

Fine Dining in Care Settings

Raising awareness on good nutrition and improving mealtime experience in Dorset

The *Soundbites* project was started as a response to poor awareness on the importance of nutrition among staff in health and social care. The project, run by the Dorset Local Involvement Network (LINK) and Dorset County Council Health Scrutiny Committee, looked at the patient's and/or service user's mealtime experience in health and social care settings.

They aimed to find out whether people were being assessed for malnutrition, whether staff were trained in the appropriate tools and techniques, and how service users experienced mealtimes.

The Project

Using LINK resources, a team of volunteers (12 to 15) was recruited and trained to undertake 'Enter & View' visits to health and social care settings.

A template was developed for the 'Enter & View' team to use which offered prompts and questions to ask patients/staff. The results for each visit were summarised for each individual organisation under the headings "Observations", "What they do well" and "What could be improved".

Phase 1 (2011): Visits to acute hospitals, community hospitals and local authority managed care homes in Dorset.

Phase 2 (Jan – Aug 2012): Visits to 40 independent/private care homes.

Each phase concluded with a report including recommendations (see link below).

Volunteers undertake much of the work, so having good protocols and procedures for 'Enter & View' visits ensures they are carried out to the best standard possible.

Undertaking a review of this type and complexity also required allocating enough time to make sure progress was made.

It was essential to work with providers and to supply information that would be useful and usable for them. The project ran a free informal session called “Let them eat cake” to encourage them to come together, network and to learn from each other. It was attended by 50 care home managers.

The Benefits

The report for Phase 1 was well received and action plans were put in place by a number of the community hospitals and Dorset County Hospital.

The project has action plans from the service providers. Most of the changes are small but make a big difference to a patient’s or service user’s mealtime experience, e.g. providing appropriate napkins or tabards (instead of large plastic bib-type aprons), using photo menus or training staff to help provide individuals with the right support in eating and drinking.

The report for Phase 2 was published in July 2012. Dorset LINK will be following up the recommendations with providers in early 2013.

CQC also used the analysis from both Phases to provide their inspectors with useful information and to help them plan future visits. Some of the feedback reported has also been used by the local authority Monitoring Team.

For further information, please contact:

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Full reports can be found at www.makesachange.org.uk.

<http://www.makesachange.org.uk/cms/site/news/dorset/soundbites-mealtimes-in-care-homes-in-dorset.aspx>