

Partners in Care (Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole)

33 activity coordinators qualified with a Level 2 Award

Leisure activities are enormously beneficial to people's health and well-being. We worked with a training provider to develop a course leading to qualification in Supporting Activity Provision in Social Care. The programme was tailored to the learners, taking into account their real situations and environments, and was adapted to their suit their work schedules.

Background

Partners in Care is a multi-stakeholder partnership which was established in 2000. We work to raise the standard and quality of adult social care across Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole. We support training and development in the 500-plus organisations which provide adult social care services; including residential homes, domiciliary care providers and learning disability services. We provide advice and guidance around workforce planning and development. And we administrate government funding grants to support health and social care qualifications. We work with a number of organisations including training providers, the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership and the Dorset CCG, and we are a partner in two European projects.

We set up a forum for activity coordinators from residential care homes across Dorset, to enable them to share best practice and to share ideas about learning and development. Leisure activities such as art, music, horticulture and reminiscence have a hugely positive effect on people's mental and physical well-being.

Coordinators told us they wanted to develop their skills in planning and delivering these activities. They wanted to understand different approaches, how to make the most of the environment and spontaneous situations, and how to adapt to individual and group needs.

It was clear that the training needed to be tailored to the learners, and flexible to accommodate their individual needs and working arrangements. We talked to care providers, and found there was a requirement for shorter courses - to balance the increased pressure on their care workers' time. As a result we decided to offer local care organisations the opportunity to do the Level 2 Award in Supporting Activity Provision in Social Care.

What we wanted to achieve

We wanted to provide a qualification which was accessible to as many care workers as possible. Our overall aims were to develop their skills in activity provision, and ultimately improve the quality of life for people who need their care and support.

“ I am really pleased with the success of this programme and the hard work that the learners put into completing this Level 2 Award. ”

Sophie Trim, Partners in Care, Care Sector Business Manager

We wanted to use a trainer with a good understanding of social care who would provide a thorough course and constructive feedback for the learners. It was also important, given the geography of Dorset, that people were able to easily get to the workshop venues.

We planned to increase awareness of the importance of activities to people living in residential homes. We wanted activity coordinators to network and learn from each other, sharing experiences and examples of good practice as they completed the modules for each unit.

The aim was to give the learners real examples of practical things they could use in their organisations to improve the quality of life for their residents. It was important to understand the different types of activity and how they can be used, but also to emphasise the importance of activity being part of a whole package of person-centred care.

What we did

We created a flyer advertising the programme and asking care providers to confirm expressions of interest, and distributed it through our network. We approached a number of training providers and compared the availability of training, proposed formats and costs. The qualification is comprised

of three mandatory units: Understand activity provision in social care, Understand the benefits of engaging in activities in social care, and Understand the delivery of activities in social care. During this time we also consulted and agreed on the fourth, optional unit: Awareness of dementia.

The successful training provider then visited the activity coordinators' forum to learn more about their working environment and the particular issues and challenges they faced. The trainer used this knowledge in their work with us to develop a tailored programme of learning.

33 learners expressed an interest, and we sent each of them an outline of the course structure. We asked each prospective learner and their manager to sign a commitment. The manager agreed to release their staff member for the sessions and support them in the workplace to complete the portfolio; and agreed to pay for the full cost of the course if these terms were not met. The learner confirmed they had understood the course structure and requirements. Once these signed commitments were returned, we sent out the full details with dates, sessions and hours involved.

We arranged with the trainer to deliver three sets of three workshops - in three different locations. The aim was to reduce the amount of travel for the participants and minimise the time away from their places of work.

A member of the Partners in Care team attended workshops to review how the course was progressing, and to listen to the group discussions. After every session the trainer contacted our team to note attendance, what had gone well, and what could be improved.

The trainer was available to help participants between the workshop dates with their course worksheets, and offer detailed feedback if any work needed to be resubmitted.

What we achieved

The 33 activity coordinators who signed up for the course, all completed the Level 2 Award in Supporting Activity Provision in Social Care. This meant we exceeded our target of 30. The learners reported making changes to their working practices in their organisations. Many said it helped them to understand the 'bigger picture', and to recognise the link between activity and personal care. Participants said they realised that everything is an activity, from a meal at lunchtime to more formal, guided sessions.

Learners said the training had a hugely positive impact on the way they worked with all the care staff in their organisations. We received evidence of learners' care colleagues wanting to be more directly involved in activities, and everyone having a better understanding of how physical activity can enhance quality of life.

One example was reminiscence sessions where care staff now actively join in, contributing to the discussion and sharing ideas and experiences. Previously the session was seen as a separate activity for residents and to be managed by one member of staff.

Another example given was increased spontaneity of sessions where, rather than following a planned programme, a crossword is used to stimulate discussion prompted by a particular word or reflection which in turn leads on to an unplanned activity such as dancing or singing. Learners commented that they are now more creative in making the most of opportunities as they arise, using intuitive activity during conversations and taking account of how a resident is feeling at that particular time.

Learners also reported their recognition of the importance of cultivating an environment where people feel comfortable, and are able to take part in activities. The dementia unit was useful in helping learners notice more about the people they are caring for, to understand their reactions and how to adapt their environment to improve activities.

What we learnt

The learners without exception praised the way this course was delivered. One of the key factors in its success was having the right training provider working with us - who understood the sector and was prepared to accommodate our need for flexible workshop locations.

The training provider took the time to attend our activity co-ordinator forums to get to know the environment in which the participants worked. All the learners commented on the thoroughness of the marking of workbooks and the helpful comments that they received from the trainer. We enjoyed a really good working relationship with the training provider who communicated regularly about the progress of each member of the group and whether there were any concerns about their work programme.

The second successful element was locating the workshops in three different venues around Dorset to minimise the amount of travel the learners had to do – this was key in maintaining the excellent attendance levels. It also helped that we kept the workshops to a half day per unit. We planned all the dates of the workshops well in advance so that when learners signed up to the course they knew the dates right through to the end of the course. We allowed some 'catch-up time' in December having no workshop during this month as this tends to be the time when activity co-ordinators are particularly busy.

The participants enjoyed the group discussions which formed part of each unit and found it helpful to learn from each other and share their experiences. Allowing time during the workshops for reflection and networking was important to the success of the programme.



“ The course material created and stimulated the thought process and made us focus on many aspects of activity provision. It was helpful to understand the bigger picture and the importance of linking activity to personal care. ”

Angie Thomson, Activity Co-Ordinator, Glenhurst Manor

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. While we have not developed any directly related resources, you may be interested in the following;

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/publications

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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