Clinical effectiveness

CARE HOME EDUCATION PROGRAMME—MECHANISM FOR SUSTAINING IN THE FACE OF AUSTERITY

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Background: Management of Older people in Care Homes (CH) requires some basic understanding and knowledge by CH staff. There is no requirement for those working with older people to gain specialist knowledge. Access to such education remains scarce. In Stockport we have been running a care home education project and have experienced at first hand the effects of austerity measures on care homes and its negative influence on our education programme.

Innovation: A structured CH education programme has been running in Stockport since 2008 with the aim to improve knowledge of staff in comprehensive assessment and management of older people. It is organized in liaison with Stockport Social Services and CH managers are encouraged to sign up staff. The course curriculum covers both general and disease-specific modules and assessment of knowledge is undertaken pre and post completion. It is run on a voluntary basis with no funds.

Evaluation: The course has completed its 4th cycle of teaching. Unfortunately sign up to the 2012 course was significantly down due to:
1. Loss of our main contact with Social Services due to redundancy of the Contract and Performance manager resulting from austerity measures by the local Social Services.
2. Austerity measures by CH management resulting in reluctance for filling the gap created by staff coming to attend the course.

We have been able to sustain our CH project for 2013 by:
1. Holding meetings with the local authority and independent sector
2. Reducing the frequency of education sessions
3. Change to a more accessible venue site
4. Greater advertising of our education programme

Conclusion: The negative effects of austerity has resulted in a marked drop in attendance. This is despite the high satisfaction of staff participating in the course. We will continue to review our strategy for delivery of our CH project. Such education programmes need to be made mandatory.