

Dementia Champions

This project aimed to promote a new organisational model of dementia care in residential, day and domiciliary care organisations and to offer dementia awareness and skills to personal assistants and carers

Background

Solihull Workforce in Care Development Association (SWICDA) Ltd has 66 members all of which are small or medium sized organisations or Direct Payment employers /Personal Assistants (PAs).

Care providers are subject to financial constraints and difficulties being faced by local authorities and by the need to change to meet the personalisation agenda. Demonstrating quality services is essential but they are finding it difficult to fund training and development.

Research has suggested a need to understand and support the PA workforce and has acknowledged that it is rapidly expanding. Some of this workforce is coming from a traditional care environment but many new entrants have no prior experience. If partnerships are engaging with providers of social care then naturally we should be looking at the development and qualification of this workforce and seeking to understand how SWICDA can influence quality care. We need to adapt to the needs of PAs and Individual Budget holders and we need to support them and the service.

Our pilot project offers to contribute to funding a new whole organisation model. If the pilot can show good outcomes for the person who needs care and support and the business it will help SWICDA promote the model to commissioners and care providers and could be used to seek further funding to carry the model forward.

What we wanted to achieve

The aims of the project included:

- Developing a champion in organisations with increased knowledge and skills about dementia care
- Training and offering to the dementia champion the possibility of gaining specialist dementia qualification units
- Working with each dementia champion on an individualised programme to identify what would be needed to up-skill staff in their setting focusing on communication and interactions with people suffering from dementia

What we did

The project was planned and delivered in 2 parts and covered 9 member organisations (a third stage was planned but not completed during the original project timeframe – see learning section). To implement the changes, the following was undertaken:

Part 1

- Engaged with members and promoted in order to identify the eight pilot organisations
- Defined the role of the dementia champions

- Trained the managers of pilot organisations to support their staff to champion dementia care
- Trained and qualified one member of staff per pilot organisation to be a dementia champion by completing the units DEM 301, DEM 308 and DEM 312.
- Developed a 1 hour presentation for champions to deliver to their fellow staff members individually and at a staff meeting and provide presentation skills course these individuals
- Identified and briefed a mentor who will support the champion at the first staff meeting

Part 2

- Engaged with Direct Payment employers, to agree involvement of PAs
- Provided separate flexible training to PAs and qualification to 2 PAs (and support around replacement cover)
- Following their original work, SWIDA are now planning 6-monthly meetings to keep the Dementia Champions up to date, with specialist input from a leading Medical Director.

What we achieved

Dementia Champions prepared staff to work with service users with more complex needs. It has led to benefits by ensuring there are trained and motivated those who act as a source of expertise for others around dementia care. By training these champions using formal QCF qualifications, this built confidence and recognition of achievement for their newly acquired learning and abilities.

Personal Assistants engaged in the project and overcame some of the financial barriers to learning and development by undertaking formal Level 2 Diploma in Health and Social Care qualifications. An evaluation has highlighted that this project has

improved the quality of service to people suffering from Dementia in 9 residential, day and domiciliary care establishments. Likewise, early indications where the champions are based has seen hospital admissions reduce.

SWIDA found that a service quality improvement is when tendering for work from the local authority, having Dementia Champions can help to improve the organisation's rating in this process.

What we learnt

SWICDA's plans to provide a third part of the project aimed at training courses for informal carers proved impossible to deliver within the timeframes. Financial difficulties of the carer organisations was the biggest obstacle and there was insufficient time to identify others.

Whilst the other parts of the project were both very successful, SWIDA highlighted some key points that could be useful to others considering similar approaches.

Despite employers recognising the benefits, it was still difficult to free up Dementia Champions and mentors to attend the training. SWIDA regularly engaged with organisations to ensure this was possible but this was a complex part of the process. It was sometimes difficult to convince organisations of the values of this process to gain their commitment.

Regularly engagement was also key to identifying Personal Assistants to be involved to enable them to focus on achieving the qualifications.

The relatively short timescales of the project - necessary to comply with a partner's funding requirements – proved challenging. Effective project planning was essential to ensure these key elements were kept on track.



For more information please contact

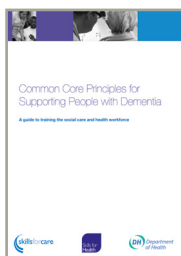
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Skills for Care Recommends

Our resources relating to care for people with dementia range from research to qualifications and funding.

Common Core Principles to Support People with Dementia Care



We have produced the common core principles for supporting people with dementia, a guide which supports the social care and health workforce to care for people who are suffering with dementia.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/dementia

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