

Woodford Homecare & Support Services

Resilience training strengthens leadership skills

Leaders and managers working in domiciliary care can learn how to be a “walking, talking example of how to deal really well with people”, according to the project leader of this programme in people-management which has brought “impressive results”

Background

Woodford Homecare & Support Services, run by Helen Wilcox, provides domiciliary care services across Wolverhampton and Dudley in the West Midlands. A life-long advocate of workforce development, Helen is keenly aware of the need to find efficient and cost-effective ways of training and empowering her staff.

Woodford Homecare's supervisory staff includes line managers and quality and compliance leaders (the latter were introduced as part of a recent restructuring). Leaders in both types of role were the focus of this WDIF project.

This project involved piloting a people-management programme incorporating tools for assessment, training, mentoring and coaching which viewed ‘good work’ and ‘resilience’ as key elements of personal wellbeing and effective stress management.

- ‘Good work’ is defined as healthy, safe, non-controlling and improving self-worth
- ‘Resilience’ is defined as maintaining successful performance and wellbeing while under pressure and facing difficult/ challenging times. It includes the ability to recover from or adjust quickly to misfortune or change, whether at work or in one’s personal life.

Essentially, this project underpins how important these qualities are for leaders working in the pursuit of excellent standards of care.

“The most welcome result is the way quality and compliance leaders now discuss things and collaborate more fully with one another. Imagine my pleasure when I see an aspiring manager set off to do a new and challenging task for the first time and return elated by their success.”

Helen Wilcox, Project Lead

What we wanted to achieve

This leadership programme had a number of aims:

- To provide line managers and quality and compliance leaders with the development tools to achieve excellence in their workplace
- To enhance the ability of line managers and quality and compliance leaders to cope with stressful and even traumatic experiences. These can include major changes in health conditions, death, abuse, decline in mental health, neglect, perplexing behaviours, changes in work requirements and practices, and many other circumstances
- To increase participants' 'soft' skills – the interpersonal skills which aid effective management
- To increase collaboration among managers - and between managers and staff – to bring about more cost-effective and efficient management, a sharper focus on staff development and the delivery of person-centred care
- To help drive up standards of service for people in need of care and support so that all those engaged in Woodford Homecare's domiciliary services are viewed as providing truly person-centred care, focused on positive outcomes.

Alongside these business and service improvements, the project recognised the broader issue within the adult social care sector of recruiting, selecting and retaining staff. The programme sought to address this by providing a means of enhancing the professional standing of social care workers – with particular emphasis on domiciliary care services.

What we did

Helen Wilcox worked closely with an occupational psychologist and trusted training providers to develop a holistic people-management programme. Ten managers and quality and compliance leaders took part in this programme comprising four elements:

- Firstly, they completed two assessment measures intended to contribute to resilience and people-management development:
 - a) An 'i-resilience' online questionnaire which generated a personalised report of natural strengths and weaknesses, and
 - b) A positive manager competency indicator which provided a means of scoring effectiveness
- Secondly, they attended a one-day training course which focused on four aspects of resilience development:
 - a) Adaptability
 - b) Confidence
 - c) Social support
 - d) Purposefulness
- Thirdly, external mentors and coaches were provided for the participants to support and enhance their development activities
- Finally, there was a follow-up process of reflection and internalisation of successful aspects of the training and coaching programme to produce a greater sense of accountability. Managers and quality compliance leaders learned to adopt role modelling and cascading approaches to help embed understanding of qualities such as trustworthiness and its impact on empowering people, as well as autonomy and interdependence – all essential for meeting the

“ It is inspiring to see people blossoming because the programme has provided a basis for each individual to do more good work, and do it more efficiently and happily. ”

Helen Wilcox, Project Lead

needs and aspirations of people in need of care and support, carers and staff.

The project was evaluated using a combination of self-report subjective and objective ratings. These saw participants rating their own performance while staff and direct-report managers provided objective ratings as validation (aggregated upward-feedback was provided to participants where possible). The process was supported by senior management and a small steering group of advisors.

What we achieved

The objectives already identified have been achieved and Helen was delighted not only by the apparent success of the project, but by the degree of change she noted in the confidence and self-assurance of all who took part.

Helen said, “I am most pleased with my quality and compliance leaders. What they learned about adaptability, confidence, social support and purposefulness has really raised the bar for all of them as a management tier in my organisation. This, I’m certain, will continue to feed into the way they work with each other, our domiciliary staff, carers and people in need of care and support”

Further outcomes, which can be noted and assessed more gradually include:

- Reduced sickness absence resulting from improved health and wellbeing of staff (“If people feel healthy, well valued and supported, they are more likely to be satisfied, engaged and productive”).
- Strengthening the ability to meet the Care Quality Commission’s essential standards of quality and safety and beyond.
- Coping techniques cascaded through to staff incorporating the principles of empowerment, dignity, inclusion, co-production and enablement.
- Better induction processes and more rigour in the overall recruitment process.

- Generally improved working relationships between domiciliary care workers and those using their services and their carers.
- Enablers that underpin and promote the aims of the Vision for Adult Social Care to ‘Think Local, Act Personal’ and comply with the Workforce Development Strategy.

What we learnt

The pilot programme demonstrated that by anchoring resilience and good work among the leaders at the frontline, self-assurance, confidence and leadership capability followed with surprising speed. The programme has promoted good decision-making, stronger teamwork and better communications, all of which have led to improvements in frontline care.

Helen comments, “There really has been a rapid growth in these qualities and what has surprised and pleased us most is how people are taking the initiative and collaborating better than ever.”

Another learning point from the programme stems from its construction as a holistic and blended approach which included elements which are essentially private. “Staff didn’t have to share the results of the ‘i-resilience’ questionnaire with anyone,” Helen reports. “Those results are entirely personal, providing benchmarks for individual development; their time with mentors and coaches providing exactly the stimulus they needed.”

According to Helen the key ingredient to the success of this project was the skill and expertise of the training providers (who knew the sector well), combined with the expertise and direction of the occupational psychologist. “They were excellent,” she says, “and held the programme together making it possible to achieve the desired outcomes and to exceed our expectations.”

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;

Leadership and management

A range of qualifications, programmes and tools to help leaders.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/leaders

Manager Induction Standards

These optional standards can help new and aspiring managers of care organisations to adapt to their role. This is complemented by a separate priced publication; Becoming the new manager.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/mis

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