



'Home first' policy saves money

Community Dementia Support Team, Bracknell Forest Borough Council

A dedicated community team delivers a person-centred, cost-saving service, but they don't work in isolation. Partnerships with other professionals, training for providers and carers, along with personalised budgets, complete the picture.





Background

Bracknell Forest created a training package for carers working with people with dementia. This led to the development of a home support dementia team which won the 2007 Skills for Care Award for most innovative new types of worker project and Winner of Winners Award.

The development of the team and reconfiguration of services as part of the new types of worker project has saved Bracknell Forest Borough Council money, approximately £300,000 in the first year the community service was set up. Savings have resulted from reduced admissions to long-term care, in particular elderly mentally infirm (EMI) nursing. The improved person-centred service continues to save money year on year.

Aims

The project aimed to:

- improve access to personalised support in the community for people with dementia
- implement a 'home first' policy to include support for carers
- offer access to financial advice
- ensure there were skilled, knowledgeable and experienced staff in all settings.

What was done?

As part of the reallocation of resources to develop the 'home first' policy, the dementia support team was trained and set up. There are now 16 people in the team, who work from home, but have regular team meetings. They are all highly trained to level 3 and do the well-regarded Gemma Jones training called 'Communication and caregiving in dementia: a positive vision'. The training covers the elements that good, sustainable dementia care needs to encompass. They also use 'Carer Aware' e-training designed by Dudley Council and delivered by Cylix.

When somebody with dementia is referred to the local authority, the specialist team go in to the home and work with the person and the carers, to develop a hands-on support programme. Members of the team work with the person for a transition period of up to 12 weeks.

"We also have a complete support package for carers, this includes: respite; personal budgets; an e-learning course; an 'Understanding Dementia' course; access to financial advice; a dementia advisor and a duty officer." **Naoma Dobson, Head of Service.**

There is an extended handover from the team to external agencies. During this time they link with other services such as day care, Age Concern, physiotherapists and occupational therapists. They do in-reach in hospitals and go into rehabilitation centres. They have developed good partnership working with the acute trust and mental health trust and share information. Carers and voluntary sector providers can access free training.



Outcomes

There are an impressive range of tangible outcomes from the project:

- intensive end-of-life care is provided for people who have been able to remain at home
- carers can access a wide range of support measures
- there is an increased variety and choice of services on offer including telecare
- the number of day centre places has doubled for people with dementia
- the residential, rehabilitation unit, Bridgewell, has recently been extended. It now offers support for people in the early stages of dementia who require slow stream rehabilitation
- specialist dementia training has been rolled out across the Council and Trust. All the members of the Community Mental Health Team undertake specialist dementia training
- training on dementia and adult safeguarding is offered free of charge to voluntary sector providers and is mandatory for private sector providers
- all people who use services have personalised budgets, which can be used flexibly
- there are regular meetings with providers so they are involved and understand the type of service that is expected from people using the service.

“Our personalised budgets mean that people with dementia can still do ordinary activities such as going to a garden centre or have someone go with them to a hospital appointment. One person used the hours to have support to go to a family wedding.” **Naoma Dobson, Head of Service.**

Impact

There have been significant impacts from the ‘home first’ policy:

- financial savings are estimated to be between £100,000 and £300,000 each year
- admissions to hospital and call outs to GPs have been reduced
- Bracknell Forest has some of the lowest delayed discharge rates in England
- there is a marked decrease in medical problems for people with dementia
- the service prevents, or delays, admissions into institutional care settings.

“Having this specialist dementia training means our team can spot early signs of illness, such as urinary tract infections; they obtain samples and take them to the GP surgeries. Where infection is confirmed, treatment can be started immediately. This saves money in the health budget as well as reducing confusion and discomfort for the person with dementia.”

Naoma Dobson, Head of Service.



Learning

The development and implementation of a holistic 'home first' policy for the increasing number of people with dementia has provided a better, person-centred service. It is also more cost effective. This approach requires reconfiguration of a range of services. It also demands a mandatory, effective training programme to provide skilled and experienced support, in all settings, for people with dementia.

People trained to assess the support needs of the person with dementia and the care giver are crucial. It is also important to provide access to a range of personalised support in the community. Bracknell Forest Borough Council did this through their Community Support and Wellbeing (Dementia) Team. Personal budgets enable the provision of a much more flexible service.

Joint working and better co-ordination with all care and health professionals including GPs and mental health teams has led to a more integrated service for individuals and carers.

Contacts

<http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/home>

Further information

For further information about the health and social care integration work between Skills for Health and Skills for Care please contact:

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