

Activities that promote mental health well-being in the care sector

This training combined core knowledge about dementia with three specially designed courses that gave carers the tools and qualifications to provide a range of activities for people with dementia. The approach proved to be both popular and effective and can now be used by over 90 local organisations.

Background

People with dementia have a range of distinctive needs and to improve their wellbeing and provide high quality care ideally requires knowledgeable support from both paid and unpaid carers. However, while the numbers of older people suffering with dementia is growing, the time, course availability and funding to provide training for carers in the subject of good dementia care is becoming harder to find.

Tameside Training Consortium were keen to tackle this concern directly by means of a project which involved short courses of training to provide underpinning knowledge leading to a Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) accredited qualification at either Level 2 or Level 3. Tameside set out to devise a programme which focused on stimulating more and better activities

for people with dementia. It is widely known that both physical and mental activities of various sorts stimulate the brain, help to improve memory and generally enhance the wellbeing of people with dementia.

Consequently, supported by a Workforce Development Innovation Fund award, Tameside Training Consortium commissioned three distinctive but complementary courses and invited carers and care support workers from different sections of the care community to take part in them. Tameside provided additional core training in dementia, including awareness of dementia and understanding how to communicate with people who have dementia.

What we wanted to achieve

The main aim was to invite both paid and unpaid carers to a programme which would involve a combination of knowledge concerning the conditions surrounding dementia with specially devised courses focused on stimulating and encouraging activities for people with this condition. The underpinning knowledge would also form a basis for candidates to work towards the achievement of either Level 2 or Level 3 of a QCF accredited Certificate in Dementia Care.

The aim was also to devise a programme in which the key learning activities were covered in short courses minimising the difficulty of making time available for candidates. By having QCF assessors

visiting the workplace this also minimised any disruption to the normal working time of all those involved.

While the core training provided much-needed knowledge about the condition of dementia, the courses on activities provision were designed to enable each candidate to be confident in preparing and encouraging a range of stimulating activities for people in their care with dementia. By cascading this training care support workers could help to promote more activities and greater wellbeing for those with dementia in a range of care environments.

The project was designed to contribute to the objectives of the local and national Dementia Strategy, part of which involves bridging the gap in carers' skill and confidence to provide meaningful activities for people with dementia.

What we did

Tameside Training Consortium commissioned training providers to design three special courses which included:

- A half-day Life Story course in which candidates learn how to use a Life Story book in which individuals with dementia write down details about their likes and dislikes and, often with the help of family and friends, build up a picture of their life which enables carers to work closely with them and understand them personally.
- A separate half-day course on activities facilitation which encourages carers to create activities that are likely to engage people with dementia, again involving family and friends as well as one-to-one activities.
- A two-day Jabadao course which is based on 'movement play' and emphasises the encouragement of physical activity and non-verbal communication.

Tameside has a well-established network of members and used a combination of email messages, care home forum meetings and flyers to advertise the courses. These proved to be very popular and the 22 candidates initially targeted for the courses were soon subscribed.

The candidates were mostly from care homes or worked in domiciliary care.

The programme proved to be so popular that a separate cohort of 33 candidates was also engaged in it with separate funding applied for through the Workforce Development Fund. All candidates pursuing a qualification were required to take two additional half-day courses, comprising the core knowledge about dementia. These were already part of the Tameside Training Consortium calendar of training and involved Awareness of Dementia and Communication with People who have Dementia.

To ensure that there was full occupancy on all of the activities-related courses, other care workers from various parts of the care community were offered places, with the result that 105 care staff in total took part in the activities training.

After all the courses were completed, candidates for qualifications were able to use their knowledge as a reference for further work, assessed directly in the workplace, towards either Level 2 or Level 3 QCF awards.

A comprehensive evaluation process was built into the training programme. This included trainer reports following the short courses and verbal and written evaluation reports from each candidate on completion of the courses. Also, one of the QCF dementia award assessors attended the short-course training and provided feedback, and there were follow-up telephone calls to managers.

What we achieved

A total of 105 care staff have been provided with activities-related training specifically focused for people with dementia. Of these, 55 people have completed all the short courses and have gained either Level 2 or Level 3 Certificates in Dementia Care.

The aim was to improve the provision of care for people with dementia and to enhance their mental and physical wellbeing. Reports from managers of candidates who have contacted Tameside indicate that this aim is being achieved. Answers to the survey monkey question "Has this training led to improvements within your service?" include:

“ The Jabadao training gave me a more in depth insight into different types of activities that can be delivered to people with dementia. The activities allow people to build their self-esteem, increase their confidence, bring fun, laughter and happiness, interaction with others and to help enhance physical strength and fitness. All this information I can now pass on to home carers and carers working in the community. As with everything I learnt from the training, it is about the importance of preserving the quality of life, dignity and comfort to those living with dementia. ”

Participant, Homecare Agency

- It has shown better ways of providing care for people with dementia.
- It has helped the staff by providing a better understanding of people with dementia.
- Staff are now able to interact in a much more empathetic way with clients who have mental health problems and understand how their illness affects all aspects of their life and care needs

Other responses about the degree to which staff are working in more person-centred ways include:

- Staff have been aware of people’s individual identities and feel more confident in assisting them with personal care and choices.
- Staff now realise that task delegation is not appropriate for people with mental health issues and are much more aware of working in collaboration with clients while ensuring their safety and dignity is maintained.

The programme is sustainable, particularly with the assistance of managers who are helping to embed the learning and cascade good practice within their organisations. Jabadao training was introduced to the managers at the annual care conference when staff were booked for the course. Good feedback from this has resulted in managers commissioning Jabadao training for their own organisations. Tameside Training Consortium is delighted with the apparent success of this workforce development approach and feels that a similar format for workforce development can be applied to other programmes such as in training about autism.

“This has been a successful project and, although more time will tell just how much improvement there is in the provision of care for clients, and in their general wellbeing, the indications are that this is happening very much as we intended.” Lynne Taylor, Project Lead

What we learnt

Lynne said that they were impressed by the popularity of courses, which were rapidly filled, requiring some ingenuity in satisfying the demand by arranging funding for further candidates. She believes that by providing short courses, where candidates have to actually sit and learn, even for a short time, suits the QCF approach which is marginally more academic in nature than the former vocational qualifications approach. The way the programme was put together also suited people’s working time and availability.

“We have learned a lot from this project,” said Lynne, “and it wouldn’t have happened without the funding. We now have special courses that we can continue to use to support improvements in the care of people with dementia, which is an increasingly important concern.”

Another lesson from the project was that some of the care workers did not feel completely comfortable with being able to carry out a Life Story activity with an individual with dementia without the support of their manager. Tameside are looking into the possibility of training managers directly in Life Story techniques so as to provide support and encouragement in its use.

For more information please contact

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Skills for Care Recommends

From activity provision and dementia qualifications to associated guidance, Skills for Care produces various resources to strengthen care worker skills and enable better care provision.

Common Core Principles for supporting people with Dementia

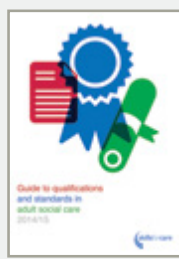


We have produced a guide which supports the social care and health workforce to care for

people with dementia. Employers should use the principles as part of their development plans to improve the experience of those with dementia and their carers.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/dementia

Guide to qualifications in adult social care



We have developed a Level 2 and 3 qualifications in both Dementia Care and Activity Provision, as well

as ensuring there is a Dementia pathway as part of the Diplomas in Health and Social Care.

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 learning disabilities.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/funding

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