Case study - Tameside Training Consortium

Activities training to improve dementia care

This training combined underpinning knowledge about dementia with three specially designed courses that gave carers the tools and QCF qualifications to provide a range of activities for people with dementia. The training approach proved to be both popular and effective.

Background

People with dementia have a range of distinctive needs and to improve their wellbeing and provide high quality care ideally requires knowledgeable support from both paid and unpaid carers. However, while the numbers of older people suffering with a dementia is growing, the time, course availability and funding to provide training for carers in the subject of good dementia care is becoming harder to find.

Tameside Training Consortium were keen to tackle this concern directly by means of a project which involved short courses of training to provide underpinning knowledge leading to a QCF accredited qualification at either Level 2 or Level 3. Tameside set out to devise a programme which focused on stimulating more and better activities for people with dementia. It is widely known that both physical and mental activities of various sorts stimulate the brain, help to improve memory and generally enhance the wellbeing of people with a dementia.

Consequently, supported by a Workforce Development Innovation Fund award, Tameside Training Consortium commissioned three distinctive but complementary courses and invited carers and care support workers from different sections of the care community to take part in them. Underpinning these courses, Tameside provided additional core training in dementia, including awareness of dementia and understanding how to communicate with people who have dementia.

Aims

The main aim was to invite both paid and unpaid carers to a programme which would involve a combination of underpinning knowledge concerning the conditions surrounding dementia with specially devised courses focused on stimulating and encouraging activities for people with this condition. The underpinning knowledge would also form a basis for candidates to work towards the achievement of either Level 2 or Level 3 of a QCF accredited Certificate in Dementia Care.
The aim was also to devise a programme in which the key learning activities were covered in short courses minimising the difficulty of making time available for candidates. By having QCF assessors visiting the workplace this also minimised any disruption to the normal working time of all those involved.

While the underpinning training provided much-needed knowledge about the condition of dementia, the courses on activities provision were designed to enable each candidate to be confident in preparing and encouraging a range of stimulating activities for people in their care with dementia. By cascading this training care support workers could help to promote more activities and greater wellbeing for those with dementia in a range of care environments.

The project was designed to contribute to the objectives of the local and national Dementia Strategy, part of which involves bridging the gap in carers’ skill and confidence to provide meaningful activities for people with dementia.

**What was done?**

Tameside Training Consortium commissioned training providers to design three special courses which included:

- A half-day Life Story course in which candidates learn how to use a Life Story book in which individuals with dementia write down details about their likes and dislikes and, often with the help of family and friends, build up a picture of their life which enables carers to work closely with them and understand them personally

- A separate half-day course on Activities Facilitation which encourages carers to create activities that are likely to engage people with dementia, again involving family and friends as well as one-to-one activities

- A two-day Jabadao course which is based on ‘movement play’ and emphasises the encouragement of physical activity and non-verbal communication

Tameside has a well established network of members and used a combination of email messages, care home forum meetings and flyers to advertise the courses. These proved to be very popular and the 22 candidates initially targeted for the courses were soon subscribed. The candidates were mostly from care homes or worked in domiciliary care.

The programme proved to be so popular that a separate cohort of 33 candidates was also engaged in it with separate funding applied for through the Workforce Development Fund.

All candidates pursuing a qualification were required to take two additional half-day courses, comprising the underpinning knowledge about dementia. These were already part of the Tameside Training Consortium calendar of training and involved Awareness of Dementia and Communication with People who have Dementia.
To ensure that there was full occupancy on all of the activities-related courses, other care workers from various parts of the care community were offered places, with the result that 105 care staff in total took part in the activities training.

After all the courses were completed, candidates for qualifications were able to use their underpinning knowledge as a reference for further work, assessed directly in the workplace, towards either Level 2 or Level 3 QCF awards.

A comprehensive evaluation process was built into the training programme. This included trainer reports following the short courses and verbal and written evaluation reports from each candidate on completion of the courses. Also, one of the QCF dementia award assessors attended the short-course training and provided feedback, and there were follow-up telephone calls to managers.

**Outcomes**

A total of 105 care staff have been provided with activities-related training specifically focused on encouraging activities for people with dementia. Of these, 55 people have completed all the short courses and have gained either Level 2 or Level 3 Certificates in Dementia Care.

The aim was to improve the provision of care for people with dementia and to enhance their mental and physical wellbeing. Reports from managers of candidates who have contacted Tameside indicate that this aim is being achieved. Answers to the survey monkey question “Has this training led to improvements within your service?” include:

- It has shown better ways of providing care for people with dementia
- It has helped the staff by providing a better understanding of people with dementia
- Staff are now able to interact in a much more empathetic way with clients who have mental health problems and understand how their illness affects all aspects of their life and care needs

Other responses about the degree to which staff are working in more person-centred ways include:

- Staff have been aware of people’s individual identities and feel more confident in assisting them with personal care and choices
- Staff now realise that task delegation is not appropriate for people with mental health issues and are much more aware of working in collaboration with clients while ensuring their safety and dignity is maintained

The programme is sustainable, particularly with the assistance of managers who are helping to embed the learning and cascade good practice within their organisations. Jabadao training was introduced to the managers at the annual care conference when staff were booked for the course. Good feedback from this has resulted in managers commissioning Jabadao training for their own organisations.
Tameside Training Consortium is delighted with the apparent success of this workforce development approach and feels that a similar format for workforce development can be applied to other programmes such as in training about autism.

Learning

According to Lynne Taylor, Project Lead from Tameside Training Consortium, “This has been a successful project and, although more time will tell just how much improvement there is in the provision of care for clients, and in their general wellbeing, the indications are that this is happening very much as we intended.”

Lynne adds that they were impressed by the popularity of courses, which were rapidly filled, requiring some ingenuity in satisfying the demand by arranging funding for further candidates. She believes that by providing short courses, where candidates have literally to sit and learn, even for a short time, suits the QCF approach which is marginally more academic in nature than the former vocational qualifications approach. The way the programme was put together also suited people’s working time and availability.

“We have learned a lot from this project,” says Lynne, “and it wouldn’t have happened without the funding. We now have special courses that we can continue to use to support improvements in the care of people with dementia, which is an increasingly important concern.”

Another learning from the project was that some of the care workers did not feel completely comfortable with being able to carry out a Life Story activity with an individual with dementia without the support of their manager. Tameside are looking into the possibility of training managers directly in Life Story techniques so as to provide support and encouragement in its use.

Contact

Lynne Taylor, Project Lead,
Tameside Training Consortium
Tel. 0161 3423029
Email. lynne.taylor@tameside.gov.uk