

Case Example 8:

Essex Dementia Care

Type of organization: Independent support service (registered charity)

User group: People with dementia and their families

Client numbers and location: Currently working on a one-to-one basis with 14 people with dementia in Essex and around 30 people across two activity centres

Staffing: Nine paid members of staff and 13 volunteers (the latter work mostly in the activity centres)

Services: The service aims to help people with dementia to maintain an active lifestyle and remain at home. It specialises in both dementia and use of activities therapeutically.

There are two main service areas:

1. A one-to-one service where a practitioner meets with a client and engages them in an activity, or series of activities, depending on their mood and preference.
2. Two activity centres in different localities, each open one day per week.

Funding: Most clients are self-funders, but some pay using direct payments. The activity centers are well supported by volunteers and so offer a cheaper alternative to one-to-one support.

Evaluation

This service has not been formally evaluated.

Features of Good Practice

Person-centred ways of working

A particular strength of the service is its capacity to be person-centred. People with dementia, and their families, want to sustain a lifestyle which is as near to their previous lifestyle as possible, and to remain as independent as possible. Essex Dementia Care can help with this.

The one-to-one service is entirely tailored to the needs and preferences of the client. Some particularly active clients may be supported to play squash or go swimming, while with

more frail people, activities may centre around doing something they enjoy such as cooking, or going to a concert.

Not everyone has the capacity to make choices. For those without capacity, there are still ways to ascertain immediate wishes. The one-to-one delivery of the service enables staff to pick up on non-verbal cues and body language to tell whether clients are enjoying an activity or not.

Meeting practical, emotional and social needs

A key aim of the service is to meet the social and leisure needs of people with dementia in order to maintain their quality of life, which in turn should maintain overall well-being and prevent deterioration. Staff also provide emotional support to family carers.

In the activity centres, the focus is on group activities that bring people together and that everyone can participate in. There are a lot of music related activities, including song, dance, drama therapy, story-making, and physical activities with different props, including parachutes and streamers. Music brings people together and breaks the ice.

The service would not accept a referral solely for personal care, but staff do deliver personal care as part of their support to meet higher order needs, for example making sure someone has had lunch at the end of a session. In keeping with the aim of maintaining independence, staff would encourage or help clients to prepare lunch for themselves in this situation, rather than making lunch for them.

Continuity of support

People may come to the activity centre in the early stages of dementia, and move through to the one-to-one service as their needs become more severe and complex. Continuity of staffing, via a keyworker, is an important part of the service. Once rapport has developed, the keyworker will gradually introduce two or three other members of staff to the person with dementia and their family, so that they know enough workers for holiday or sick leave not to be a problem. The activity centres are a useful way for people to get to know all of the Essex Dementia Care staff, which in turn supports continuity.

Further Information

For more information visit the Essex Dementia Care website:

<http://www.essexdementiacare.org.uk/>