

7. Use community innovatively;
8. Measure only what matters;
9. Timely easy access with an effective response;
10. Using reflective practice to continually challenge, review and evaluate services and drive improvement.

Within the Llanelli community resource team, these messages have been widely promoted and reiterated on a daily basis. Posters of the new purpose and principles have been displayed on the walls in every room and are used during the daily multidisciplinary team reflection sessions. Workers are told that solving people's problems is not the job of community health and social care, but their role is to empower people to solve their own problems in an informed manner.

This has been a significant cultural shift for workers who have, in the past, worked within a crisis response system under pressure, to assess for and provide services.

Workers now realise that solving people's problems is not always their job. Their first priority is empowering people to solve their own problems in an informed manner, enabling individuals to do what matters to them while, where possible, reducing the man hours and resource use of the service. This has delivered the sense of independence that service users want.

The service advocates supporting individuals to re-engage with the community and to participate in community activities. Staff are encouraged to discover what is happening informally in the community - be it a choir, a chapel, a group playing dominoes in the pub, local history groups or a café delivering meals - to provide people with real options, which can enable their informed decision making.

The whole service aims to acknowledge that relationships are important to people, rather than a constant focus on activities.

What impact has it had?

The project has resulted in empowered staff and service users in tandem with a reduction in staff hours and resource use in the service, while delivering a service that people prefer. The results have been striking.

Reduced dependence on services:

One of the principles was to "use community innovatively" and to promote true local area coordination. This means more use of community support, voluntary and third sector services and integrating people back into the community without the need for social care.

As a result of this new approach, there were 11 fewer new residential care placements; 100 less hours of domiciliary home care needed and 21 fewer people needed meals on wheels between July and October 2013, compared to the same period in 2012.. There was also improved feedback on services and a significant reduction in complaints, as people were empowered to do what mattered to them, rather than simply receive services.

Accessibility and equity:

Access to services has also substantially improved for service users. Before the service redesign, the percentage of individuals returning into the system within 12 months was 46%. A year on, that had fallen to 10%. The knock on of this has been an increase in a speedier response to those who need services - in November 2012, it took an average of 30 days for an inquiry to be resolved; in November 2013, this had fallen to less than two days.

Delivery of targeted and tailored care:

It often takes longer to discover what is important to someone than to assess their needs and practitioners have been encouraged to spend longer with individuals to support true informed decision making in identifying sustainable outcomes with individuals.

This approach has enabled a large number of people to avoid the need for services altogether and to rediscover community friendships and independent living in the community, rather than independence within an individuals' home.

What makes it prudent?

The principles developed by the team through the work on the lean systems approach closely match the ethos of prudent healthcare. A cultural shift was achieved and multidisciplinary workers have been empowered to work with service users to enable them to solve their own issues in an informed way. By placing the service user at the heart of the process and ensuring every step was adding value from their perspective, only the minimum appropriate intervention was carried out, rather than using systems and processes which existed simply for the sake of the organisation.

The outcomes for service users have improved. This form of process innovation - looking at the whole service, rather than a discreet aspect - is the approach NHS Wales is adopting in response to prudent healthcare.

For more information:

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