

Action Learning Set for Senior Staff in Care Homes responsible for implementation of the National Dementia Strategy

Background

The National Dementia Strategy, published earlier this year, stresses the importance of improved quality of care for people with dementia in care homes. In particular the Strategy requires care homes to identify a senior member of staff to take the lead for quality improvement and to develop a local strategy for the management and care of people with dementia in the home. Key to success in the implementation of the strategy is the development of person-centered care in the home.

At a seminar in Deal recently, attended by senior staff in care homes as well as representatives from the PCT and Social Services, the feedback suggested that senior staff would welcome support and training in the implementation of the strategy. This proposal addresses these needs through an approach based on an action learning set.

An action learning set approach.

There is evidence to suggest that while care staff have access to training on person-centered care, it needs to be embedded in daily care practice. An action learning set, based on principles of transformational leadership, explores both the requirements of the strategy as well as the leadership skills needed to implement the strategy in a safe and supportive environment.

The learning set comprises six two hour workshops for up to ten participants over a twelve week period, together with an allocation of two hours for on-site support to assist participants in implementing the requirements of the strategy in their home. By the end of the learning set participants will have an understanding both of the requirements of the National Strategy and also of ways in which it needs to be implemented in the care home setting. The learning set will be run around a cluster of homes in a particular locality, for example Deal and Sandwich.

The topics covered during the group sessions are formulated in line with the development needs of the participants. Guest speakers will provide input as required. A typical programme will cover:

- Assessing and meeting the mental health needs of residents with dementia and developing best practice on the use of anti-psychotic medication. This session explores the NICE guidelines and the recommendations in the strategy through

the input of Primary Care, Community Mental Health Teams, Home Treatment services and other specialist resources.

- Where are we now ? Using the 'VIPs' approach developed by the Bradford Dementia Centre, this session identifies ways in which a home can evaluate its progress towards embedding person-centered care. This provides an opportunity not just for establishing a baseline but for engaging staff and other stakeholders such as relatives in the process. This session also prepares participants for the 'SOFI' inspection framework (see below).
- Person-Centered Care in the daily life of the Home. How do we know when person-centered care is embedded in the ethos of our Home ? Through taking a strengths based approach to working with people with dementia, this session looks at person-centered care planning, the use of individually focused activity programmes, life story work, meeting spiritual needs, etc. The session also focuses on effective ways of allocating staff time and motivating staff in order to meet these needs.
- Meeting our inspection requirements. This session covers the inspection requirements of the Care Quality Commission, with a particular focus on the Short Observational Framework for Inspection (SOFI) and how this tool is incorporated within the overall inspection framework.
- Developing our home strategy. This session focuses on the development of the Home's own strategy. Participants are supported in developing an achievable action plan based on their learning throughout the life of the learning set. This session is also supported through the provision of on-site support (see above).

The final session consolidates the learning in the earlier sessions and provides an opportunity to evaluate the programme and address other themes raised by participants.

The learning set will be facilitated by Ben Bano, Director of Telos Training Ltd in partnership with the Prosperity Network, which is a newly formed organisation committed to developing and organizing high quality training in the care and related sectors. In addition to providing training on person-centered care in dementia, Ben has also facilitated similar learning sets for first line social care managers in 5 London Boroughs. He has been commissioned to facilitate a learning set for managers in the Sussex Partnership NHS Trust from September 2009.

Contact Ben on 07887 651117 for further details of the start date of the learning set.

