Using Dementia Care Mapping to improve dignity and respect

Everybody has a right to be safe no matter who they are or what their circumstances. We all have a duty to ensure the safety and welfare of vulnerable adults and we must ensure that we are doing all that we can to protect the most vulnerable members of our society treating them with care and compassion and dignity and respect.

This case study demonstrates how Cornwall Council’s Social Care Learning and Development service use dementia care mapping to help organisations develop a better understanding of the people they work with and up-skill their workforce to improve quality of care.

“Once you’ve met one person with dementia ……you’ve met one person with dementia” attributed to Tom Kitwood

What is dementia care mapping and why it is used?

Dementia Care Mapping (DCM) helps a professional to observe life through the eyes of a person with dementia.

It involves watching someone unobtrusively over an extended period of time to see how they respond positively and negatively to events that happen to and around them.

The results of DCM can change the way the person with dementia experiences care and support, while also assessing the employees who deliver that care and identifying employee training needs.

How is it done?

During a DCM evaluation, a “mapper” will sit with a group of people in the communal areas of a care home. They will to observe up to five people with dementia, continuously over six or seven hours. After each five minute period, the mapper will record the behaviour, mood and engagement of the person or people they are observing.

All of the interactions are recorded, including personal enhancers (any interaction that has a positive experience on the person and their wellbeing) and personal detractors which have the opposite effect.

Once the initial exercise has been completed, the findings and feedback are discussed with employees. Employees are encouraged to take ownership of the report and its findings, and with the support from their managers, look at how they can improve the quality of care, interactions and well-being of the people living in the home.
Recent feedback has been extremely positive with noticeable shifts in the way organisations and their staff work.

**Practical examples of DCM at work**

Two notable examples are West Cornwall Hospital and Benoni Nursing Home.

A hospital approached us to deliver a DCM whilst they were in the process of transforming their Dementia Ward. The ward wanted to establish a baseline report to indicate where they were and what they needed to do in order to improve the experience of patients with Dementia.

The first DCM highlighted a number of areas which needed to be developed and the messages delivered during the initial feedback session were hard for some to hear. We used ‘real patients’ to give feedback to the employees about their personal experiences on the ward. Unequivocal experience is a very powerful tool to facilitate a cultural change.

In addition to these ‘interventions’ we fully supported the team during the transitional period and observed some dramatic changes in the ward, the employee skills mix, the generation of some fantastic ideas including a memory café and importantly, a renewed passion to deliver quality care and support to their patients.

As with the hospital, the transformation within Benoni Nursing home was impressive. The baseline DCM highlighted various areas for improvement.

As with all our feedback sessions we strive to make them a positive experience which can often be challenging. We explored a number of ideas on how to improve the experiences of the residents, delivered some bespoke sessions around communication, ESOL as well as some coaching.

In addition to this we sign-posted employees to relevant funded formal opportunities including Level 3 Management and Coaching and Mentoring.

As with the hospital, we believe the transformation is greater where you have strong management and a recognition and willingness to change. A crucial factor is the motivation of employees, under the leadership of their manager, who are required to take a hard look at the way they currently do things and be willing to do things differently - this process that the LTDU successfully facilitates.
For more information

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