Stroke Association

A good old novel approach to stroke awareness training

The Stroke Association developed an accessible course, which delivered face to face training and an accredited qualification in Stoke Awareness, to 60 support staff from residential care homes, in the West Midlands and North West. This was achieved with telephone and text follow-ups - with no e-learning.

Background

Stroke is the leading cause of adult disability in the UK and a major cause of severe disability among people in care homes where, according to National Audit Office statistics, it has affected between 25 and 50 per cent of residents.

The results of stroke are broad ranging, including emotional, behavioural, physical and psychological effects. Therefore, as the care sector grows rapidly so does the demand for stroke awareness among support workers, and the importance of understanding the condition so as to provide effective care for residents.

In the last 20 years the Stroke Association has become established as a leading provider of stroke-specific training in the UK. Until this project the organisation’s highly experienced trainers delivered endorsed courses in their drive to improve the knowledge and understanding of stroke prevention, awareness and management within the care sector.

This project enabled the Stroke Association to devise and deliver its own stroke awareness course, innovatively designed so that it was widely accessible to care workers in residential homes. The new course also enabled the association to secure accreditation for its own trainers from the NCFE so that trainees gained a Level 2 Award in Stroke Awareness.

What we wanted to achieve

The overall aim of the project has been to improve the care for survivors of stroke, at the same time increasing the confidence, skills and effectiveness of those who work most closely with them. The importance of this issue has been underlined by a report issued in spring 2012 which found that a major concern – raised by 85 per cent of the stroke survivors surveyed – was the lack of understanding of stroke among professionals with whom they came into contact.

Under this umbrella objective, this project sought to create a course:

- designed to be widely accessible to care home staff while being aligned to the QCF framework
- which offered a cost-effective approach for both care homes and the Stroke Association through blended learning
that would result in more staff holding an accredited qualification in stroke awareness

that would increase stroke knowledge and specialist skills leading to more effective use of time in the workplace

that would lead to a replicable, sustainable approach that can be rolled out across the UK

that supports and takes forward the 2010 Department of Health Strategy for Stroke

What we did

The Stroke Association designed a course especially for staff in care homes which also developed to be a QCF Level 2 Award qualification. This allowed the Stroke Association to be accredited to deliver the training and to become approved by the NCFE to administer and support an accredited training programme.

While e-learning is almost a standard of training across the country, evidence from the National Association for Providers of Activities for Older People (NAPA) suggests that the most effective method for staff working in care homes is paper-based distance learning. This is because access to computers is rarely available to staff in the workplace or, if it is, time and shift issues can make access difficult. Therefore the blended approach adopted by the Stroke Association comprised the use of a workbook and end-of-course assessment plus two four-hour sessions of face-to-face learning.

The Stroke Association focused on potential candidates from care homes in the North West and the West Midlands. In these areas respectively, candidates were sought with the help of officers from Manchester City Council and Halton Borough Council. Generally the response was encouraging, particularly in the West Midlands where a waiting list had to be set up.

The training took place between January and March 2013 with two highly experienced Stroke Association trainers providing the two half-day courses for four cohorts of trainees, each with 15 candidates. For each cohort, the training sessions were set a week apart to allow for self-directed study between the face-to-face sessions. This gave each candidate time to complete their workbooks ahead of the second training sessions where they would be assessed and any learning points could be discussed.

Evaluation of the training included feedback forms following the face-to-face sessions to get an immediate feeling for the effectiveness of the training supported by follow-up telephone calls to trainees which allowed them to add anything they might not have felt comfortable writing down.

The immediate and longer-term benefits of this project involve care home staff achieving their potential through vocational qualifications. They will ultimately drive up care standards for stroke survivors. The project also enabled us to become accredited to deliver the training and this will lead to future training programmes being accredited too.

Paul Williams, Senior Training Lead
According to Paul Williams, Senior Training Lead,
“Additional telephone feedback sessions involving
a few candidates and managers of care homes
also provided valuable information on how we
could improve the training and develop it further.”

Another critically important factor in this project
was the feedback from the NCFE that was
received at intervals during the accreditation
meetings and the approval/moderation meetings.
“This also allowed us to see what went well and
what things we might have to modify in the future”,
comments Paul.

What we achieved
The responses from the candidates, care home
managers and, anecdotally, from residents who
have suffered strokes, demonstrate that the course
was successful in its design and execution and
that it achieved all its aims. Sixty care home staff
are now in a position to pass on knowledge and
apply new skills with confidence and therefore
change the dynamic of stroke care in their
workplaces.

As in all innovative approaches to workforce
development, some outcomes come as a bonus
or are only properly considered with hindsight.
One such is that the Stroke Association has had
the opportunity to assess just how effective these
courses can be in the care home sector – and how
welcome they are, given the response to the pilot
training courses.

“Another such outcome was the good practice
developed between the two trainers who, although
conducting the training miles apart, were able
to exchange views, timetable assessments and
plan any internal verification needed while cross-
modifying each other's assessments. The NCFE
reported that they approached a challenging
programme impartially and professionally.

The way the course was planned and run has
also laid strong foundations for its transferability,
sustainability and scalability.

“The focus on care homes was a sharp one for
obvious reasons” says Paul. “They’re all potential
candidates for the award because they directly
affect the wellbeing of stroke survivors – their
improved knowledge might help prevent strokes
too.”

What we learnt
Paul Williams reports that a key lesson from the
project turned on the decision to use a workbook
and classroom approach without any reliance on
the use of computers.

“No IT was needed by the candidates. In many
care homes, IT is not practicable for care staff. IT
in training is so commonplace due to our everyday
reliance on apps, phones etc, that not to use it
is unusual. In effect, we innovated by applying
traditional approaches and then added in some
modern communications offered by emails,
telephone and texts as a support. Unfortunately,
this meant that trainers and assessors sometimes
struggled over an individual’s handwriting!”

Another learning which contributed to the Stroke
Association’s confidence in the sustainability of
this project was the response from trainees. The
trainees were thoroughly engaged in their own
research and learning stimulated by the workbooks
and no one dropped out from any of the four
cohorts.

Not least, the Stroke Association’s accreditation as
a trainer is one more tool in its armoury of activities
that push forward its mission set out so clearly at
www.stroke.org.uk.

“We are now in a position to
consider how we offer this
qualification to more staff in care
homes across the UK. But we
plan to extend the qualification
to domiciliary workers,
intermediate care and daycentre
staff, other adult social care staff
and personal assistants too.”

Paul Williams, Senior Training Lead
For more information please contact
Stroke Association
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Skills for Care Recommends

This innovative project was a relatively new area for Skills for Care to support. We have developed a qualification and provide funding related to this;

Guide to qualifications in adult social care
We have developed a Level 2 award and Level 3 certificate in Stroke. Whilst Skills for Care does not directly deliver this training, we may be able to assist around funding.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/qualifications

Funding
For adult social care employers in England, our funding can help towards the cost of learning and development for Stroke.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/funding

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