Gloucestershire’s Compendium of Best Practice - Dementia

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<th>Project:</th>
<th>Caring for Carers in Tewkesbury Community Hospital. This project involved setting up a weekly ‘Carers Cafe’ on the hospital ward to offer peer support for informal carers, and signpost to useful information in the format of a ‘carers board’ and resource rack with ‘tips for caring’ especially for people with dementia.</th>
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<td>Community Hospital Ward Sister Gloucestershire Care Services NHS Trust</td>
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<td>Date Submitted:</td>
<td>May 2016</td>
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The idea had been awaiting fruition, to bring ward patients’ relatives together for a weekly coffee morning and shared opportunity for support and information exchange. When a previous drop-in service provided by 3rd sector organisations was discontinued, it felt there was a gap.

The Care Act (DoH 2014) requires local authorities to arrange services to prevent or delay the need for support in their local populations, including adults caring for adults. Peer support is evidenced to help carers realise that they are “not alone” in their experiences and emotions; and the benefits also include, opportunities to talk freely about difficulties and learning how others cope (Greenwood et al 2013).

An opportunity was created, as the Trust were looking for pilot sites to run “carers cafes”, so we volunteered. The organisational intent was to direct carers to information, signposting and education, but having attended a dementia conference in the previous autumn where ‘peer support’ was advocated, I was empowered to follow this ethos.

Through stakeholder engagement within the hospital, support was rallied from another department who naturally welcome carers to wait whilst patients have therapy. This was a potential starting group and publicity was made tentatively at first, both in hospital and outside in the community via GP surgeries and existing carer support groups. Posters and flyers have since been populating public noticeboards throughout the area thanks to willing staff, and social media postings.

A successful collaboration has been the facilitation of the cafe by charitable organisation “Connect”, who are non-clinical personnel growing peer support groups throughout the county, training volunteers to lead and sustain them. Their support for long term conditions when patients are discharged has also been of additional benefit.

With simple room dressing at minimal cost, a couple of cafe chalk boards and kind provision of refreshments from the “volunteer’s trolley” profits, the set up was simple. Toast racks are used for leaflets and creative eye catchers put out with carers stories/facts about caring to spark conversation. The ambience is informal and eleven weeks on there has been someone new attending every week.

Feedback from carers is positive and formally captured. We have used the “Plan-Do-Study-Act Model of Reflection” (Langley et al 1996) to review the cafe every 4 weeks. Whilst small numbers have visited, the ripple effect on the ward has been very positive with staff taking a real interest in wanting to help make the project work, and it has inspired them to make better use of the ward environment for patients to enjoy social dining and engage with meaningful occupation too.

NB: please note, this best practice example may be used for showcasing the work in Gloucestershire achieved through the Glos Dementia Training Strategy Group
Comments from carers: “I didn’t realise there is so much support available”............”knowing this is here each week has really helped me”........”I didn’t realise I am a carer, until they encouraged me to pop into the cafe”.

Photo Above Right (used with consent): Facilitators and volunteers at Tewkesbury Carers Cafe held in the: Abbeyview Ward Dayroom every Tuesday 10-12pm.

Photo Below Right:
Carers information board and leaflet rack.

References:


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