

# Raising their game – activities culture, qualifications and technology improve people's health and wellbeing

An innovative project led by Hertfordshire Care Providers Association (HCPA) brings together three related programmes, culture change, training and touch screen tech to improve activities provision in numerous care settings across the county.

## Background

Providing a range of engaging activities for people who receive care and support in residential and other settings can contribute significantly to health and wellbeing – and not just of the people receiving care. Activities enable socialisation, entertainment, engagement as well as mental and physical exercise. HCPA firstly consulted with its member care organisations in the county and used the feedback to design a novel approach to engage both staff and people who need care and support.

## The project involved a three-pronged programme:

- a leaders' programme from Ladder to the Moon - this organisation provides learning, change and development through creative interventions.

- a qualification specifically for activities co-ordinators – NOCN Level 3 in Activity Provision in Social Care.
- the establishment of a number of IT hubs, with specialist software for people with dementia and learning disabilities, which can be used by people receiving care and support, carers and their families.

## What we wanted to achieve

- The aim of the Ladder to the Moon programme was to support staff who had responsibility for activity in the home to shift from seeing themselves as the 'co-ordinators of activity' to become 'leaders of activity'. The leaders programme therefore set out to embed an activities culture within care settings and to maximise the number of care staff with activities training.
- The Ladder to the Moon programme linked closely to the second strand of the project which enabled candidates to gain an accredited Level 3 qualification in activities provision. The aim here was to enrol 25 'activity co-ordinators' all of whom would become activities champions who were more knowledgeable and confident to deliver good quality activities within their own organisations. In turn, they would encourage and support other care workers to become involved in activities and in creating them for people who need care and support.

- The aim of the third strand of the programme was to install IT hubs – with large touch-screens – in seven locations. The hubs, loaded with specialist software, would provide a range of screen-based interactive activities to attract and involve people with dementia or learning disabilities, as well as their carers and families.

## What we did

- Within a relatively short timescale 27 activities co-ordinators from 18 different care organisations in Hertfordshire were enrolled in the NOCN Level 3 qualification. Out of all those who applied to do the HCPA-supported qualification, priority was given to the staff from organisations which had also successfully tendered for the My Life software and the Ladder to the Moon programme. In this way learners would be engaged in a wide range of learning. The qualification involved a combination of study in one's own time with assessors visiting the workplace.
- Alongside coaching and training, the Ladder to the Moon programme used creative methods of delivery, including modelling and reflective practice as a way to shift attitudes and culture in day-to-day care. The purpose of the creative interventions was to enable participants to see beyond the usual dynamics of care, and learn to appreciate each other individually.
- The seven IT hubs were installed in various locations: four were placed in residential care/nursing homes, one was placed in a day centre setting, one in a learning disability supported living environment and one at HCPA offices where it is used as a showcase for social care providers visiting the Education Centre.

Volunteers and care staff were trained to operate the software, called My Life (initially it was called Dementia Life but it became quickly apparent that it was popular with people with learning disabilities too) and to introduce it to people who need care and support and their families and friends.

- As part of the tender process for the My Life hub, successful organisations were required to register a minimum of ten people who receive care and support in the first three months with a minimum of 30 hours of activity from people and carers during each three-month period. There also had to be a minimum of 20 internal or external care staff, volunteers or carers registered for e-learning over a 12-month period. The successful organisations attended an initial half-day induction course to which they were obliged to send an activities co-ordinator and a service manager.

## What we achieved

- The three strands of the project make up a package which has achieved the objective of improving the quality and quantity of activities provision in a range of care settings in Hertfordshire.
- Of the 27 members of staff who initially enrolled in the NOCN Level 3 qualification, 25 completed the course amounting to a 92 per cent success rate.
- Activities co-ordinators now take part in regular action-learning sets where they come together to discuss particular ideas and projects and can network, as a means of exchange and confidence-building. They have also been able to encourage others to be involved in activities

“It is depressing to visit a care setting to see the residents just sitting on their own and doing nothing. We set out to change that and see if we could raise the level and quality of activity and stimulation.”

Jackie Taylor, Project Lead

and, in particular, there is more evidence of engaging people from local communities – art teachers, musicians, school children, local choirs – in care settings. There are also more one-to-one activities taking place.

- The value of the package approach is demonstrated by the way the Ladder to the Moon programme complemented work towards the qualification. For example, an initial observation from a learner concerned an activity involving a children's game in which people had no interest. The learner was able to improve the relevance and quality of the activity following some constructive feedback by the NOCN assessor and additional involvement with the Ladder to the Moon facilitator.
- The My Life software has been “absolutely brilliant” according to Jackie Taylor with each hub used extensively and enjoyed by people who need care and support, families, friends and carers. Each hub offers a broad range of activities and is simple to use. There are various games for people with different skill levels and there are art programs for graduated abilities. People who need care and support and families can watch and reminisce about early TV programmes. There is a bingo session for group involvement; music can be stored and played and there is a ‘story book’ program where people can upload their own pictures to create a photographic biography.

## What we learnt

- One factor that stands out from the project was the blended approach which involved a formal qualification, coaching and creative interventions, and the use of the IT hubs – all leading to greater community involvement. If HCPA had offered to support just the qualification without the other elements, Jackie Taylor doubts that there would have been the same response and take-up of qualifications nor the overall boost to activities among many care providers.
- The degree of success of the My Life software and the way it has served to engage so many people in a number of quite different locations, is another lesson learned by the project team. Feedback from the seven sites, activities

co-ordinators and social care organisations that trialled the software was universally excellent. HCPA has an additional 13 touch screen PCs and is considering a loan scheme for organisations that would like to subscribe to the software.

- The project has been a means of involving the wider community and while there was substantial support from Skills for Care as a Workforce Development Innovation Fund project, the Ladder to the Moon strand of training and creative intervention was funded by the local authority. This collaborative approach has clearly been successful in helping to set up and embed a culture geared to greater activities provision. It is envisaged that all organisations involved in the project will encourage more activities provision ensuring the sustainability of the programme.

“Typically those responsible for providing activities in all kinds of care setting can feel extremely isolated. One of the great benefits of this ‘package’ approach to training and awareness-building has been that it has boosted the knowledge and confidence of the activities co-ordinators and given them the inspiration to try new ideas.”

Jackie Taylor, Project Lead

## For more information please contact

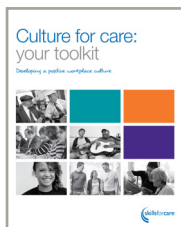
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## Skills for Care Recommends

Safeguarding is important for all of those working in adult social care. From inducting new colleagues to their longer-term development, Skills for Care resources can help

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### Culture Change Toolkit



The toolkit explains why a positive workplace culture is so important, details the business benefits for culture and provides activity sheets and scenarios to help providers embed a positive workplace culture.

[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/culture](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/culture)

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