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Practical advice to primary care commissioners and educators setting up education programmes

TOP TIPS

Preparation

1 Educational assessment
Perform an educational assessment of your locality's educational needs. Target the relevant groups of healthcare professionals via questionnaire or face-to-face contact.

2 Working party
Establish a working party involving members from primary care (GP, district nurse, Macmillan clinical nurse specialists), secondary care (palliative care consultant), hospices, OOH provider representatives, primary care organisation representatives (OOH coordinators) and educational facilitator (if there is one). Decide among the working party what the aims and objectives of the programme will be.

Design of the teaching programme

3 Frequency of teaching
Decide on the frequency of the teaching and timing of the sessions, eg, once a month on a practice half day, for six months, after which the programme may be repeated. Decide on the teaching method to be employed (presentations/case work/hands-on).

4 Appropriate educators
Identify appropriate educators to deliver the teaching – specific educators may have the more appropriate teaching style to deliver what is agreed.

Funding

5 Consider your budget
Establish the stream of recurrent funding (at the outset) that can be accessed for providing an educational programme. Fees will need to be met for guest speakers, hiring venues (with refreshments), publicising and sending out invitations, secretarial and administrative support, and producing learning materials (handouts etc).

'Free' education sessions may attract a better uptake. However, some areas have made a nominal charge for the teaching.

Ways of reducing funding include accessing specific education funds set aside by the primary care organisation; using 'in house' speakers and educators; accessing funds from the locality's cancer network (but this will depend on local arrangements and discussions); making use of an educational facilitator if there is one in post.

Support

6 People who can help
Establish where the support for the education programme will come from. Important players include the primary care organisation and identifying administrative support. Support may also be obtained from the local cancer network.

Implementation

7 Delegation
Identify and delegate practical tasks such as developing and sending out teaching sessions and programmes; booking appropriate venues; sending out invitations; assembling and booking relevant speakers; preparing and producing learning materials; preparing and analysing attendance and evaluations sheets.

Compliance

8 Service level agreements (SLA)
Ask primary care commissioners about including a clause in their SLA with their OOH providers, that all OOH staff have a mandatory obligation to attend a minimum number of education sessions. This also helps to ensure that their OOH providers will make sure their staff are educated to a minimum level and standard as set by the primary care commissioning body.

9 Fees
Consider charging fees – for attending the course, or for non-attending free courses, or send reminders before the course and chasing up non-attendees.

Sustainability

10 Keep it going
Promote the sustainability of the education programme to the primary care organisation, using evaluation analyses and feedback. Ensure there is recurrent funding for continuation of the programme.

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