

Working together: Improving end of life care through better integration

Introduction

Health Education North Central and East London (HENCEL) through an end of life care advisory group was awarded funding to seven end of life care projects in its area. Skills for Care partnered with Skills for Health and worked in association with the National Council for Palliative Care (NCPC) to run a project which started in October 2013. This project focused specifically on integration of end of life care. It built upon other work Skills for Care and Skills for Health had developed on workforce integration and was delivered across 10 of the 13 local authority areas covered by HENCEL: Barking and Dagenham, Camden, City of London, Hackney, Havering, Islington, Newham, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest.

We worked with practitioners to identify the most important messages for front line workers to help them work in an integrated way when supporting people at the end of their lives. This summary outlines how we did this, and can be used as a template for thinking about how to set up similar projects. All of the resources in this pack were developed as a result of this project.

A full report, which gives more detail and includes an evaluation, can be accessed via the links overleaf.

What we did

We worked with practitioners to create a set of key messages to help individuals work in a more integrated way, and then delivered the messages to other front line workers. We began to create a network of people who could support each other when working in end of life care. We also produced a film, and developed an interactive tool to support people's thinking and learning.

How we did it

A project group steered all of the work throughout the life of the project. Membership included people from Skills for Care (and Skills for Care associates), Skills for Health and the National Council for Palliative Care, who were also partners in the project.

We identified a group of strategic leaders across the project area to make sure that this piece of work was delivered to enhance other learning and development, and that it linked to other relevant initiatives.

Using contacts from the strategic group, contacts known to Skills for Care and contacts that were sought through Skills for Health, we sent an open invitation to people to

participate as champions. We were looking for anyone with experience, expertise or enthusiasm in end of life care. We did not ask for a long term commitment, just that people would attend one event.

We held four events with the champions. Each event had a mixed audience (social care, health, carers, voluntary and private sector) as we wanted people to find out about each other's work and experiences. At the events, participants were asked to share experiences of working together in end of life care. People talked about what had worked and what had not. The groups then looked at these experiences to identify the most important messages about working together.

Once all of the events were finished we used the materials to produce a set of six key messages for people working at the front line, to help them in their everyday practice. The key messages were also developed into an interactive tool. Those messages were used to underpin a learning and development session that was developed to deliver to front line workers.

The stories that people told were used to create a single story that was made into a film called 'it helps to talk'. The film illustrates the key messages. As the materials were developed, champions and the strategic group were consulted to ensure that what we produced reflected what people said. All of the champions agreed to share their contact information with each other, and that formed the basis for the development of the network.

We then used all of our contacts to invite people to attend a free learning and development event. We told people we wanted mixed groups, but said we were happy to run sessions in a workplace so long as other people could attend. To maximise people's ability to attend we offered the programme at different times of the day, and kept it short (1½ hours).

A project report, giving more detail about what we did and people's experiences has also been produced.

Next steps

We were successful in securing further funding which is enabling us to continue work on establishing an electronic network, and hold three champion events over the next year to help support the network. The additional funding will also allow us to offer further learning and development sessions, working with some of the boroughs not included in the original project.

All of the materials mentioned here are available online at

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/endoflifecare

www.skillsforhealth.org.uk and www.ncpc.org.uk

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