

## Knowsley Social Care Partnership

# New rooms open the door to social care staff and people who need care and support

A new kitchen and sensory room have opened for care-workers' active-learning in cooking, nutrition, safety, and understanding of dementia and autism. The whole community benefits from access to the spaces – for fun, for learning and, for relaxation.

### Background

Knowsley Social Care Partnership created a skills programme to add to its other learning and development provided for personal assistants and social care workers. They wanted a resource which would enable a wide range of informal learning to thrive, encourage innovation and a diverse local enterprise partnership between social care workers, personal assistants and the people they care for in the community.

The focus of the project was the creation of two rooms located at Torrington Drive Community Centre – a new training kitchen and a special sensory room.

- The kitchen is used to provide private sector, voluntary and third sector partner care workers with training in various cooking skills, including how to produce a well-balanced, affordable

nutritious meal in a short time for people who need care and support. This overcomes the problem of people receiving inadequate or poor nutrition due both to the inexperience of many young care workers and the lack of time they often have to prepare a good meal.

- The sensory room was devised as a space for calm and relaxation and as a place where special interventions and equipment can be used beneficially by people with dementia or autism and all levels of learning disability. Before this room was developed there was no equivalent facility in the borough and the nearest one available was prohibitively expensive to hire.

### What we wanted to achieve

The aim of this project was to increase the skills of the care workforce in the borough including a cross-section of roles such as personal assistants, care homes staff, domiciliary carers, learning disability services, day centres and reablement services. Ultimately, this training would benefit the health, wellbeing and quality of lives of people who need care and support. The basis of the training is active learning geared to enable the effective transfer of practical vocational skills from the classroom into the workplace.

The aim was also to provide training for activity coordinators in the use of sensory stimulation so that they could use equipment and special interventions to manage the challenging behaviour of adults with dementia or learning disabilities such as autism. The objective was to create a well-equipped sensory room which would be free for the beneficial use of people receiving care, and their carers for a range of activities or just as a place for calm and relaxation.

## What we did

The first task was to find an appropriate venue for both of the required rooms and Knowsley Social Care Partnership was fortunate to locate and rent suitable space in a community centre which is central and accessible. The rooms were then carefully designed and equipped and candidates were sought for 'training the trainers' so that the partnership could create a programme of vocational skills training in the use of the sensory room and in the development of cooking skills and knowledge.

For the sensory room, dementia and autism training was developed and this requires a full day's commitment to learning and is open to all carers working in private, voluntary and third sector organisations. The morning session is a tutorial providing learners with knowledge about these conditions and how they affect a person. This theoretical knowledge becomes the basis upon which the learner can develop more practical skills in intervention techniques, including the use of massage. The practical session takes place in the afternoon..

In the kitchen, the Food for Life programme has been developed and delivered by appropriately qualified professionals working with community cooks who helped to devise the menus and the style of delivery. The focus is on developing the learners' ability to provide a range of meals that can be easily and quickly cooked and which are balanced and nutritious. The programme also incorporates health and safety, fire safety, food safety, hydration and infection control. All skills are taught and assessed practically in the kitchen during the day of training. At the end of the day, learners are given a wallet of recipes and menus to give them confidence as they set out to create

good meals for people who receive their care and support.

Knowsley Social Care Partnership has taken care to evaluate the project thoroughly including feedback from the New Hutte Neighbourhood Centre staff, people who need care and support, Knowsley Older Persons Voice and Age UK Knowsley among other partner organisations. Online surveys were used to capture anonymous quantitative evidence from staff who took part in the learning, in particular to ascertain whether skills learned at the centre were being transferred to the workplace.

## What we achieved

As a result of this project there are a number of notable outcomes:

- Knowsley now has facilities to provide additional, effective learning and development for care and support workers and staff from all caring professions in the borough.
- the facilities are currently free of charge for learners and for use by carers and people who need care and support.
- the facilities offer enjoyable learning that offers an excellent learner experience, as testified by feedback.
- both the sensory room and the kitchen provide community involvement and engagement.
- the new rooms represent additional community resources.
- the rooms are a venue for providing assessed skills which translate into practice in the community to the benefit of people who need care and support – as testified by feedback from those people.

Both the facilities have been well used for the purposes intended. The sensory room is particularly popular both for skills training in activities and for various activities; for example, some like to use it for periods of calm relaxation, others use it as a place to sit and listen to stories. The kitchen is used for regular training sessions and some of its output is sold through the Green Café which is part of the community centre.

Both rooms have been widely used and supported by partner organisations such as the Torrington Drive Community Association, Community Cooks programme and Knowsley Older Persons Voice. Plans are being developed to use the rooms to provide employment skills for students with learning disabilities.

To ensure the sustainability and scalability of the project, there is an administrative process for booking and managing the rooms which is co-ordinated by the learning and development team from the local authority. This ensures that the rooms are continually used in an effective way.

### What we learnt

Knowsley Social Care Partnership is delighted with the success of the new facilities both as a resource for training and as a means of providing engaging and therapeutic activities for people with a range of disabilities. The active learning element of the project, which has involved the creation of courses of practical vocational skills for care workers, has been pivotal to the success of the project. Another important component has been the

involvement and engagement of people who need care and support, particularly in the activities now on offer to them in the sensory room but also in testing the new knowledge and skills of all those who have undertaken training within the care profession in the borough.

By establishing the facilities in a popular community centre, Knowsley Social Care Partnership has seen the emergence of a real sense of community involvement in the project. The partnership has also learned the importance of ensuring that the work of booking rooms and managing and organising the training is properly administered. According to Jean Perkins, Project Lead: "As more people learned about the availability and facilities of the rooms this management task became a clear requirement. I was responsible for doing this initially but it demanded too much time once the rooms were established and properly promoted. We are immensely grateful that this work is carried out separately by the local authority's learning and development team which is located very close to the centre."



## For more information please contact

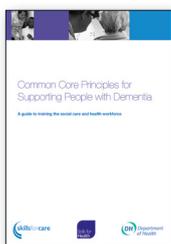
Jean Perkins  
Project Lead

## Skills for Care Recommends

Skills for Care has developed a number of resources to help the continued development of care workers, from formal qualifications to formal guidance.

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### 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](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/dementia)

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