

# Raising Their Game: Staff Equipped to Tackle Malnutrition

## Education and training for staff across five nursing homes in Islington

A recent audit of care homes in Islington recognised poor practice around identifying, preventing and monitoring malnutrition. This four month project aimed to address the problem by delivering an education and training programme to staff at five care homes. Staff were empowered with the skills, confidence and competence needed to identify malnutrition, to provide basic nutritional care including food fortification and to make appropriate referrals for dietetic advice.

### The Project

There were three phases of the project:

#### Phase 1 (5 days): Pre-audit of MUST screening use

The Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool (MUST) was already in use in each of the five nursing homes. A pre-audit was carried out in each home to note how often patient weight and MUST score had been recorded over the previous four months. This would form the base line.

On the whole, the nursing homes were already good at weighing patients every month and recording this but in three homes there was room for improvement. In every home there was a degree of error in recording the overall MUST score.

#### Phase 2 (10 days): Training

Based on the findings of phase 1, a practical training programme was designed to improve the knowledge and understanding of MUST for staff. A training session of 1½ hours was then delivered on two occasions in each of the nursing homes for carers, nursing staff and some catering staff.

A questionnaire was used to determine knowledge and understanding of MUST before and after the training.

Phase 3 (5 days): Re-audit

A post-audit was carried out in three of the five homes to find out whether there had been an improvement in recording monthly weight, the overall MUST score and to discuss any concerns with the nursing home manager or clinical nurse.

**The Benefits**

There has been an increase in awareness of malnutrition and identification has improved.

Staff at the nursing homes had a greater knowledge and understanding of MUST after the training. Knowledge about MUST was low before the training sessions; between 50% and 93% of staff at the different homes were unable to answer one or more of the questions. After training, knowledge had improved dramatically so that only 0% to 37% were still unable to answer the questions.

Evaluation showed that the majority of staff felt the training was very good or excellent and 100% agreed it was relevant to them.

There was an improvement in the number of patients who were weighed monthly and in the accuracy of MUST screening.

Project staff worked collaboratively with care home staff and managers to ensure processes were in place to support the recommended practices.

**For further information, please contact:**

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