



The Men Can Care project 2nd evaluation report:
An experiential evaluation of the Men Can Care programme

Jennifer Lerpiniere and Ian Milligan

October 2006

Ribble

Acknowledgments

The assistance we received from Dougie Hope, Men Can Care Placement Manager and Co-ordinator, throughout this project was invaluable, and without which the project would have been a much slimmer volume. We would like to thank Dougie for his continued support and help with this project. We would also like to thank Leslie Napier for her help in setting up interviews.

The project, of course, would not have been possible without the time and input of the Men Can Care trainees. We very much appreciate the openness and honesty of the trainees who were involved in the research and the time they spent recounting their experiences of the Men Can Care training programme.

Contents

	Page Number
Introduction	4
The Research	6
The Men Can Care Trainees	9
Fraser's story	10
The Application and Interview Process	14
Mark's story	16
Reflections on the Training Experience	20
Kevin's story	26
The Men Can Care Support Network	28
John's story	31
'Men Can Care Folk' – Group Identity	35
Becoming Reflective Practitioners:	37
Daniel's story	
Adam's story	
Conclusion	44

Introduction

One of Scotland's oldest child care facilities Kibble Education and Care Centre originally opened as a reformatory for 14 'youthful offenders' in 1859, funded by a charitable bequest. Currently it provides residential and day school services for more than 100 secondary school age boys who have a range of emotional, social and behavioural needs. It is also in the process of building an 18-bed Safe Centre providing secure accommodation in three units.

Background to the Men Can Care project

Senior managers at Kibble developed the idea for the Men Can Care project to address concerns they had in relation to the recruitment of male care staff. There was a dual concern about the lack of positive male role models in the lives of boys cared for at Kibble and, in recent years, men had been less successful than women when they applied for care positions at Kibble and were also less well prepared for interviews than women.

The Men Can Care project was funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). Funding was matched by Kibble Education and Care Centre. The project ran at Kibble for two consecutive years during 2004 and 2005. The Men Can Care project was a ten month course which, for the first cohort of men, began in March 2004. During the first year 34 men participated in the training programme and in 2005 funding was secured for a further 17 trainees. Its aim was to reduce gender inequality in the workplace through the provision of employment, education and training. It achieved this by promoting the recruitment of men into the child and youth care sector; providing training and

work placements within the residential and day care units at Kibble. In addition, as part of the training programme, each trainee spent a short period of time working in other child care agencies in order that they would gain some insight into the child care sector as a whole. An important aspect of the project was that issues of masculinity and reflections on what it involved for men to be, and become, care personnel would be an explicit feature of the programme.

The project was a training scheme and employment at the end was not guaranteed for any of the trainees. However Kibble was in the process of expanding its range of services and managers believed that it was very likely that the trainees who completed the programme, and received positive reports from their placement supervisors would be in a good position to compete for jobs in Kibble as they became available. In the event this has happened and a large number of the Men Can Care trainees have moved into jobs at Kibble.

The training programme

The training programme combined taught training courses with work experience in the care units. Most of the taught training courses were run in the training suite on the Kibble campus. Others took place in colleges and universities in Glasgow. The first part of the course was an introduction to residential child care which gave men an insight into the types of issues and responsibilities associated with residential child care. Other short courses focused on bereavement, confidentiality, child abuse, child law, and recording and report writing skills. A number of these short courses provided underpinning knowledge which assisted towards the completion of Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) units. These form part of the range of qualifications that residential child care workers must possess in order to register with the Scottish Social services Council.

Trainees spent part of each week, usually two days, on training courses and the rest of the time was spent working directly in units at Kibble. This form of concurrent training allowed the men to acquire the knowledge and understanding of residential child care and gave them an opportunity to practice some of the skills they had learnt during training courses.

The Research

Aim of the research

This report forms the second part of a wider evaluation of the Men Can Care project. An initial evaluation, *Men Can Care: An evaluation of an initiative to train men for work in child and youth care* (Smith, McLeod and Mercadente, 2006), focused on the outcomes and details of the first year of the training programme including statistical information and the background of the project.

The purpose of this second research study was to supplement the original evaluation by providing an insight into the experiences of the men who participated in the course and to explore the experiences of men who work in care. Thus it is a qualitative study which seeks to explore the reasons why the men applied for training in the care sector, and what their experiences of participation in the programme were.

This report is based on information gathered from a number of interviews with men who had participated in the Men Can Care scheme. A number of major themes are addressed in separate sections using short extracts from different participants' experiences. These themes and other issues are further explored by telling, in a more extended way the 'stories' of a number of the participants. This allows a number of the themes to be examined through the words of the participants themselves.

Method

At the time this evaluation was undertaken the training programme had been completed and the intention was to collect the views and experiences of a range of participants. Twelve trainees from across the two cohorts were involved in interviews. A sample of trainees were sent letters inviting them to participate in the study. This included trainees who represented proportions roughly equal to:

- those who had progressed to employment at Kibble;
- those who had not completed the programme, and
- those who were employed in other organisations or undertaking further study.

Follow up phone calls were made to arrange times to interview the men. In all except one case, interviews were tape-recorded and carried out at the men's place of work or study. One telephone interview, which was not tape-recorded, was carried out.

Seven of the men came from the first cohort of trainees and five were from the second. Eight of the trainees had secured posts at Kibble, two had secured employment in other child care agencies, and a further two attended full-time college or university courses. Excepting one trainee, who had elected not to finish the training course at Kibble, all trainees had completed the ten month course. This latter person was one of the two who had secured employment in another child and youth care agency. The age of the men involved ranged from early twenties to mid forties.

Names have been changed to protect identities.

A semi-structured interview approach was used to investigate a number of themes including men's interest in applying for the Men Can Care training course; perceptions of the interview and application process; men's experience of the training course, and what they had (or had not) gained from the course. These themes are discussed in the report along with two other themes trainees frequently raised: 'The Men Can Care Support Network' in which the trainees spoke of the support network provided by their fellow trainees and 'The Men Can Care Folk' where men spoke of their experience of being labelled 'Men Can Care folk' by existing employees throughout the Kibble campus.

Although some of the interview themes were structured, a flexible, narrative style was used to allow trainees to tell their own story and give details of their experience of the training project. Extracts from interviews with all participants have been included throughout this report, and six of the individual stories have been retold in fuller detail in the report.

The Men Can Care Trainees

The men who participated in the training course came from a range of employment backgrounds; including taxi-driving and computing, construction and retail industries. Most had little previous involvement with children and young people, especially with vulnerable children and young people. However some of the men had either, other social care, or voluntary youth work experience. One had been a Children's Hearing panel member, and some had wives or partners who worked in the social care sector.

Previous experience and motivation

It came across very strongly in interviews that trainees were looking for a new direction in their lives. They wished to embark on a career that they felt was worthwhile; something that would give them greater job satisfaction and that they would look forward to each day.

I've always worked since I've left school and I'd never been happy in any job I'd been in. It wasn't till one of my old youth leaders said to me, 'You should try and get into some kind of youth work. You're combining your interests with actual work.' I thought about it and thought I'd love to do something like that but basically all the kind of jobs I'd looked at you had to be qualified. I was just busy working away as a taxi driver at the time when I noticed the Men Can Care project and all they were looking for was guys with a wee bit of life

experience and I had a keen interest. It looked ideal. That's when I phoned up for an application form. I was quite lucky. I believed that it was always meant to be anyway but it was lucky that I found that article one day. It's worked out great. I'm very happy working in here. I can't see myself working in any other line of work now.

James

Fraser's Story

Fraser had been working in construction for six years and wasn't getting any job satisfaction. He had been working around the country for six years, anywhere from London to Aberdeen and missed his family and friends.

He was interested in the social care sector and in order to gain some experience decided to combine taxi driving, which allowed him to work flexible hours, with volunteering on an adult literacy project. Fraser found his work with the adult literacy project very rewarding.

It was dead rewarding. We basically got a couple of boys from Kibble attending the project. I started working with this one young person. Before we started he'd had numerous volunteers working with him and he just couldn't deal with anyone. I started working with him and I felt the relationship getting a bit stronger and better. By the time we'd finished our nine month session I'd been looking at the programme I'd set him. He could do addition. He could take away. He could divide. He could multiply. I felt totally rewarded for that. There was no better feeling and no extortionate amount of money that I used to get paid. The job satisfaction I

was getting from doing some voluntary work just outweighed that by a mile.

After working like this for a year, combining voluntary work with taxi driving, Fraser received a call from his manager at the adult literacy project. She had seen a recruitment advertisement. Kibble were looking for male workers. She told Fraser, 'You need to phone Kibble. They're looking for guys. I think you'd be ideal for it.'

With this encouragement Fraser applied for the post thinking that the interview experience would be good. He thought however that he would need further voluntary experience and qualifications in the social care sector to help him secure a post. He was delighted to be asked back for a second interview and then offered a position on the Men Can Care project. At first Fraser found the report writing and studying quite hard. Since finishing the Men Can Care traineeship he has completed further qualifications and with more experience of working in the units he feels that the 'academic' aspect of the training now makes more sense and the training and practice has come together for him. He was pleased to be able to help new workers with reporting writing.

Fraser felt the training helped him cater to the different needs of individual boys. He said it was like putting the theory into practice and just watching it happen. He commented that it was sometimes difficult to meet the needs of individual boys and maintain the general structure, limits and boundaries needed within the units. An example he gave was dealing with young people and swearing.

One boy in the unit swears all the time and another swears maybe a couple of times. You're challenging them in different ways. And one's saying, 'Well, why's he not getting sanctioned?'

And you're trying to explain, 'Well, this is the stage he's at and this is the stage you're at and I know that you can contain your language. He can't.' It's hard to try and work with that.

He would often go home and reflect on things that had happened throughout the day. For example, what he may have done differently or how he could have defused conflict.

Fraser secured a permanent post in Kibble and shortly afterwards he was asked to manage cases for two young people. His manager thought that he was capable of doing it, if he felt ready for the challenge. Fraser thought that the Men Can Care course had helped him to achieve this level of practice competence, and confidence so quickly.

Fraser found practising in the units much better than he had anticipated and enjoyed establishing relationships and working with the boys.

It's better and I can't emphasise how much better it is. I got given two case-loads to manage and you're dealing with the whole primary care thing from checking if they've brushed their teeth to if they've got dirty socks in their bed to the other end of the spectrum where you're dealing with external agencies and, for example today. This is the first time I've seen the whole, the end product if you like of the system, somebody whose case I managed. I was away today at a young person's hearing to get a young person off his supervision order and back with his mum, which happened. Going right through with a young person who I've worked with who came out the end and returned home was a heart warming experience. His mother burst into tears and said, 'Oh that's me. I've got

my boy back.’ To see the joy in faces and know that you’ve contributed to that. It’s fantastic. Amazing.

Fraser did say that there were times when he felt a bit down. He felt this was an experience for most workers because of the intense environment that they worked in.

You do get wee lulls where you feel down and I think everybody goes through the same thing because it is an intense environment and it is people’s lives that you’re dealing with. You’re not dealing with something where you can just say ‘I’ll put that off.’ Like today I was supposed to finish at 3pm and I had a young person saying to me, ‘Could you phone my Gran?’ Rather than disappoint him I stayed and did it.

Overall Fraser was really pleased with his progress and couldn’t imagine working anywhere else.

I would never have thought I would be doing this just now and contemplating going on and doing further training for my own development but here I am. I’m thoroughly enjoying it.

The Application and Interview Process

The Men Can Care training project had been widely advertised in a number of ways: including on local radio, at a recruitment stand in a local shopping centre and in local and national newspapers.

The men who chosen to apply for the programme had found out about the project in a variety of ways. Some had read or heard the advertisements and some had spoken to the trainers at the recruitment stand in the shopping centre. Others heard through more indirect routes, from managers in their previous posts, or from partners and even passengers in a taxi.

Each trainee who spoke about the application and interview experience commented on how unique, easy, even enjoyable, it had been. Part of the reason for this was because the questions were clear and easy to follow.

In all honesty I thought the application process was easy. The format was easy compared to other application forms that I've filled. This wasn't an application form about a post. This was an application form that was asking about you as an individual and it was unusual so it was easy because you weren't having to go 'What is it they're looking for here?' The questions were specific and depending on how you answered it they were able to measure probably things like degree of empathy.

Daniel

The application and interview process had been designed this way by management at Kibble in order to make the process accessible for men who had had no previous experience in the child care sector. The men commented that they felt comfortable with the application process.

I've always felt that Kibble are very good at playing people to their strengths. I've had three interviews at Kibble and they've probably been the three best interviews I've ever had in my life. I felt really confident. Even going from the Men Can Care project, to annualised hours, on to a full time worker. Even if I didn't get the job, I felt I'd said everything I wanted to say. I think the interviews are set up that way. They're pretty informal. It makes you feel comfortable going through that process because nobody likes interviews.

Blair

Some of the men commented that the interview process had helped Kibble to choose men with values that they wished to promote in the organisation and impart to the boys.

They got so many like minded guys in. We were all very different and had very different backgrounds but we all had very similar values. I think the interview process worked really well.

I think we valued the family, valued everybody's rights and opinions. Nobody was ever afraid. You would never have anybody sitting thinking, 'Well I'm not going to say anything'. Everybody would be very, very open and say I'm really struggling with this. We just valued each other as individuals and valued each other's opinion and nobody was ever wrong. It was just a different opinion.

Mark

Mark's Story

Mark had been in the computing industry for 15 years and had become disillusioned with the company. He was offered a voluntary redundancy package which he accepted and used the opportunity to look for further training rather than going straight into another job.

Mark's wife worked in an area of social deprivation which had a high incidence of drug related problems. When she told him stories about the problems that she had witnessed he wished there was something he could do about it. This prompted him to look at new job possibilities such as teacher training and courses about young people and the community. He was in the process of applying for these courses when he came across an advert for the Men Can Care project.

Mark's application was successful and he was very pleased to start the Men Can Care course only a week after he left his previous job in the computer industry. Although Mark no longer works at Kibble he thought the training was brilliant and found all the short courses very useful.

One course that he found particularly useful was the attachment theory and child development course.

You've got a big boy who's 15 and he's bigger than me, maybe twice the size but he's functioning at the level of an 8 year old. Just getting to grip with things like that it makes it so much easier to begin to understand why things are happening then you can empathise with them which makes the relationship better.

What he found more useful was the support network offered by the other men on the course.

All the short courses. They were extremely useful but I think what was more useful even than that was the fact that you would do your training and then you would go away and work in the unit. And when you came back you all got together and it was kind of like you got to fire off each other and say, 'That's happened to me. You'll never believe this.' That was what I thought was so good about it.

After working in a unit for a while Mark decided that the environment at Kibble wasn't for him. He had a number of injuries in dealing with episodes of challenging behaviour. He was very positive about the move into this line of work and the training he received, although eventually deciding that Kibble was not the place for him.

Although there was loads and loads of fantastic work done with the boys towards the end I was just getting a bit scunnered of putting boys into their room and hands on work. There was one boy who would get restrained maybe 10 times a week and I was just getting like, 'This isn't for me.' I think he probably would have got something out of it. He would have eventually got, its all about boundaries and realising you can't do that and sometimes it meant he had to be helped to his room.

Mark found the staff at Kibble very supportive during this period and they arranged for him to try different units and to try working in the education block but he felt it was time to move on. Despite the incidents he mentioned Mark did not recall only bad experiences from his time at Kibble. He spoke of a particularly memorable occasion when he spent some time with one of the boys.

There was one thing that I remember that was the most simple daft thing. It was this one boy who, he'd suffered terrible set backs. He'd not had a very nice life and he'd been in care for a lot of his life. He hadn't the kind of family normality that a lot of people take for granted. I remember one night it was just him and me in the unit, can't remember why. There was a wee quiet room we went into and we had the telly on and a video. And we just sat, watched a video and had a drink and made some toast and at the end of it he was like, 'Thanks very much that was amazing.' I was just like, 'What? We just sat and watched the telly and had a cup of tea.'

But that to him, because where he came from, the house was just chaos, he just didn't get the time to do the stuff that people take for granted. And that really hit me, that's just mental to thank me for sitting here and having a cup of tea. But that shows you. That's one of my abiding memories from it.

Mark still works with the same client group, vulnerable young people, including some of the boys from Kibble, only he now works in a community based project. His work involves travelling around the west of Scotland meeting young people in their own homes, or in care homes if that is where they are based. He aims to help young people stay at home, or return home, and prevent them from getting into offending and drugs.

He found he could take a lot of the Men Can Care training forward to his new job. He had found the child care law and confidentiality courses particularly valuable in relation to a recent case he had been working on. He also thought the recording and report writing course was useful within the social care sector in general. He found the throughcare course

particularly relevant to his new role working with young people who were sometimes in the process of returning home.

Mark commented that the Men Can Care experience was life changing and that in the future he would like to be able to do the same for others.

I think if I could take as much experience out of this as I can and then maybe go back and do for somebody else what the likes of the trainers did for me. That's what I would really like to do in 10 years or so. It's been quite a revolutionary change for me and it all started from that advert. I'm glad I did it.

Reflections on the Training Experience

All of the men enjoyed the training course. They enjoyed the combination of practical experience and taught courses. They found that this helped them to understand issues and to relate theory to practice.

When I was on the course I really didn't know what to expect at first and I think it was also the very first time Kibble had run a Men Can Care project so they weren't sure what to expect. But the nine months I was on the course it was just great. It was brilliant because we were learning all the time. We were in the school doing the placement and everyday we were reflecting on our work and learning and putting it into practice.

I had a lot of preconceived ideas about how I would deal with people, how I would deal with young people from the youth clubs. But since I've been in here a lot of my ideas and a lot of my opinions have changed just through the training. When you come in here, every single boy you're dealing with, you've got to have a different approach. There's no one approach that will work with everybody so you're just constantly learning.

The actual programme, the course was a total eye opener. I was used to working with kids, young people, that were, they had their home basically. They didn't have the kind of issues that the boys in here had. So I came in here and I was seeing some of the behaviours and I thought it was totally bizarre, you know, but the more training I did, I was able to link those theories to some of the

behaviours and putting some of those theories into practice was great.

I think things like doing attachment theories. We did a lot about attachment theories, you know, about people not bonding with their parents when they're younger, how it affects them. You start to look at maybe how poverty affects people's behaviour and how it runs from generation to generation in the one family. A young person grows up with the expectation that they've got to be like the rest of their family and they don't work.

James

One point of view was that the project managers had an idea of the kind of workers they would like to work in Kibble and created a course that they thought might facilitate the development of workers in this direction.

A lot of the stuff was put together by SIRCC in partnership with Kibble and they must have sat down and thought, 'Well what would be good to offer.' I think they saw us as blank canvases who they could mould and end up with some sort of end product of how they would like the workers to be. That's the way I eventually saw it when I look back on it.

Daniel

The trainees thought that all of the courses which made up the overall programme were equally important and as a package gave them an understanding of the whole caring process. The trainees found the courses very informative but at the same time an intense and demanding course because it was new content and, for many, a completely new sector in which they had limited experience.

We touched on different theories that are very, very important to know in our field because we deal with people that have got attachment problems. It was something very new for me and the courses we had that covered these areas were very informative and gave us a good base for our practice.

We had other training about group living which was very relevant to our setting here. We also had different courses possibly designed to help you more as a worker, like report writing skills and skills that you need for completing record logs. It was a very complete course. Very, very complete.

Billy

The men found it extremely helpful to develop an understanding of the issues boys were facing. The taught course prepared the men for their work in the units. It encouraged them not to make assumptions before they gathered information about the boys' backgrounds. It helped some of the men to understand boundaries and to implement structures when working with the boys because often the boys came from environments where there was little or no structure.

When it came to practical training many of the men felt the course had an influence on the way they viewed their approach to working. They felt that the course allowed them to reflect on their practice. A few of the trainees commented that it wasn't until they completed the course and started working in the units that they were fully able to understand the theories they had been taught.

Another enjoyable part of the course some men mentioned was the opportunity to learn or develop a new skill.

Part of the project was you had to learn a new skill. I'm driving now. It could be hill walking. It could be swimming. It could be something that will make you more employable but also something that you could bring to the workplace. These are the things that you're encouraged to achieve in order to help you stay here. The training opportunities and development opportunities have been unbelievable, and ongoing.

Blair

Others thought it was good to have a work placement in another care organisation because it provided an opportunity to experience different environments and styles of working.

A number of trainees spoke of the drive and enthusiasm of the trainers motivating and supporting them through their studies.

Trainees who elected to leave the course before completing it also had positive views of the training they had completed. One trainee found that the courses were very relevant to child care work and had found them very rewarding, particularly role play sessions and the placement in another organisation. He chose to leave the course however because he wished to undertake more practical work with young people. He felt he would like more responsibilities than they were being given during the training programme but still wished to remain working in the social care sector.

Masculine but not 'macho'

Part of the purpose of the course was to discuss issues around masculinity in child care. Some of the trainees spoke about creating a more 'open' environment in place of a traditional, masculine environment which might involve reacting in a

controlling way if someone presents challenging behaviour, such as sending a young person to his room or restraining him immediately following an incident. The focus of the course was on developing trainees understanding of children's experiences and to encourage them not to adopt this type of controlling, or reactive response, but rather to engage young people in discussions about their behaviour and how they could manage it.

I think the concept traditionally was if someone wasn't doing what they were asked when you were telling them to do it they were fired to their room or being restrained. It's a 'route one' with no sort of in between whereas now we are trying to pinpoint when these guys are going into the escalation period. Trying to encourage them to think about their actions. Trying to put wee things into their mind, wee seeds that will pull them back and they can realise what's happening here. Give them the option to make a positive choice or to consider consequences. Which can go into the long term when they leave here, hopefully they'll have adapted some of these skills instead of the usual route one and lose it.

Adam

Part of the course focused on helping men to use their emotional skills with young people.

[It seemed] they chose a lot of big guys but they weren't that macho at all. They were quite sensitive. What was it we spoke about? Your emotional quotient. People who are able to talk about their emotions because that helps kids feel on a par and they can speak about theirs. They were looking for that. So by the time I got into the unit I was expecting this macho culture and it was there

to an extent but the macho culture wasn't overbearing. We maybe didn't need to challenge the macho side so much in my unit.

Mark

Discussions also took place around perceptions of men who worked in care.

A lot of the training was on masculinity and discussing the macho culture. For example, how, in Scotland, males are down the pub on the weekend and females indoors. They were trying to open your mind to that. You needed to have a conscious understanding of how you go about your business and how people will perceive you, and just to be aware as males working in care.

Daniel

The trainees found little evidence of a macho culture in Kibble, though it was thought that there were one or two individuals within the organisation who at times still used a 'traditional' or inappropriate masculine approach.

Kevin's Story

Kevin had experience of working with young people in youth clubs and had worked in alcohol and drug rehabilitation services. He had been looking for work in residential child care and had applied to the Men Can Care training programme at Kibble and also to another care home which offered training. He was very pleased to accept a place on the Men Can Care project.

He found it very helpful to gain experience in a practical setting, working with challenging behaviour, in different staff teams and on different shift patterns. He thought the training course and theories were very helpful.

All the courses you were doing informed good practice and all the theory we did was really helpful. It showed us how things worked in the units.

Kevin found it quite hard when he started working in the units. He felt there was some resentment from existing staff that they hadn't received the same intensive training. To cope he adopted the attitude that he was there for the young people with whom he really enjoyed working.

One thing that he found different to his previous work with young people in youth clubs was the involvement in young people's lives and the in depth knowledge he gained about their backgrounds.

You don't know the full extent of people's background and then they come in and their family come in and you saw what their mum's and dad's were like, how different they were. You felt sorry for them. It's hard for the parents as well.

Kevin didn't stay to work at Kibble but found a post in another residential child care setting. Kevin didn't stay at this other organisation long because he did not agree with some of the working practice. For example, he felt that on one hand the organisation tried to encourage young people not to smoke but on the other, staff were given money to buy cigarettes as a reward for young people.

These experiences hadn't put Kevin off a career in social care. He had found however that the combination of work and study impacted on his family life and chose to continue with social care studies at college for a year, which he was undertaking at the time of the interview, before looking for a job.

Kevin found the Men Can Care training very relevant to the college courses he was taking and had no doubt that they would be useful in whichever line of social care work he found himself in the future.

The Men Can Care Support Network

All the men interviewed found the support of their fellow trainees invaluable, and it is clear that the two cohorts developed very positive and supportive group relationships. There was very little criticism of other trainees or evidence of group conflict or rivalry expressed during the interviews. The trainees found it very useful to be able to exchange ideas and learn from each other's experience. Men would also support each other by discussing course work and talking about how to tackle assignments.

It helped a great deal because we all started working in the units at the same time. There was a lot of exchange of experiences. Our first shift in the unit. How did you feel? What did you have to do? Was it good? Was it scary? It was good to receive support and give support to other guys as well. I would say in the beginning that was what the group was all about, exchanging ideas and talking about your own experience and your own feelings about what you were doing. Supporting each other in that way.

Fergus

For a small number the support they experienced from the group made the difference between leaving the course and carrying on.

You have to restrain young people and I remember the first restraint I was involved in I was just ready for chucking it and if I didn't have that support from the Men Can Care. We used to all go back and speak about it, speak to the facilitators.

We used to go back and say, ‘Well I was working on Tuesday, Wednesday in the unit and I had to deal with this, I had to deal with that. I had to deal with maybe somebody’s parents and I got a mouthful of abuse, how do you deal with that?’ People were saying, ‘Well that happened to me and this is what I did.’ Or we used to go back and say, ‘I made a bit of a mess of something. I was in a situation and I handled it all wrongly.’

People used to say, ‘Well that’s just human nature, that’s just this job, you’ll never ever learn fully, everybody’s going to make mistakes, it’s about if you go into that situation again, it’s trying to deal with it differently.’

James

Even where men had chosen to leave the course before completing it they found the support offered by the Men Can Care trainees and co-ordinators very helpful. One trainee found the other students supportive of his decision and felt very positive towards the trainers who offered him the opportunity to discuss his decision and make sure it was the right one. After he had made the decision to leave the trainers helped him with interview techniques and to find other work in the social care sector.

The two cohorts of trainees however didn’t come into contact unless they were working with each other in the units though this was not the case for all the men. When trainees did work together, men from the second cohort were pleased to have the support of others who had been through the men can care experience. The first cohort of men were pleased to help out where they could and provide assistance to the second cohort of men can care trainees.

For a while when I worked the day units there were two guys in that unit who were on the first course and they were a great help because they knew what I went through. I became quite friendly with one of them. He still supports me even though I don't work in the same unit now. Now that I'm in this other unit there's nobody here that was on but it's a good bunch I'm working with.

Billy

Some men thought that it had been a missed opportunity that the two cohorts hadn't had more to do with one another.

We were suggesting that the people on the first course should have mentored the other ones because there's nobody better to mentor someone than someone who's already been through that process.

Again that would be a big responsibility for the individual because we were learning, still developing as well.

Blair

Using the Men Can Care trainees from the first cohort as mentors for the second cohort of trainees had been considered by Kibble management but ESF funding rules stated that receiving an additional allowance for mentoring was not permitted while trainees were still receiving a salary allowance.

John's Story

John had been working as a Children's Hearing panel member for five years when he saw an advert for the Men Can Care project. The company he worked for in the electronics industry

was looking for redundancies at the time and John thought it would be a good opportunity to change careers and do something different.

It was his background in the Children's Hearing system that opened the door to a social care career for John. Before this he hadn't realised that some children's lives could be so hard.

I was quite surprised at what kids get into and the poverty that they had. Just a real eye opener. I didn't think things were so bad.

John was surprised and 'over the moon' when he was offered a place on the Men Can Care project. After visiting Kibble during an information evening John had decided that working with young people was what he would like to do. He thought that the majority of the training was very good and came across new issues that hadn't been covered in his training for the children's panel. He did find that some of the topics were a bit dry, such as bereavement but recognised that it was difficult to make a topic like bereavement an easy or fun task.

The training prepared John to go into the units because it gave him knowledge about the underlying issues that young people might be experiencing. It gave him an insight about some of the reasons for the boys' actions and helped him not to make too many presumptions about the boys.

I wouldn't prejudge any of them. I got that from the courses but even before that I never really prejudged people. I like to see people on their own merit and take it from there. But I think when you go into a group setting with, you've maybe got 17 boys and they're all running about you might be inclined to say, 'What's he doing running about like that?' You could but this helped you think of

what they're going through, think of their background, what they're going through outside.

Another aspect of the training that John found very useful was the placement opportunity that each trainee carried out in different establishments. People went to different places such as the Mungo Foundation which offers a range of social care services including those for children, drug users and homeless people. He found that Kibble were very supportive towards the men when they were considering their future careers. There was no pressure to stay at Kibble if they didn't feel it was the right environment for them.

They said if you don't want to come to Kibble, if you want to go elsewhere we'll support you and we'll help you through the interview process. Two of the men are working full time in other places now and it was through their work with the Men Can Care project that got them in the door.

Kibble staff and Men Can Care staff could not influence the outcomes of interviews. It was the experience and qualifications the men gained from participating in the training programme that was valued by other social care organisations.

For a brief period during the training John returned home each night wondering whether Kibble was really an environment where he could work. He was learning about abuse and many other issues that the boys were facing and wasn't sure if he would be able to deal with all these issues. John's wife, who also worked in child care, was very supportive and encouraged John to continue with the course and apply for a post at Kibble.

I sat down with my wife and as I say she's been in this job for 20 years. She said, 'I think you'd be the ideal candidate. I think you would cope

brilliantly.’ She said, ‘I don’t think it would phase you at all. I really believe you would cope.’ I think that kind of made up my mind as well and it has been fine since.

John enjoyed working in the units. He liked the positive approach used to facilitate the boy’s behaviours, though he felt it didn’t always have an impact on all the boys.

You work with their behaviours in general. Language, how they act in the community. Their actual well-being, their social being. We work on that.

I think the boys, it’s positive for some of them. I also see some of them and I don’t believe it’s going to help them ever change. We’ve had a boy there two and a half years. And I think there’s been improvement in his general behaviour within the unit but once you put him out into the community his behaviour just goes. So he’s not even allowed to go out himself. None of them are in this unit. I don’t know what’ll happen when he’s 16, maybe he’ll have to go out in the community but he’s going to struggle because he doesn’t know how to control himself in the community.

John very much enjoys working in the specialised unit within Kibble and feels that his training and experience within the unit has really helped change the way he perceives children. He takes time to understand the background of the child and the issues they are facing.

John thoroughly enjoyed the experience and found that the group setting throughout the training experience helped. The

Men Can Care group bonded particularly well and were a good support to each other.

There were a lot of good lecturers. A lot of good people, a lot of good training. I'm glad I've done it and I'd do it again. I've enjoyed the whole experience and I think probably it would benefit anybody coming into this working environment.

‘Men Can Care Folk’

All of the trainees felt that the clear identity they had, and perhaps the large size of the first cohort, led to issues of status and identity within the overall staff team at Kibble. In the eyes of some of the trainees this meant that there was some degree of ‘stigma’ associated with being a ‘Men Can Care guy’, as they were often described in conversation across the Kibble campus. The effect of this varied amongst the men. For some it was sometimes a difficult experience, while for others it was expressed in a light-hearted manner. One impact that having a substantial group of trainees available to work in the units, even for 2 days a week, was that the amount of overtime available to existing staff, was reduced.

Often trainees felt that other staff were envious of the training the Men Can Care trainees received.

There was a bit of anxiety with some staff because we were getting all these courses and they hadn’t got them and they had been there for maybe three years and we were getting all this training within the first nine months.

George

Associated with this were problems when the trainees suggested a different point of view in the units, something they had learnt at training. Often they found that staff would react negatively or not consider their points of view.

We were coming in and challenging things like, ‘This shouldn’t be getting done like that’. They said, ‘We’ve been doing this for years. We know better.’ We felt they kind of looked down on us. It was kind of hard at the star

Kevin

Some of the men commented that the ‘Men Can Care Folk’ attitude had filtered down to the young people. The young people would say to them, ‘We don’t have to do what you say, you are just Men Can Care guys.’

It was felt that some of these issues could have been resolved before men had started the course.

It wasn’t pitched to them properly, the existing staff. There were a couple of things attached to the programme that maybe shouldn’t have been attached, like people saying, ‘You’d better watch what you’re doing because the overtime’s all going to dry up. There’s a training programme coming in and there’s going to be a lot more bodies on campus.’

Keith

By and large however trainees felt that time and getting to know staff resolved these problems.

Becoming Reflective Practitioners

Daniel and Adam both spoke about their experiences of the Men Can Care project and how it had helped them to think about their practice and approach to working with the young people. Each felt that the training programme had significantly shaped the workers they had become. Their stories are described below.

Daniel's Story

For Daniel, the Men Can Care project came at the ideal time. He had been looking to change careers and had always thought he would like to try, and be good at, working with young people. He wasn't sure specifically which area he would like to work in, only that it had to be worthwhile. He knew that many people entered social care work by first gaining experience in the voluntary sector. This was not an option for Daniel because he needed a steady income.

It was while Daniel was working as a taxi driver that he found out about the Men Can Care project at Kibble. During a conversation with a passenger Daniel mentioned that he wouldn't be driving a taxi much longer. He was looking for something else. The passenger told him that Kibble was running a programme and he should maybe try that. Immediately after Daniel had dropped the passenger off he drove round to Kibble to pick up an application form.

The Men Can Care programme allowed people like myself who were interested the chance to do it whilst still having the chance to earn some sort of money and not having to struggle by.

When Daniel was accepted on to the course he wasn't entirely sure what he was getting into. As someone from the Paisley area he had always been aware of Kibble and knew the organisation had developed and changed in a number of ways over the years. After he started the course he recognised that the ethos of Kibble emphasised and encouraged staff to develop an understanding of issues underlying the boy's behaviours.

Daniel thought the training course made him feel as though he had worked with young people even though he had had very little previous experience. He felt it had given him insight which enabled him to reflect on practice.

If I hadn't had the training I would have just fell into line with the practice that was here and what was happening. Whereas if you've got an insight into other things you quickly say, 'Well let's look at it this way.' So you can effect change.

The training gave Daniel an understanding of the bigger picture, of the issues that had affected boy's lives that should be taken into consideration when working with them. Daniel felt that the training helped him to understand the work he was undertaking with the young people. He understood that the method they had been taught was to challenge the behaviour and resolve it through discussion with the young person about why they might have carried out the behaviour.

But what's important is you need to know that that's what you're doing and you need to know the reasons. Then you know a bit about the potential reasons for the behaviour and that for me was the difference. Anybody can tell somebody not to do something. It's why, what are the benefits of not doing it. Why are you doing that? What are you [as a worker] trying to achieve? What are the

changes you're trying to achieve, or if you're trying to affect any change. Are you trying to change anything or is this just about keeping somebody in here and keeping them safe.

He found that the boy's behaviour wasn't as challenging as he had anticipated. He had witnessed similar or worse problems in the community. He also used the training to help inform strategies that he used with the young people, and he did not get discouraged if his first approach in a situation didn't work. If one strategy did not work with a young person, Daniel would try a new one and wouldn't give up trying until he felt the issue had been resolved. Daniel thought about the possible consequences of all the strategies he used before implementing them. He was careful not to use sanctions too often because he felt that they would lose their value.

Daniel found the environment at Kibble very supportive. If he had any problems or questions the trainers and others were very helpful and always gave him an answer. Daniel viewed the whole process as an opportunity and felt very fortunate to be involved.

I think if somebody has given you the responsibility of looking after children then you really need to be wanting to do that. If you don't want to be here don't be here. I realised quickly that this is what I wanted to do or I would have left. No hesitation. Once I got here I realised this is for me, I can do this.

Adam's Story

Adam had worked in the airline industry for four and a half years and found that it wasn't giving him as much fulfilment as he would have liked. When he found out about the Men Can Care project he had been looking for other jobs. He was keeping his eyes open for a career that he would really interest him. A friend had found an advert for the Men Can Care project and passed on the information. Adam thought that this may be a good career choice for him because he had previously enjoyed teaching sailing and canoeing to young people and enjoyed working in a group environment.

When he spoke about the interview process, Adam commented that it was a good experience. He felt it exposed him to some of the issues he would come across at Kibble and allowed the interviewers to see how he reacted to these situations.

It was quite good. I quite enjoyed it. It was unusual. A bit more intense but I think for this line of work you really need to be like that so you can weed out people that maybe shouldn't be here and gauge the right mindset.

After he was accepted on to the programme Adam looked forward to starting. He wasn't sure what to expect from the course because he didn't have a clear concept of what it would be like to work with vulnerable young people. He found the first introductory course very good. It gave a good introduction to the broad responsibilities and different aspects of the job that he and the other trainees would have to undertake in their work at Kibble. He thought the combination of practical and taught training was very helpful.

The continual training was fantastic. Just preparing you for being in here. I think traditionally in this line of work you got sessional work and then you work your way in and you're on a part time contract, then you're on an annualised, then you're on a fulltime contract. Along the way you maybe get sporadic episodes of training whereas this is coming from the completely different end. You're doing various courses to prepare you.

I think coming from the theory side was good because it gave us more of an indication of how to channel what you're meant to be doing. It's not just you're sitting in the classroom doing all the theory work and then you're launched into a unit. You're sort of eased into a unit two days a week and you'd be in training three days getting a chance to put this into some sort of pattern or framework to reinforce it. Very, very good.

The main skills that Adam found helpful to have learnt were those that he could use to help structure the lives of young people and to understand how his values influenced practice.

We learnt about how your own values impact on your practice and being aware of company policies and procedures in terms of values because yours might be different from what the company's are. Trying to be firm but fair in your practice. That's something, if you're going to do something follow it through not make empty threats. Not that you would be threatening but consequences and stuff like that, 'You're not doing that.' Instead of saying it ten times you're laying out the boundaries. Structures, boundaries. It's all very very important to these guys. You really need to be structured

with these guys because they come from an environment where there's no structure.

When he first started working in the units Adam felt as though he was a bit inexperienced. He wasn't sure what he should be doing and felt that this made him stand out.

To be honest I felt like a fish out of water. I think most of the guys did. I was in an intensive support unit which was very very small. Literally a lounge, three bedrooms, an office and a toilet and a kitchen so there was no way I could hide. You couldn't not do anything, you would stick out like a sore thumb. But the staff were very good at showing you through routines and it was great going in with the theory.

It's a line of work you need to be in the daily runnings to develop understanding and make experience of how things work. Sometimes you maybe felt you were doing a bit too much training. It would be good to be back in the unit because you'd be there for two days then you wouldn't be there for another week so you'd missed out on a catalogue of stuff. That made it hard to form any kind of relationship with these guys because you were in and out, in and out. As the programme progressed you were in the units a lot more.

Adam decided that this was an environment he would like to work in. He gained satisfaction from his work with young people and felt that he was making a difference.

It is very interesting working with people, young people especially and having that position of some sort of influence on people's lives is fantastic, a

positive influence. Drawing on your own experience and being able to pass it on to some sort of extent to some of these guys. Working in an environment where you're not looking at your watch every five minutes because you want to clock off. It doesn't happen. Never has happened. Getting responsibilities and progressing. Working with the young people in general. It's a great environment. A great opportunity. We're privileged.

Adam was looking to the future at Kibble and hoping to develop a programme of outdoor activities that he could undertake with the young people.

I thought I could bring something different. I do mountain biking and all that sort of stuff and am looking at developing outdoor activities for these guys. I think that's a great arena for developing relationships. A lot of these guys haven't been outside Glasgow. To get them out to the countryside. We've done it a few times but trying to develop that because you need to have qualifications which is very important.

Conclusion

The *Men Who Care* experiential evaluation has found that being part of the Men Can Care project was a very positive experience for all the men involved in the evaluation. Several of the participants described it as a 'life changing experience' which had given them opportunities to develop their skills and understanding of a sector which they were now proud to work in. It was an intensive course but they felt they learned a lot from both the practical and taught elements of the course. The trainees felt they had acquired many of the necessary skills for undertaking work at Kibble or in other care environments and felt that the training experience had given them confidence to practice.

The course had been invaluable for informing trainees' practice. It helped them to reflect on their work with young people and to think about the consequences of actions.

A huge part of the success of the programme was the supportive nature of the course. The Men Can Care trainees were very supportive of each other when completing course assignments and talking about their experiences in the units. The trainers were very supportive of the trainees in terms of the course and work experience but also in the decisions they made about future employment, even when this entailed leaving the course or the organisation following completion of the course.

The value of the training programme for the trainees was highly affirmed:

If I'd applied to start a job in Kibble, I don't think
I'd have lasted without the training and support.

James

