



INTRO

OPTIO is all about supporting people to explore options on how to spend their time. OPTIO aims to support people who have a learning disability aged from 16-65 engage in a two staged model with the overall aim of increasing their employability skills and providing opportunity and choice for enterprise and self-employment.

➤ MODEL



Stage 1 of the programme is a 10 session course. Three sessions are specifically focused on exploration of self and motivation, and aspiration for employment and personal life. Six sessions contain innovative teaching on enterprise as an introductory access course to the option of self-employment. Participants have the opportunity to work towards accredited units at Entry Level and Level 1.

Hi I'm Angela. I have a learning disability and I struggle with mental health and was having a difficult time - I didn't go to the first week of OPTIO because I felt so low. My friend Heather went to the training and said it was very interesting so I decided to try. I didn't miss a single day after that! It was such a good course, it made me feel really happy. Every week I looked forward to going and learning about work. I worked on confidence and I learned about business. I talked about what I'm good at and what jobs I could have. We did our Enterprise Challenge in Waterstones and I said I could work in a shop because I was there selling all the things I had helped make. Doing OPTIO made me realise I'm really good with people, I make people feel good about themselves. OPTIO really helped me feel more confident. I'm taking a new course now and after I finish it I am going to look for a job.





Stage 2 of the programme is a 12 session Enterprise Challenge course and utilises information gathered by each participant and within the group during Stage 1. The participants are supported to run a one-day event for a start-up enterprise, utilising the soft and work based skills they have acquired, as well as their new knowledge about enterprise.

Hi, I'm Lynette! I am 25 years old. I struggle with speech and hand movements. I loved making everything for the Enterprise Challenge!! My support worker was surprised at how excited I was by the Enterprise Challenge and how determined I was to help make everything on my own. It sometimes took me a little longer but I have a lot of patience and take my time and get things done right! I really want to do more stalls like we did on OPTIO, it was really good coming up with ideas of what we can do and picking things and making them. I loved it!



Following completion of Stage 1 and Stage 2, each participant has a review meeting and individual action planning sessions. The individual decides their next step based upon skills, learning and knowledge gathered throughout the Programme and signposting to support will occur, including but not limited to regional enterprise hubs. Each Stage runs over 3 months respectively.

OPTIO is a creative space for people to think outside the box on what they want from their lives.



➤ IMPACT – Outputs and Soft Outcomes

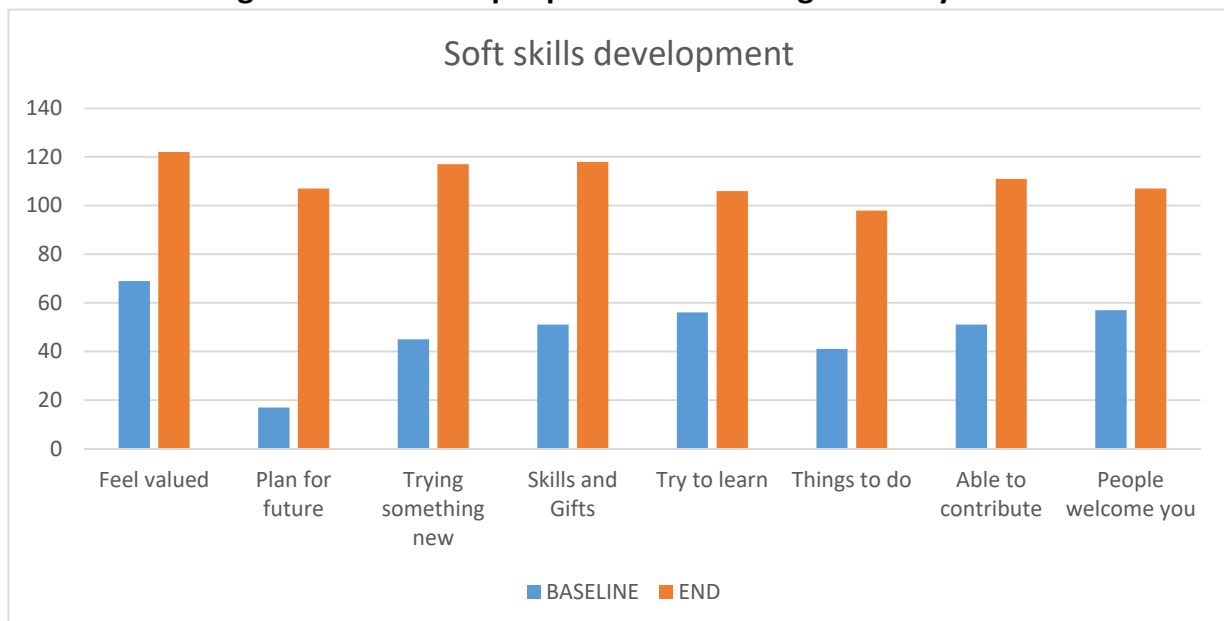
Hi, I'm Donall. I'm 37 years old and I attend a day opportunity hub in Newry. I'm quite shy



and quiet but I work really hard and always try my best. When doing OPTIO I was brilliant at the Enterprise Challenge! We did a stall in our local market and I was so good at selling everything. I didn't want to leave so much that I stayed for the second shift. I spent all day smiling and speaking to people, and getting them to buy from our stall. I would never have done this before OPTIO.

During OPTIO we talked about jobs and I talked about working in a café. I think I could do it well because I'm very polite and follow instructions really well. Now that I've finished OPTIO, I'm doing catering training in my day opportunity hub so that I can practice serving and clearing tables then one day see about getting a job in a local café.

In Year 1, 28 participants were recruited to OPTIO across two cohorts, exceeding the recruitment target of 13. There was a 100% retention rate with all 28 participants completing Stage 1 and Stage 2. Of the 28 participants 79% are hopeful to achieve accredited qualification. For each group, a support worker attends the weekly sessions to embed the development and support the participants on their journey as they overcome the significant barriers people with a learning disability often face.





Hi, I'm Danielle, and I have very limited verbal communication so there aren't many courses I get to be part of. I got to go at my own speed during OPTIO, my goals were different to other people in the group because I needed to work on my focus. I got really good at it! I worked on my fine motor skills and also my eye contact and attention. I got to be part of the team for the Enterprise Challenge, and my role was helping to make things for selling. I had to concentrate very hard and take my time to get it right but I did it! I made Rainbow Jars on my own and I went to help at our stall in the local market which was really tiring for me because I hadn't done anything like that before.



Two Enterprise Challenges were implemented to great success with both groups selling all stock and making a clear profit. One group decided to take a Market Stall in their local area of Newry and the Belfast based group created a link with Waterstones to run a pop up stall in the bookstore in Belfast City Centre, a network that they are keen to develop and sustain. The 1-1 personal development plans are progressing with the participants and formal feedback from the support workers for monitoring the impact.



"We already create greeting cards and saw OPTIO as an exciting opportunity to help the people we support think through opportunities to grow the business and identify what new products they could create. We hope the pop up stall becomes a frequent opportunity at locations across Belfast, and Waterstones have really helped kick start this."- Kylie, Staff Member, Orchardville TRC



➤ SUPPORT STAFF VIEWS



Hi, I'm Michael. I have had work placements but they had all fallen through and some people said that I would never have a job so I didn't think I could. I really liked the training on OPTIO, it was really good and we had fun. I got more confident in saying what I think about things and ideas about what job I would like to do. After Stage 1 I thought about stopping OPTIO - I really liked the course and coming up with ideas of what I can do, and learning about business but I didn't think anything would change. I spoke to my support worker who said they would definitely be helping with all the ideas that I was saying in OPTIO so I did Stage 2 and it was great! I felt really shy at the start when we first got to Waterstones but then I felt a lot happier about talking

to people and telling them about our business and everything we had done. I was fantastic at dealing with the money when we were selling everything and keeping track on how much stock we had. It made me really want to work in a shop, and my support workers have helped me and I've got my dream and am volunteering in a games shop. I hope that one day I can have a paid job for working with games and cds.

The feedback from support staff on the improvement in participants' aspiration and motivation, confidence, engagement with others and the public, as well as decision making skills has been extremely positive. The staff have also referenced the impact on OPTIO for their skill set as support staff and sustaining the learning and entrepreneurial development within their organisation.

"OPTIO is helping participants to move beyond their current level of ideas on what they can and cannot do. As a support worker I want all the participants to continue to use the skills they've been developing, and to use these to find jobs or decide on further training they would like to do to help them secure work."- Ivan, Staff Member, Prospects





Hi, I'm Julie. I do not have very good confidence and always say no to things but in OPTIO I learned to say yes! I always think I'm not good at anything but in OPTIO, I learned about making choices for me, and looking at what I can do instead of saying no I can't do



anything. I can do things - I was brilliant at the Enterprise Challenge! I went outside the day centre and I spoke to strangers and got them to buy things from my stall. I even met my hero Da! My support worker said she could not believe how much I was saying yes to things and how hard I was working, and how many ideas I have for jobs. During OPTIO I said I like helping people and I have got an in-house job in the day centre now which I had always said no to before. I'm working as a carer support to other people in the centre who are in wheelchairs and need help moving around and feeding themselves. I had a job selling programmes in my local football stadium but I didn't get paid for it, I'd like to do that again but get paid for it. I also really, really, really want to

do another stall. I've already said to my support worker because three of my friends want to do another stall and she said she will help us do one at Christmas with our cards, and we are going to speak to Waterstones about going back to them for Valentine's Day. I'm really excited by this! It's a big yes from me!

ARC is piloting the two stage model as a potential springboard tool that can be used within the statutory and voluntary sector to enable people with a learning disability and their support staff to think creatively on how they spend their time and the value of enterprise in providing the opportunity to upskill and develop employability.



PARTNERS



OPTIO is delivered in partnership with East Belfast Enterprise who are collaborating to make training on enterprise accessible for people with a learning disability. People with a learning disability are one of the most disadvantaged and socially excluded members of society. The Enterprise Challenge aims to increase social inclusion by empowering and enabling people with a learning disability to engage in their local community for their pop up enterprise.



Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

OPTIO is delivered in partnership with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and is part of the Day Opportunities Review that is taking place within the learning disability sector. OPTIO works with participants and their support staff to address personal barriers, and also to address the systemic challenges that face people with a learning disability in accessing resources. OPTIO aims to innovate and expand the opportunities available to people with a learning disability, raising aspirations and empowering real choice.

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