

Supporting Care homes: what should end of life care look like?



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Background

Without the expansion of end of life care training for staff in care homes, the number of hospital deaths of very elderly, frail residents with dementia will increase unsustainably.

With challenges to education in care homes including high staff turnover, funding, GP support, time language/cultural differences, a nationally established programme with evidence of impact is necessary for change to be achievable.

Whilst Birmingham St Mary's Hospice is a regional centre for Gold Standard Framework (GSF) Care Home Training and provides a substantial Education Programme, there is an urgent need to explore how we can support local care homes better.

Aims

As part of a larger project, a 6 month pilot was commenced to produce a service model which facilitates onsite education and embedding of a sustainable programme such as GSF and/or Six Steps, to improve the competence and confidence of local care home staff.

Method

A Palliative Care Clinical Nurse Specialist was seconded for 6 months to:

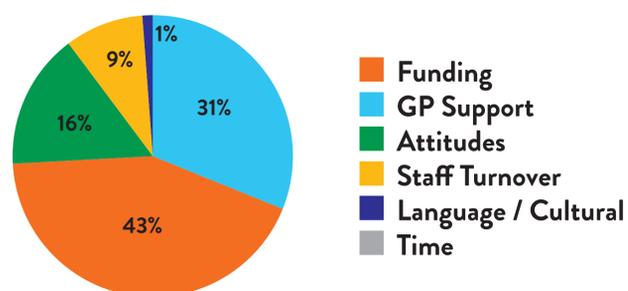
Map, scope and identify local and national evidence based practice | Design a model | Test the model | Collaborate with University of Birmingham University | Audit and measure outcomes

Results

Interviews with 30 care homes and extensive networking with local and national health care professional, academics and residents showed:

Need for additional support (in particular health care assistants and onsite) | Examples of good practice (e.g. regular Advanced Nurse Practitioner and GP input) | Uptake of education programme does not reflect the number of local care homes | Poor out of hours communication | Poor communication from hospital | Significant number of care homes relying on more than 2 GP practices | Some understanding of Advanced Care Planning, but improved communication with families needed | Out of the 30, only 4 have embedded use of GSF

Care home managers perception of challenges to providing good end of life care



Recommendations

- Launch a service specifically for Care Homes with 2 facilitators (Band 7 and Band 6) with the potential to support 24 to 30 local care homes
- Provide Six Steps Programme as well as GSF
- Evaluate the service using quality markers and audits
- Establish Care Home Forums
- Collaborate with STP, LA and local hospitals, as well as out of hours services
- Actively support initiatives that improve transitions between hospital and the care home e.g. Red Bag Scheme, patient passport, shared electronic records
- Obtain hospital admission figures (or alternative indicators) so homes in greater need are targeted
- Continue working with Birmingham University and other research colleagues to consider:
 - Robust outcome measures
 - Research proposal & service development paper
 - Literature review
 - Quality initiatives e.g. appreciative enquiry and learning for excellence
- Pursue funding for Project ECHO

“The time has come to test new approaches, such as innovative palliative care models in care homes and the community, to ensure we address this growing need which will affect us all, directly and indirectly, in the years to come. Otherwise we will be faced with more deaths in hospital, or poor quality end of life care or both”

Professor Irene Higginson,
Director of the Cicely Saunders Institute at King's College London, 2017.

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