

User involvement group (commendation)



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The team have embraced the concept of user involvement in improving the work of the community specialist palliative care team and local palliative care services.

A partnership group was established in 2009 and includes service users. The group supports the team by identifying what is important to patients about the service and areas where improvements can be made. The group have made tangible service improvements which have had a significant impact on local patient care.

User involvement

User involvement is important in all aspects of health care; however the challenge in palliative care is making this a reality. In this area this is particularly challenging given the rurality and distances patients who are unwell and carers have to travel. The team were inspired to make user involvement reality. They began by holding an event on a Saturday where current patients, carers and ex carers were invited to attend. At the event the users were invited to comment on what the team were doing well and what improvements were needed. Over the time the group has been in existence the instigating team have worked tirelessly to make it a success.

Challenges

There have been a number of challenges the team have had to face. As a busy team there are always competing clinical demands. The work to support and sustain the group has been achieved by the commitment of the team, often supporting the work in their own personal time. The team have held several events on weekends to further the development of the work of the group. The success of the group is a credit to the team and the enduring support from the users who feel equally passionate about the group.

Involving users in service improvements was central to their strategic vision. When the group was established a series of workshops helped form a plan to improve service quality through a number of collaborative initiatives.

The team worked collaboratively with national leads that were recognised at the time for their work in user involvement. This helped the team to learn from others experiences. As a consequence this has led to mutually supportive relationships with

the National Council for Palliative Care with an article due for publication in the Inside Palliative Care Journal outlining the benefits of user involvement in service improvements. The profile of the group was also raised by the production of an information leaflet and a local annual event, which invites current users to poster presentation and informal feedback to the group on the achievements to date. At the last event over 100 users were invited to attend and this resulted in new members being recruited to the partnership group.

The group produce a newsletter which promotes ongoing work and recruitment into the group and thus sustainability. The partnership group has been embedded into the culture of the team and has lead to collaborative professional working across the organisation to improve out of hours service provision. Another local annual event is planned for October, over 200 invitations have been sent.

If you have any questions about this team's case study please email Macmillan development manager Stephen Guy SGuy@macmillan.org.uk.