



The Recovery Constellation project

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Project background

An increasing number of older people are living alone and are at risk of becoming socially isolated. This is of concern because social isolation has been identified as a risk factor for poor health and reduced wellbeing, including mortality, depression and cognitive decline.

The West Oxfordshire Community Therapy Service is a rehabilitation service for people over 65 years of age, dedicated to enabling and maximising patients' independence in the community.

Aim

The aim of this project was to design and implement a patient-led, six-week mental wellbeing and health promotion group for patients aged over 65 years. To achieve this, the objectives identified were to:

- Identify current gaps in provision of mental health and wellbeing groups in West Oxfordshire
- Liaise with stakeholders in order to help steer the direction of the project
- Work with patients to create a basic structure for the wellbeing group that would aim to enable patients to develop self-management strategies and share personal experiences
- Identify patients potentially suitable for the group pilot

Implications for practice

- Collaborative working with key stakeholders can generate enthusiasm and interest in a project or service improvement
- There is a need for regular conversations to raise the profile of services

This project was supported by the FoNS Patients First Programme in partnership with The Burdett Trust for Nursing

Online

Further information about the project can be accessed from: fons.org/library/report-details?nstdid=73985

Key activities and outcomes

• Stakeholder meeting

A stakeholder meeting was held in February 2017 and was well attended. The project team undertook a claims, concerns and issues exercise, which generated a lot of information, some of which seemed to challenge the team's initial ideas. Issues identified suggested a need to:

- Understand what was currently provided by healthcare, social care and the voluntary and independent sectors in the area
- Explore the wider community therapy service team's values and develop a shared vision and purpose
- Seek patient feedback – perhaps the project team had been too prescriptive in its thinking

• Project team meetings

Meetings were held regularly, initially with the two project leads and later including an assistant practitioner and mental health occupational therapist.

• Values, beliefs and purpose of the wider team

A team awayday was held with the wider community therapy service team. At this, a values clarification exercise was used to identify the purpose of the team and how its members could support the project objectives.

• Patient stories

Initially a patient questionnaire was devised to facilitate understanding of the patient experience. However, there was a poor response rate, so staff members chatted to people at their regular appointments. In doing so, they captured stories of social isolation and loneliness, and ideas of how this might have impacted on their mental health. This would also form part of rapport building between professional and patient.

• Introduction of logotherapy

The project team decided to underpin the group workshops with the principles of logotherapy. This innovative approach explores motivation, meaning and the nature of thought, emotion and patterns of anxiety, enabling patients to set realistic and meaningful goals that they can work towards during and after the group work has finished.

• Identifying potential patient members for the pilot group

A meeting was set up with a local GP practice to promote the project. This meeting evolved into more of a factfinding forum, using case study examples to stimulate discussion and to identify how the GPs could support these patients. During this time, the project leads were able to raise the profile of mental health practitioners. This has increased the number of referrals and improved communication with the local GPs. A further meeting established referral criteria for the patient wellbeing group.

• Next steps

The team plans to gather referrals and set a date for the new patient group to be piloted for six weeks.