

Skills for Health helps to create a new role for East Cheshire in partnership with Age UK Cheshire East

Background

A unique partnership in East Cheshire between the voluntary sector and the NHS has led to the creation of the role of Wellbeing Coordinator.

Skills for Health supported the partnership in developing the role, which aims to help older people to enjoy improved health and wellbeing, and it is hoped will lead to fewer GP visits and hospital admissions.

Why develop the role?

The UK's ageing population means that people are living longer with more complex conditions. It is therefore vital to find ways to support people to stay well in their own homes – including making better use of services available in the voluntary sector – in order to relieve the increasing demand on the Health and Social Care sectors.

Age UK Cheshire East were already considering implementing a role which would work with older people to support them in adopting a healthier lifestyle, helping them to find all of the services that are available to them. Working with the NHS in East Cheshire, they saw the potential for a new role of Wellbeing Coordinator.

The Coordinator takes a holistic approach to the person and can advise on areas such as health, diet, exercise and social isolation. It might be the first time that the individual has had a relationship with a professional who has time to talk to them and get to the root of their health and related issues.

East Cheshire NHS Trust, Eastern Cheshire CCG and South & Vale Royal CCG have developed Integrated Teams, bringing together GPs, community nursing services, mental health services and social care services in areas based around GP practice populations. This seemed an ideal environment for the new role.

“I think we’re all working towards the same agenda which is helping people avoid health and social care services. Everybody wants to do this and this new role is one way we can achieve that goal.”

“Breaking down the boundaries between the statutory and voluntary sectors was a crucial part of the process. In particular, Age UK Cheshire East was able to access funding which made the role possible.”

Dominic Anderson
Deputy Chief Executive Services & Development,
Age UK Cheshire East



“It’s been a great experience to work with people at Age UK Cheshire East who’ve been able to push this in a different way, without getting snarled up in bureaucracy.”

Sue Dean
Project Manager, Leadership, Workforce & Organisational
Development Eastern Cheshire Clinical Commissioning
Group

The outcomes

- two roles were developed; a Level 5 Wellbeing Coordinator which manages the development and evaluation of the scheme, and client intervention; and a Level 4 Wellbeing Coordinator, which involves only client intervention.
- the post is managed by Age UK Cheshire East but is transferable to other sectors because it is underpinned by transferable skills and competencies.
- the role is already in place, with five people in Level 5 posts.
- the Level 4 role has not yet been implemented as the scheme is at a pilot stage and so post-holders need evaluation and project management skills.
- initially referrals to the scheme came in more slowly than anticipated, and tended to be for people needing more complex health or social care intervention – showing that a proper evaluation process is needed so that people are referred before they reach that stage.
- there have been positive reactions from teams in both sectors because everyone is working towards the same agenda. The role is taking off now that existing staff understand how it can assist patients in their caseload.

Benefits to health and social care services include:

- fewer unplanned hospital admissions and readmissions.
- more effective hospital discharges.

Benefits to the individual include:

- an increased sense of wellbeing.
- fewer visits to their GP for emotional issues.
- a healthier lifestyle, including a better diet and appropriate exercise plans.

A typical successful intervention included an 80-year-old man who lived alone and had heart failure and osteoarthritis. He was referred by the Community Heart Failure Nurse because he wanted to lose weight in order to improve his symptoms. The WBC spent time getting to know the client, and helped him identify two short-term wellbeing goals – to follow an exercise plan three times per week, and to learn how to use the internet to keep in touch with family across the country. With agreement from the Community Heart Failure Nurse, the WBC devised a seated exercise plan and found a circuit-training class for over-50s with an experienced instructor. The WBC also referred the client to a Community Agent who could teach him how to use the internet and Skype at a local church.

How they did it

Skills for Health worked with East Cheshire Partnership and Age UK Cheshire East as part of the UKCES-funded Role Redesign for Support Workers programme. As a voluntary organisation Age UK Cheshire East was able to access funding for the role from the NHS and also from other sources including the National Lottery.

Skills for Health provided advice, guidance and support in the development of the role. In particular, its role redesign methodology supported the review, development and expansion of the Wellbeing Coordinator roles and ensured that the outputs, together with a job description, were mapped to National Occupational Standards.

