



Interview with Dr. Norma Clark, Project Manager Scottish Government NIDMAR Program

The Scottish Government has invested in the professionalization of 300 Supported Case Managers to become Certified Disability Management Professionals. This five-year program was established in 2018 with the first group of exam candidates achieving their professional designations in 2019 and additional Case Managers completing their training and writing their exams in Fall 2020, despite the disruption of the global pandemic. We connected with the Program Project Manager, Dr. Norma Clark, to learn about how this nationwide initiative came about, their progress to date, and how things may evolve further.

Speaking of the importance of consistency of service from those helping clients access support, Dr. Clark explained why she had put forward a proposal to rollout the training and certification program to case management professionals from all of the sectors who collectively support an ill or injured worker, including healthcare, local authorities and charitable organizations. Referring to her own observations when referring cases to existing community programs she noted, “The support programs can be good, but if the individuals who are tasked with delivering them are not properly trained, the program can fail, and not because it’s a bad program”.

Dr. Clark had seen how experiences and outcomes could be hit and miss for patients, depending on the individual case manager that they were referred to. This led her to speak up about the importance of ensuring quality and governance, not just for the actual programs being delivered, but also for the individuals who are helping clients access them. She put forward that the missing link in the successful delivery of services, was the certification of these case managers who, up until the launch of this initiative, would have had quite differing approaches based on the varied levels of training offered by their own specific team or sector.

In addition to the very tangible results of the program – with 69 case managers already completing the training modules and achieving their designations, and another 73 who are ready to write the exam in May 2021 – Dr. Clark also spoke of another valuable impact of the program. “What I have really enjoyed in each of the cohorts, has been seeing the students from different sectors who start the training as separate groups based on their own specializations, going through the program together and gaining a broader understanding of one another’s perspectives and expertise. They come to see each other as equals and peers.”

When asked if this was a deliberate outcome for the program, Dr. Clark noted that while it wasn’t a formal part of the agenda, she had hoped that by setting up mixed cohorts,



Dr. Norma Clark



there would be an opportunity to break down silos and encourage these relationships to develop. “It happens organically and is one of the aspects of the program that I appreciate the most.”

When discussing how the program has evolved since 2019 and what Dr. Clark sees as the next priorities, she spoke to the importance of the longevity and sustainability of the program. Dr. Clark has taken a five year secondment from her career with the Scottish National Health Service to establish and run this initiative, and since day one she has been laying the foundations for the ongoing certification of professionals in the field long after she returns to her previous employment. The process to enroll, train and certify new CDMPs has been steadily gaining momentum; there are four cohorts per year with targeted enrollment to ensure that case managers from all 14 of Scotland’s territorial boards will have access to the program.

The training modules were first developed by the National Institute of Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR) in Canada, but have since been adjusted by UK delivery partner Graham Halsey, Well Working Matters, to include Scottish statistics and case studies which ensure that the content is relevant and tangible for the audience.

Filling the available spaces in each cohort has not been an issue. Dr. Clark uses other well established networks to announce each upcoming enrollment, leveraging the reach of groups such as Allied Health Partnership and the British Association of Supported Employers, as well as the Scottish Government’s own Supported Employment E-newsletter. In 2020, the upheaval of COVID-19 created delays and road-blocks, but with a few adjustments to offer online training sessions, the cohorts were able to continue and Dr. Clark is still confident that they can achieve their goal of 300 CDMPs by the end of the program in 2023.

When considering what could come next for the program and how to build on this successful momentum, Dr. Clark sees huge potential in casting a wider net for enrollment in the future. After completing the initial professionalization of the 300 Supported Case Managers, she would like to see training rolled out to a broader clinical group of staff who, in becoming more knowledgeable themselves, could

then be better informed to refer patients to the Supported Case Managers. Dr. Clark intends to connect with other colleagues where employment is part of their portfolio, to see how they might be able to help take this program to another level of impact.

This success story from Scotland is an example for other public and private organizations around the globe, illustrating how the professionalization of individuals working in this rapidly growing field is an absolutely essential component of the successful delivery of the programs and resources being offered.