

Flexicare Altruistic Solutions Ltd

Training to understand how people think and feel improves workplace health and happiness

Flexicare Altruistic Solutions developed a programme for care staff to learn about their own and other people's psychological and emotional needs. The people receiving their care and support unanimously reported a more sensitive, more accommodating and more personalised service.

Background

- The bio-psycho-social model of health recognises how biological, psychological and social factors are interwoven and play a significant role in the way humans function in the context of health and wellbeing. While the psychological model of care is not new there is no previous evidence of its use in training and developing care workers in the home care sector.
- Flexicare decided to trial this approach by means of a development project which provided the workforce with continuing education and insight into all aspects of people's needs – including psychological and emotional requirements. The Flexicare team believed that such a programme would

create a unique and superior workforce who would take pride in their work and who would be motivated to deliver commitment and dedication to the care they give.

- The psychological wellbeing of people who need care and support and of the workforce caring for them is central to this innovative model of care delivery. The Flexicare project team believed that the introduction of the bio-psycho-social model would ensure that carers had a deeper and broader understanding of the individual needs of people while at the same time they would maximise their own development. Essentially the premise was that developing carers' knowledge and understanding of psychological concepts significantly improves their care provision and also improves the health of the people receiving their care and support.

What we wanted to achieve

- The aim of the project was to develop and evaluate training materials based on the Psychology of Care model and to provide the training to a target of 35 care staff. The training materials were mapped against Level 2 in Psychology of Care which could be used as a foundation for higher levels.

- The main aim of the course was to educate carers to understand functioning and inter-relationships between biological, psychological and social factors and how these affect health.
- Ultimately, the aim was to improve the wellbeing of both carers and people receiving care and raise the quality of care provided and received.

What we did

- The educational materials were mostly created by psychologists following significant research and discussions with various care groups and care-related charities. The initial training and development material included PowerPoint presentations, handbook, a 12-week workbook and links to videos. These were drafted and discussed with a number of different experts before being amended to form a set for pre-pilot training. Then, following pre-pilot training, the training set was refined and adjusted further in preparation for the pilot programme.
- A two-day course was devised and 36 care staff were selected to attend the course and to receive the handbooks and workbooks.
- Creating evaluation materials was an important part of the project. Evaluation was mostly based on qualitative data including observations, discussion groups, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Qualitative data was collected before, during and after the two-day training course and for a period of up to twelve weeks.
- We used a questionnaire to gather information about the wellbeing and quality of life of people receiving care and support. By asking people periodically Flexicare was able to identify and monitor key issues affecting people such as loneliness, depression and poor quality of life. Equally, these questionnaires enabled carers to find ways of providing properly targeted support for individuals.

What we achieved

- As a result of careful research, discussions and input from various disciplines, Flexicare developed further multi-media training materials which include a handbook, workbook, presentation, exercises and course evaluation material. These training materials can be provided for use by family carers and the plan is to seek accreditation so that they can be input into new Level 2 and 3 QCF units.
- The training was undertaken by 36 care staff, one more than the original target, all of whom took part in the two-day training course and went on to complete their 12-week workbooks. The feedback from the learners was unanimously positive.
- Further analysis of the qualitative feedback revealed a number of common benefits resulting from the programme:
 - those attending the course found their level of understanding of psychological concepts was much less than they had perceived before the course. The course greatly improved their understanding of these concepts and many borrowed books from the company library to continue their learning.
 - those attending found that they became more understanding of people's different personalities and consequently more tolerant and accommodating of people's individual differences.
 - benefits were higher among experienced carers.
- Typical feedback from people about the care that they were receiving in the period following the two-day course, described:
 - exemplary care and support (far superior to other care providers).
 - carers are very attentive to my needs.
 - carers listen, understand and respect me.

- Following the pilot, Flexicare has decided to change the two-day course to a ten-week course involving three-hour sessions once a week with homework required involving the use of reflective workbooks. Family carers and other interested parties will also be invited to attend. Two other companies have also attended the training with a view to adopting it for their organisations.

What we learnt

- During the development of the course materials the Flexicare project team found that discussing ideas with people from other organisations, especially those who were passionate about providing excellent care, opened up many areas of new thinking. This improved the effectiveness of the training materials.

- The programme has proved that through understanding more about the development and functioning of the brain, carers are less likely to label people or put them into 'boxes'. This in turn enables carers to be more accommodating and sensitive to people's unique needs.
- The process of scheduling all company carers to attend the original two-day course was challenging, mostly because of the calls on their time away from work. For this reason, and to provide an incentive to ensure the reflective diaries are completed, the course was adapted over a ten-week period.
- The immediacy of the benefits of the course, in terms of improvement of care and of one's approach to care, was surprising to the project team and was a factor noted by both the carers themselves and the service users receiving their support.



For more information please contact

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Skills for Care Recommends

This innovative project was a relatively new area for Skills for Care to support. Whilst we have not developed any directly related resources, you may be interested in the following;

Assisted Living Technologies

Skills for Care has developed a learning and development framework, resource hub and an app to ensure that the workforce are capable, confident and skilled.f.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/alt

Community Skills Development

We have a range of resources, which include case studies which demonstrate the learning from the programme, and practical tools to embed community skills development.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/communityskills

Employing Your Own Care and Support

We have a range of products and services to help individual employers and personal assistants.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/individualemployers

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