

## SOCIAL CARE CHAMPIONS: ENGAGING WITH SOCIAL WORK COLLEAGUES IN STATUTORY SERVICES AND WORKING IN COLLABORATION IN THE END OF LIFE AND PALLIATIVE ASPECTS OF THEIR ROLE

Following participation in the Social Care Champions Workshop held at Loros Hospice in 2014, the social work team at the Douglas Macmillan Hospice started to look at producing an action plan to try and achieve some of the specific goals from the Framework for Social Care at End of Life. This work mainly focused on improving collaborative working with colleagues in adult social care services and linking them into training and education to help improve their knowledge, skills and abilities in supporting people at the end of life.

Progress was slow at first and initial attempts to identify and engage with the leads for education and training for social workers weren't productive. We feared that our efforts were beginning to reflect some of the concerns raised at the workshops that there was low motivation and disillusionment amongst the social care workforce and no willingness on the part of social work management to fund training for social workers. We persisted though and in 2016 palliative care social worker Jackie Rutter was able to arrange a meeting with the training and development lead for a local partnership NHS trust. The aim of the meeting was to explore and identify a realistic plan to forge stronger links between them and the hospice. A proposal was put forward to facilitate a three day teaching programme to be delivered by lecturing staff within the education department and social workers at the hospice for social care colleagues who showed an interest in end of life and palliative care.

Course aims were for the participants to have a greater understanding of palliative and end of life care, including holistic assessment and communication skills for end of life, the role of social work in end of life and palliative care and for them to be able to relate these to their own areas of professional practice.

The pilot teaching programme was delivered to a cohort of 16 social care staff. The feedback from the course participants was extremely positive and two further cohort of the same training have since commissioned by the local NHS trust.

Andrew Errington, who was Professional Head of Social Work and Adults Principal Social Worker, Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Partnership NHS Trust at the time, commented that;

'The programme has provided our Social Workers with an opportunity to learn about palliative, end of life care and associated holistic assessment. The workshops look to further develop communication skills to equip Social Workers with the tools to communicate effectively in difficult and challenging situations within the specialty of palliative and end of life care.

The workshops have been extremely well received, developing skills and confidence in this core area of Social Work practice and connecting practitioners within different fields of Social Work. This is another step in furthering our relationships, as we already jointly commission posts with palliative care providers’.

Further collaboration has followed on from this project and we worked with Andrew Errington to organize an event at the Douglas Macmillan Hospice to promote the resource ‘The Role of the Social Worker in Palliative, End of Life and Bereavement Care’. The event was funded by the North West Midlands Social Work Teaching Partnership and involved the palliative care social workers from the Douglas Macmillan Hospice, Katherine House Hospice, St Giles Hospice and Severn Hospice engaging with the social care staff from its partnership agencies. The aims of the event were to look at how people can get the most out of social work and how stronger links can be developed to support the delivery of high quality end of life care.



Andrew Errington and Julie Gosling giving feedback from the workshop.



Palliative care social workers Jo Maiden and Jackie Rutter facilitating groups in the workshop.

Judging by the feedback from the event it proved to be a real success and I think led to our colleagues in social care having a better understanding of palliative care social work and to recognise the important role they have in supporting people at the end of life and those close to them. Some of the key themes of the

workshop were the need for training and educational opportunities and forming communities of interest such as end of life care champions networks. The participants valued the insights into social work in palliative care and the opportunity to meet and talk with other social workers but most of all from hearing



Palliative care social worker Kate Smith giving feedback from the workshop.

Dr Julie Gosling, a member of the working group who created the resource, talk about the contribution to the resource of people with lived experience of approaching death, those who cared for them and those bereaved. Julie communicated the wisdom of those people with warmth and humour which attendees found insightful and thought provoking in relation to their practice.

I take the opportunity here to commend the working group and all those who contributed to the resource for producing what has been an outstanding and timely piece of work. As we are a long way from people in the UK having equitable access to support from a palliative care social worker, we can hope that this resource will help to strengthen the specialism of Palliative Care Social Work and help us and others extol the benefits of this support to people at end of life to employers and commissioners of services in the hope that this will lead to greater equity of access.

The resource is going to be really helpful to us not only in terms of helping other people to understand more about palliative care social work but also as a reflective and developmental tool for our own practice. The resource groups the capabilities for palliative care social workers into the nine domains of the PCF and we have incorporated these into our social work supervision and appraisals at the Douglas Macmillan.

We thought that the training and event were good examples of collaborative and partnership working and fitted the theme of this years Hospice UK conference which was 'People, Partnerships and Potential'. We submitted an abstract for the conference which was accepted for poster presentation. This was a nice way to see out the year which has seen some progressive steps in working with our colleagues in partner agencies in practice and education to help achieve the goal of delivering high quality end of life care. We are currently working on plans for next year and how to take forward some of the ideas we discussed with the social workers at the event.



Douglas Macmillan Hospice lecturer Lorraine Dunn and I at the Hospice UK 2016 Conference

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