



# Depaul

## Sundial House

### Life Skills Programme

### Case Study

### 2012 – 2104

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“ I’m in it from the start; I don’t want to let people down cos I help out. I love learning and getting new recipes”  
**resident**



“ The Life Skills programme provides residents with an opportunity to mix with other residents and volunteers. It gets them out of the isolation of their rooms”  
**volunteer**



## 1. Overview

The Sundial House Life Skills Programme started in 2011 and with funding from the St Stephen’s Green Trust [SSGT] has been able to continue from 2012 to June 2015.

A key part of the SSGT funding was a strong formative evaluation process that included detailed evaluation reports and 2 one day gatherings each year of the 5 funded projects to share learning, challenges and progress. The SSGT also funded a legacy document that provided a summative review of the 3 years of this particular fund. ([www.ssgt.ie](http://www.ssgt.ie))

This case study provides a detailed look at the 3 years of the Sundial House Life Skills programme during the SSGT funding period.

**From every perspective the programme has been a success and made a real difference in the lives of residents, staff and volunteers. It should be permanently resourced and the Life Skills coordinator position made full time.**

Activities that have positive psychosocial impact are often applauded by funders and policy makers as they are seen as an important adjunct and step down from one to one counselling for marginalised individuals.

Unfortunately this applause does not translate into recognition in terms of funding from state agencies to provide activities such as the Sundial Life Skills programme.

This case study aims to be both a learning and policy document. It tells the story of the Life Skills programme as well as the challenges, opportunities and impacts that arose.

**The Sundial Life Skills programme should receive funding from state agencies such as the HSE to continue in Sundial and expand to other services within Depaul.**

The learning from this programme needs to be shared with other community organisations as well as state agencies to stimulate discussion and debate about the positive psychosocial impact that Life Skills and meaningful activities programmes can make to the lives of people who are marginalised.



## 2. Depaul

Depaul supports people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Depaul was established in 2002 in Ireland and 2005 in Northern Ireland. It is now a leading cross-border organisation.

Their focus is upon those suffering homelessness and marginalisation who need vital support and the opportunity to realise their true potential. Depaul offers support and guidance to break the cycle of homelessness, and assist their service users in making positive choices for their future.

“ The Life Skills programme is one of the most important parts of our service ”  
**staff**

### Depaul values

- We celebrate the potential of people
- We put our words into action
- We aim to take a wider role in civil society
- We believe in rights and responsibilities.

**Depaul Vision** is that every person should have a place to call home and a stake in their community.

**Depaul Mission** is to offer homeless and disadvantaged people the opportunity to fulfil their potential and move towards a positive and independent future.



“ I go for the company and then you never know what’s on after it, we do baking sometimes, I never baked anything in me life before now and I’m nearly a pensioner ”  
**resident**



**Republic of Ireland**  
Ballymun Case Management  
Community Befriending  
Back Lane  
Migrant Homeless Action Team

**Northern Ireland**  
Community Befriending Stella Maris  
Family Services Floating Support  
Foyle Haven Floating Support  
Harm Reduction Floating Support  
Housing First



**Republic of Ireland**  
Rendu Apartments

**Northern Ireland**  
Mater Dei  
Cloverhill



**Republic of Ireland**  
Back Lane Hostel  
Orchid House  
Sundial House

**Northern Ireland**  
Castlehill Service  
Stella Maris



**Republic of Ireland**  
Tus Nua Apartments





It gives life and fun and engagement to the residents. It is vital for them. It offers support to the staff which is also very important.  
**volunteer**



" I can see the positive results in residents day to day life. It brings variety and joy to our residents. "  
**staff**



### 3. Sundial House

The first of its kind in Ireland, Sundial House was opened in September 2008. The long-term housing project on James Street Dublin provides low threshold housing for people who have experienced extended periods of street homelessness and have entrenched alcohol use issues. Generally, service users are aged 40 years+, but the service is flexible to all age groups and to those with complex needs.

#### Project aims

- To provide a long-term housing option to service users
- To provide a supportive and healthy shared living environment
- To provide emotional and motivational support
- To take a holistic harm reduction approach to health and addiction needs
- To meet the basic medical/health needs within people's own accommodation

#### Facilities and services

The project accommodates 30 people, men and women, singles and couples in spacious ensuite accommodation. There are both single and twin rooms. The service has ample communal areas and one-to-one spaces on each of the five floors, serviced by a lift to allow for accessibility to all levels. The project is staffed on a 24/7 basis, with meals provided. There is a moderate service charge. There are laundry facilities and garden balconies available to service users.

A keyworker is appointed to all service users to ensure they can access the services they require and receive the appropriate support. A support plan is developed between the service user and keyworker, which is monitored and reviewed on regular basis. The support plan covers life skills, budgeting, alcohol harm reduction, physical health, mental health and alcohol support. In order to meet the complex health needs of the service users, a full-time nurse works in Sundial House.



“ I go because I am usually on my own, but in the breakfast club I have friends”  
**resident**



“ I love when I get a few residents involved in an activity and the chatting starts up”  
**volunteer**



## 4. Sundial Life Skills Programme - the story

### 4.1 Aims & values

Depaul Ireland employed its first Life Skills coordinator in 2010, on a one-year contract, with a remit to introduce Life Skills work across the organisation.

As a result of this initial Life Skills work, establishing a culture in Sundial House of Life Skills provision and activity support was recognised as an important goal. With 3 year funding from the St Stephens Green Trust, the current Life Skills coordinator post was established in June 2012. Funding from SSGT ends in June 2015. €25,000 a year was provided by SSGT to employ a part time coordinator and fund activities.

The Life Skills programme aimed to provide residents with:

- emotional support
- social and peer support
- practical living skills
- support residents and staff with advocacy and support planning

### 4.2 The People

#### Residents

The remit for Sundial House is to provide long term supported housing to 30 individuals who have experienced extended periods of street homelessness and have entrenched alcohol misuse. The service offers a long term sustainable housing solution for individuals with multiple and complex bio psychosocial issues as a result of long term homelessness, using low threshold and harm reduction principles as a central philosophy.

Residents have access to services to enable them to manage and stabilise their drinking, improve their health and establish relationships within a long term supported community based service.



“ It gives them a focus and they enjoy it. It takes their mind of things. If the Life Skills programme didn’t exist a resident wouldn’t have a chance to develop and they may even regress”  
**staff**

The resilience of the resident group shone through with their warm and welcoming embrace to new volunteers and staff.

What has become evident throughout the programme is eagerness on the residents part to learn new skills and increase self-esteem.

An example of this occurred in the baking class where, over time, residents asked for more complex recipes that required high levels of concentration.

Throughout the programme the participants have developed trusting relationships with the volunteers, and in a subtle way they mirror the behaviour and respect being shown to them.

The increase in positive and deepened relationships between residents and the reduction in the number of incidents annually demonstrates the impact of the programme on the participants.



“ It would be mundane in here with no activities every day would be the same “  
**resident**

### Life Skills coordinator & volunteers

The SSGT funding enabled the Life Skills coordinator to engage in a meaningful way with the residents to meet some of their social and emotional needs. This was achieved through consultation with all involved - participants, staff and volunteers.

The coordinator is employed for 19.5 hours a week.

**The coordinator role transformed** over the course of the programme. Initially the role involved more hands on activity in terms of running elements of the programme. As the core volunteer team grew to over 16 people it became clear that the coordinator role needed to become more focused on supporting and supervising volunteers and acting as a key link to staff.

There are a number of ‘types’ of volunteers and they are key to ensuring that the project is meeting the holistic needs of residents. Every day the volunteers foster a warm and welcoming culture based on commitment, involvement, diversity and excellence.





“ Essential to the residents as it gives them more of a social connection to each other and outside the house”  
**volunteer**



“ it creates a social scene. It also has a calming effect on the house. The various events create a great atmosphere and gets the residents talking about the activities and asking for more”  
**staff**



## Full Time Volunteers

Full time volunteers volunteer for a variety of reasons with many looking for work experience opportunities often working 20+ hrs per week. They have supervision every 4-6 weeks and regular reviews of their expectations and role.

Depaul has a rigorous volunteer selection, induction, support and supervision programme. Volunteers allocated to the Sundial House Life Skills programme receive a specific induction with the Life Skills coordinator.

## European Volunteer Service Volunteers

EVS volunteers (up to 12 months) spend 30-35 hrs per week on projects including activities, training, and supervision & mentoring. EVS activities must link to annual EVS objectives.

## Part-time Volunteers

Part time volunteers volunteer for a minimum 2-4 hours per week. Unlike EVS & student placements they have potential for long term commitment so role development and regular support are provided.

## Student Placement (Local or Overseas)

Students have been hosted from 1 week blocks to 8 month placements from many disciplines. They have pre-determined learning objectives for the purpose of study. Although engagement in activities is important, they require planned “hands on” experience compared to part time activities volunteers.

## Staff

Project staff are full time and act as keyworkers to residents in Sundial House. They are professionally trained and have clear roles and responsibilities.

The Life Skills coordinator is the link between the programme and the staff and the programme is now an agenda item at the regular staff team meetings.



“ I don’t usually eat a lot so when I see the choice and variety and smell the food cooking it sometimes gives me an appetite”  
**resident**



“ if the Life Skills programme didn’t exist Sundial would resemble a hospice instead of a home ”  
**volunteer**



## 4.3 Core activities 2012 – 2014

A range of activities that formed the Life Skills programme were run and have evolved from resident feedback. In 2012 a number of activities were supported by this programme in another Depaul project but their changing resident population and demands on the Life Skills coordinator resulted in the focus being solely on Sundial in 2013 and 2014.

### The Breakfast Club – Food & Cooking Support

The Breakfast Club is an activity that is on offer for residents from Monday-Friday between 10-12. This activity is supported by volunteers. Residents are encouraged to participate in the preparation of breakfast and in the basic hygiene and cleaning tasks associated.

The breakfast club was implemented in order to increase residents health and wellbeing by offering various types of food.

The idea is to provide an environment where residents can share a nutritious breakfast together, maybe read the newspaper and enjoy the company. The food on offer includes omelettes, eggs, brown bread, sandwiches, fruit, porridge, yoghurts and sometimes the much loved full Irish breakfast.

The team expanded on the success of the Breakfast Club and built a wider-ranging Food and Cooking Support programme.

In conjunction with the Nursing service in Sundial House, they now provide breakfast five mornings a week, a baking class once a week and a twice monthly cooking class.

The programmes take place in a supportive communal atmosphere. There are plans to expand the breakfast club to weekends in 2015.

### In House Activities – Holistic Healing programme

A range of holistic healing activities have been run:

**Woodworking** – ongoing and run once a week

**Art & Craft Classes** - ongoing and run once a week



“ It gives residents a change of scene, creates hope and positive friendships”  
staff



Asked how he'd feel if activities were stopped:

“ I'd be devastated – I mean that ”  
resident



**Other activities** - yoga, meditation, sing along sessions, gardening, dvd evenings, pool competitions, seasonal celebrations [e.g. Halloween bake sale]; BBQ; garden day party

### **Trips and outings**

**Large Group outings** - Initially there were 2 large group outings a year and this has grown to 4 in 2013 and 2014. Outings include – bowling and indoor golf; visit to the ISPCA and Dollymount Beach; fishing and a visit to the animal farm; Dublin Bus Tour.

**Small group Outings and One to one outings** – These outings have supported residents to visit either places of interest, such as museums, cinemas, coffee shops, shops and parks; or places of personal importance, such as family graves, or places with associated memories. The aim is to provide both social support and emotional support. The outings take place on an informal basis and happen with the support of volunteers and keyworkers.

### **Theatre and Life Story activities**

**Life Story Books** – 4 residents completed Life Story books. The books were a compilation of a residents memories of their life. One resident who completed a life story book passed away in August 2014 and his life story book was handed to his family at the funeral who seemed very happy to have received this great reminder of their family member.

**Theatre programme** – in 2013 a 13 week theatre programme was developed with residents and a local theatre company [theatre club]. 2 actor collaborators met with residents each week to develop a piece about the relationship of Irish society to alcohol. A further series of workshops were run to create a film that was screened in Dublin.

### **Resident/Manager Committee**

This is a weekly meeting of residents and the Sundial House manager to promote direct participation by residents with decision making activities in the house. They engage on practical housekeeping issues. The meetings promote a sense of responsibility, belonging and safety in the accommodation.

## Sundial House Life Skills Programme





“ I think it’s great.  
Great opportunity  
for interaction with  
residents in an  
informal setting.  
Provides  
opportunity for  
befriending “  
**volunteer**



“ gives residents  
something to look  
forward to and  
breaks the  
boredom of  
communal living.  
People learn new  
skills and social  
activity isn’t related  
to alcohol  
consumption “  
**staff**



## 5. The results – making a real difference

### 5.1 Introduction

Making a difference is what drives everyone working in Depaul and the Life Skills programme has had a real impact on the lives of residents, staff and volunteers.

Starting a new programme has different challenges than an established one and it takes time to build momentum as well as learn what works and what doesn’t.

This section of the case study will detail the impacts, challenges and resident involvement data from 2012 to 2014.

Core content in this section comes from the SSGT legacy document that this author also wrote as well as written information from the Life Skills coordinator.

### 5.2 Challenges faced over the three years

**Residents motivation** – in 2012 residents had low motivation and interest in participating in in-house activities or leaving the house. Participation in activities was quite low [6 to 20% of the 30 residents]. Staff and volunteers kept residents informed and continued to run the activities consistently.

Through 2013 and 2014 participation and engagement in activities has been as high as 100%. **A lot of work was done with volunteers and staff to make activities look informal, deliver at optimal times for residents and deliver consistently. Activities looked informal even though there was a lot of behind the scenes planning and structure.**

**Building a volunteer team to deliver the programme** - getting a team of consistent and committed volunteers to staff the programme took time. From 2012 onwards there was a concerted effort to target placement of volunteers, provide formal inductions and shadowing as well as handovers, training and supervision. There is now a solid, committed, confident and competent volunteer team in place to run the Sundial life skills programme. It has the lowest volunteer dropout rate across all projects in Depaul.



“ Behaviours have changed because residents feel better in themselves and morale & meaning to people’s lives are positively impacted... residents feel proud of their accomplishments and it gives them something to look forward to and talk about ”  
**staff**



“ I have the craic, it’s interesting to meet people from different countries like the EVS volunteers ”  
**resident**



**Role of coordinator** – initially the Life Skills coordinator did frontline organising and delivery to the group. The dual role caused role confusion with staff and residents. The coordinator also had less time to support and mentor the volunteer team. The coordinators role was changed to engage and support the volunteer team so they could interact with residents on the life skills programme. The coordinator also acted as liaison with the Sundial staff team, the Depaul Volunteer Coordinator and external agencies.

## 5.3 Key results

### Impacts on individual residents

#### Harm Reduction

Providing activities and spending time with residents builds both the idea of time spent away from alcohol and the practice of providing alternatives. During activities residents drank less alcohol and smoked fewer cigarettes than when activities were not running. Cooking and eating food provided a positive alternative to not eating regularly. Meeting people, chatting and spending time in the company of others was a positive opportunity both for better emotional and mental health and for increased social networks. Self-care and living skills were developed through cooking programmes, and targeted volunteer interventions around improving laundry skills. Yoga, meditation and physical activities provided opportunities to build on physical health. Activities in general provided more meaningful uses of time for residents and the chance to increase levels of motivation and responsibility.

#### Skills Building

In their work with residents in the Life Skills programme, volunteers assisted them to develop, or re-develop practical skills, such as food preparation, cooking, kitchen hygiene, personal hygiene, money management, alcohol management, exercise, reflection, woodwork, painting, sculpture etc.

Residents also benefited from their interaction with volunteers in terms of developing communication skills, problem solving skills and relationship building skills.

The volunteer relationship is also an insight into learning potential problem-solving behaviour. When an issue arose during an activity and a volunteer team contributed to the resolution of conflict through dialogue, discussion, listening, respect, and appropriate boundary-setting, this offered



“ provides residents with an opportunity to mix with other residents and volunteers. It gets them out of the isolation of their rooms”  
**volunteer**

residents ideas for a new way to resolve difficulties. It may not be acted upon, especially in the short term, but providing alternatives to shouting, not listening and other forms of aggressive behaviour influences a culture change over the long term.

**Decrease in alcohol usage and isolation when involved in activities** – alcohol usage by residents when involved in activities has reduced and in many cases was zero. The activities provided positive experiences and options for residents.

**Increased confidence** – this has been very evident in the breakfast, baking and cooking sessions. The residents in the baking class have positively challenged the volunteer to give them harder recipes. Some residents have also become involved in sharing their experiences in volunteer training. More residents have also become involved in the weekly manager resident meetings.

**Greater awareness of health related issues** – the food and cooking classes as well as the holistic health activities have increased residents knowledge and skills in terms of physical and emotional health.

**Residents feel safer and healthier** – residents of the programme are involved in a range of informal and formal opportunities to give feedback on the programme as well as their perceptions of improvements in their own lives.

**Observed increase in levels of confidence, positive engagement with staff, volunteers and other residents, increased resilience and positive outlook when faced with personal difficulties** – the life skills programme has impacted very positively on survivors and general residents lives as evidenced by their own feedback, observation and the Outcomes Star method used in Depaul.

**Befriending activities have increased a client centred approach** – with the development of the core volunteer team the residents have been able to access more 1 to 1 contact and external outings that meets their specific and individual needs.

**Impacts on Sundial House as a community**



“ it gives positivity and direction to residents lives ”  
**staff**





“ Because of the company, my friends and the chat “ when asked why they keep attending breakfast club  
**resident**



“ it gives residents a change of scene – something other than staff “  
**staff**



**A calmer and respectful atmosphere** – the coordinator and manager reported that Sundial house felt calmer and there were fewer incidents between residents.

Residents may not always like each other or get along well but they are more capable than previously of listening, being respectful to each other, being aware of boundaries and of the conventions of manners. Residents are more capable of taking part in group activities and also developing one-to-one relationships. Incidents between residents have decreased and the house is recognised more as a shared space between people. This change is due in no small part to the dedicated and inspired work of the volunteer team in the Life Skills programme.

**Better relationships with staff and volunteers** – residents have become more involved in resident meetings, surveys and 1 to 1 activities and this has resulted in more respect and trust.

#### **Life skills coordinator connection with Sundial**

**Management team and keyworkers** – the coordinator has been the communication link between the project and other key work teams in Sundial.

#### **Impacts on Depaul Ireland**

##### **Interest from other services in the Life skills programme**

– there is interest from other services within Depaul in the elements of good practice and resourcing needed to run an effective programme.

**Resourcing for case study** – Depaul funded the development of this case study. Depaul has a strong commitment to sharing learning and good practice.

Overall, residents feel more confident and able to clearly communicate their needs. The Life Skills programme clearly shows that when people are involved in activities that have meaning to them then they will feel and act more positively.

**It is clear that the Life Skills programme has played a huge and positive role in residents lives and should be resourced on a permanent basis.**



## 5.4 Quantitative data over 3 years

Put simply, the data shows that participation in activities started slowly in 2012 and increased in 2013 and 2014 to the point that every resident participates in at least one activity.

Some residents have been living in Sundial House for more than 5 years and did not mix with others very often. Since the Life Skills programme has been running even the most isolated residents have participated and socialise more.

“ All the residents in here like it ”  
**resident**

The table below shows participation by residents in key activities over the last 3 years.

\*The drop in befriending numbers was because residents decided they didn't need 1 to 1 befriending as they were interacting more because of the Life Skills programme.

Activity	2012 [started May]	2103	2014
holistic healing programme [this includes gardening, woodwork, meditation, chair yoga]	5	16	20
breakfast club	14	22	30
baking and cooking club	Not started	10	10
Large group outings	9	13	17
Small group outings	6	8	10
Alcohol management plans	2	25	28
Life story & theatre workshop	Not started	8	
Befriending programme [ 1 to 1 ]	5	10	5 *
Budget plans		24	24



“ I'd feel bad ”

When asked how he'd feel if the activities stopped.  
**resident**





“ I think it would be depressing and lonely for the residents without the Life Skills programme  
**volunteer**



“ I’d crack up”  
When asked how they would feel if programme was stopped.  
**resident**



## 6. Good practice as a learning process

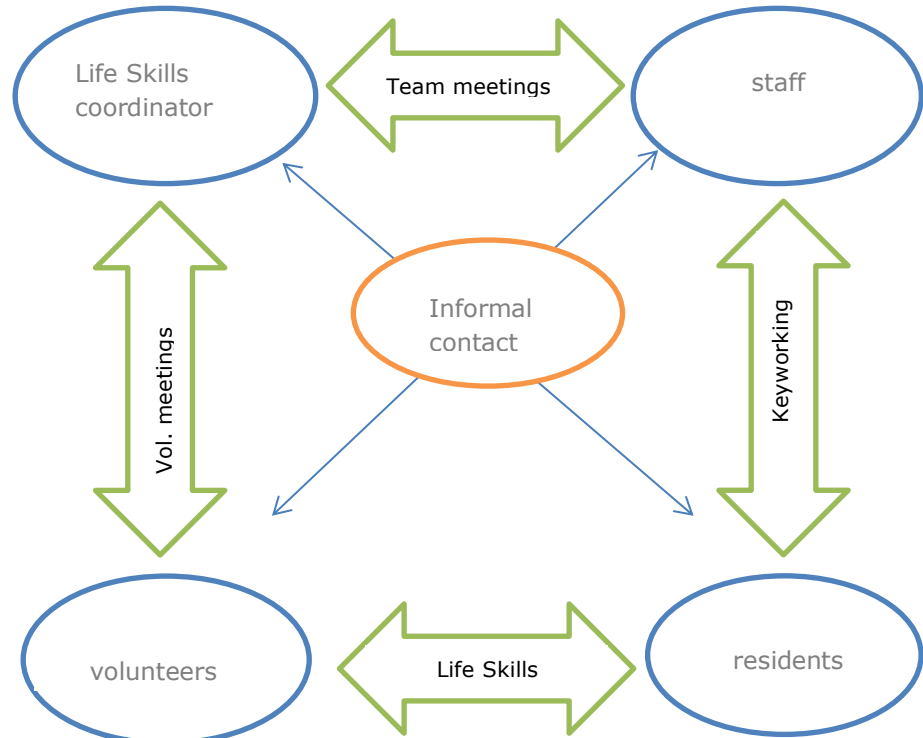
The SSGT funding and their evaluation process over 3 years allowed the programme to learn from challenges and create adaptive responses that created improvements.

Starting a new programme will always provide learning experiences and the Life Skills programme was no exception. As time progressed the learning became good practice.

Good practice is a complex process and it’s also very attainable when time is taken to clarify all its elements. The following elements of good practice informed and drove the programme:-

### 6.1 Communication pathways

Communication about activities, challenges, resident needs and any other Life Skills programme matters happened informally and formally. The communication opportunities are diagrammed below.





“ It’s fantastic ... they get to talk about issues that may affect their mental health and they socialise better with others because of the activities ”  
**staff**



“ I get a great deal of pleasure seeing some smiles when I appear and residents really appreciate my little efforts ”  
**volunteer**



## 6.2 Solidarity with residents

Depaul and all its services work in solidarity with their service users. Sundial House residents were always included in decisions about activities and had many avenues to provide formal and informal feedback. The whole process is truly client centred.

## 6.3 Life Skills Coordinator

The SSGT funding enabled the employment of a part time Life Skills coordinator and this part time position has become a linchpin in the programme. The coordinator is the key link between staff, residents and volunteers and is responsible for inducting, supporting and supervising the 16+ strong volunteer team. This position should be resourced to a full time position.

## 6.4 Support of management

The senior Depaul management as well as the Sundial House manager and team supported the Life Skills programme from the start. The Sundial House manager attended the SSGT day long project networking sessions and actively supported their evaluation processes. Having management support is essential.

## 6.5 Time + Persistence + Patience

These 3 qualities are vital and were a key part of the success of the programme. The 3 years of St Stephen’s Green Trust funding gave the programme the time to build trust and engage residents, staff and volunteers. Persistence and patience in the face of initial residents low motivation to participate paid off.

## 6.6 Feedback and evaluation processes

There were a range of feedback and evaluation processes put in place by the Life Skills coordinator. There were also SSGT expectations regarding evaluation.

Feedback from staff, volunteers and residents is shown on the left hand column of each page in this case study.

### Life Skills Coordinator led feedback and evaluation

- **informal communication** from residents, staff and volunteers
- **project staff team meetings** – the Life Skills programme became a formal item on their meeting agenda



“ I don’t usually eat a lot so when I see the choice and variety and smell the food cooking it sometimes gives me an appetite”

When asked why they like the breakfast club  
**resident**



“ breaks the boredom of communal living and builds new skills ”  
**staff**



- **focus group sessions with residents** – the coordinator led a number of formal feedback sessions with residents
- **surveys to volunteers and staff** – the Life Skills coordinator developed a survey for volunteers to give their feedback on the programme as well as a separate survey to staff.
- **Outcome star process** – the outcome star is a process used in Depaul so residents can assess their own progress against a number of quality of life and behaviour indicators.

### St Stephen’s Green Trust led feedback and evaluation

- **annual evaluation forms** – SSGT sent evaluation forms to each project annually. The forms gathered information on challenges and highlights during the year as well as qualitative and quantitative information against each projects objectives.
- **evaluator interviews** – at the beginning and the end of the funding programme the evaluator conducted in depth interviews with each project.
- **twice yearly networking meetings** – all the projects gathered twice a year for a day to share the learning from their work as well as identify issues they could collectively comment on in terms of policy and practice. These sessions were hugely positive and had long term impacts in terms of trust building, information sharing and projects working together.

## 6.7 Communicating results

The Life Skills coordinator had a key role in communicating the results and progress of the programme to Sundial House staff, residents and volunteers as well as the broader Depaul community. Updates help keep people engaged and motivated.

## 6.8 Volunteers are core to the programme

The Life Skills programme would not exist without the commitment, energy and huge enthusiasm of the volunteer team.

Every day the volunteers foster a warm and welcoming culture based on commitment, involvement, diversity and excellence.

The relationships that volunteers bring are different from the relationships between residents and staff members. They are



“ I enjoy getting to know the residents, giving them support and encouraging them to learn something different ”  
**volunteer**



“ I love the new volunteers and meeting people ”  
**resident**



also different than the relationships between residents and residents.

The volunteer relationships are professional but they are not based on the structures and obligations of the staff relationship. The volunteer relationships are friendly (while remaining within the code of professional boundaries) but they are not based on the pragmatic and needs-based friendships between residents.

By developing relationships that meet the person where he or she is at, and by valuing the person in a warm and non-judgemental way, the volunteer, through their presence with the resident, contributes to promoting the idea of the resident as a person of worth and esteem.

## 6.9 Consistency is key

Core activities such as the breakfast club, baking, cooking classes, woodwork and art classes are available at the same time every day or week. This consistency and continuity creates a sense of safety for residents as they know the activities they enjoy will be happening.

## 6.10 Depaul organisational capacity & competence

Depaul is a value driven and professional organisation and its structures, policies and processes provided the context in which to develop the Life Skills programme. Having a steady state organisational foundation allows for the introduction of creative and innovative projects.

## 6.11 Planning that makes activities look informal & don't call it a Life Skills programme

A lot of planning and coordination is needed to make the Life Skills activities blend into the day to day rhythms of residents. This was a crucial success element of the programme – making the formal look informal. It was also never 'named' or publicly promoted as a Life Skills programme. They were just activities that integrated into the daily living of Sundial Residents.

## 6.12 Documenting the story and learning

Documenting and sharing the learning is essential and this case study is one key result that will be shared.



“ Behaviours have changed because residents feel better in themselves and morale & meaning to people’s lives are positively impacted... residents feel proud of their accomplishments and it gives them something to look forward to and talk about ”  
**staff**



“ I love the chat that goes on ”  
**resident**



## 7. The future – where to next?

There is no doubt that the Life Skills programme run in Sundial House has been a huge success on many levels. There are a few directions that need to be explored by Sundial House and Depaul senior management:

**Continuation of funding** – the SSGT funding ends in May 2015 so it is imperative that new funding be found before that deadline. If the Life Skills programme was ended due to lack of funding there would be a negative impact on the morale of residents, staff and volunteers in Sundial House.

**Make Life Skills coordinator position fulltime** – if the position was full time then the coordinator could expand the programme within Sundial House as well as work with Depaul fundraising and finance teams as well as volunteer coordinator teams to access resources to fund more activities. Developing the theatre programme further would be interesting as it captured the attention of a number of residents.

**Expand Life Skills programme to other projects in Depaul** – the success of this programme indicates that it would be beneficial for service users in other projects. It is recommended that Depaul senior management research the opportunities, context and options to develop and resource an organisation wide Life Skills/Meaningful activities programme.

**Share the learning** – by sharing the learning from this programme other projects and organisations can explore what they could do for their service users in terms of positive and engaging activities. As a first step it is recommended that the Life Skills coordinator [with a volunteer and resident] present a half day workshop to interested Depaul staff on the running of the Life Skills programme. This case study can be shared on the Depaul site as well as emailed to key organisations.

As evaluator of the St Stephen’s Green Trust funded projects that Sundial House was a part of, writer of the SSGT legacy document and writer of this case study it has been a great pleasure watching the development of the Depaul Sundial House Life Skills programme.

Specific acknowledgement for their great work needs to go to:

Dee Higgins - Manager Sundial House to November 2014

Katja Debenjak – Coordinator May 2014 to May 2015

Lee Casey – Coordinator 2012 to April 2014