPPORT

• Two training events were carried out in 2015
• 10 catering staff attended
• We evaluated the pilot training
  – By exploring the experiences of people who were involved in the pilot CAP training programme.
  – This involved interviewing four catering staff, two students, two speech and language therapists, one person with a communication disability and one carer
Participants who were involved in the design or delivery of CAP in 2015 and participants who attended a CAP training event were invited to take part:

- 6 student speech and language therapists
- 3 speech and language therapists
- 4 adults with communication impairments
- 10 catering staff
IMPACT

• Joe: ‘We offered the experience of our lives to the project’.

• Sinead (catering manager): ‘His mother was so shocked that he had the ability to order for himself. We all sat and discussed [the changes]. It was really really helpful. It’s one of the best things that I have done in my career’.

• (SLT student #1) ‘I suppose a light bulb moment was when the people completing the training were no longer scared of communication impairments’.
PROGRAMME FEATURES THAT FACILITATED THE TRAINING

- An open safe atmosphere
- A collaborative approach
- Hearing personal stories about people's experiences in cafes and restaurants
- Learning practical strategies
- Video demonstrations and written information
- Participation of catering service managers
- Follow-up visit by person with communication impairment to the restaurant
- Ensuring sustainability by providing on-going training for new staff
PROGRAMME FEATURES THAT HINDERED THE TRAINING

• Time and resources
• Ways in which the programme was advertised
• Turn-over of staff within the industry. It was important to negotiate times for the training considering the busy schedules in coffee shops.
• Sinead (catering manager): ‘In the university you can be absolutely dead quiet and use these simple changes and then all of a sudden you have queues out the back door which can be more challenging particularly seeing as it coming up to exam time’
Power of personal experiences
DIFFICULTIES GARY FACED WHEN ORDERING FOOD

- Menus difficult to read
- Not being understood by staff
- Person who accompanies him being asked for assistance
- Being rushed
- Noise
- Queues
CHANGES MADE BY STAFF TO IMPROVE THE EXPERIENCE

• Providing Supports (pen and paper, visual menu for tea coffees and breads)

• Staff smiling and engaging with the person ordering.

• Numbering menus

• Staff to be patient and allow more time, not flooding him with choices

• Use of gestures, Pointing
IMPACT AND CHANGES FOR GARY

• Improves independence and self esteem
• Makes it a more enjoyable, positive and less stressful experience
• Resulted in Gary now having the confidence to give his presentation at CAP training.
LEARNING OUTCOME FOR ME

• Catering Staff are anxious when dealing with people with Communication Impairments.
• Training raised awareness of the important role they have in assisting them when ordering.
• Assumed that Gary would not be able to order his own lunch but the supports enabled him to do it independently
• The emotional experience for me seeing him do this for the first time
THANK YOU

Communication Awareness Programme
Promoting Communication Awareness in the Community