

Press Release

Date: 22 May 2014

Stafford and Cannock GPs put ‘Memory First’ with revolutionary dementia support scheme that brings care closer to home

AN award-winning dementia support scheme is revolutionising care for Stafford and Cannock patients bringing specialised services directly to their door.

The Memory First project brings care closer to home for patients experiencing dementia by assigning each patient an Eldercare Facilitator – employed by St Giles Hospice and Douglas Macmillan Hospice and funded by GP First, a consortium of all 41 practices across Cannock and Stafford - to provide support for patients and their families and carers, to help them to access the services and support they need.

The pilot programme incorporates locally-based memory clinics led by a consultant psychiatrist or an advanced nurse practitioner, with social care services, charities and end of life support, and ensures, where possible, patients are able to access care in their own community under the care of their GP with expert support from South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare when needed.

Tracey Malcolm, an Eldercare Facilitator responsible for patients in Cannock Chase, Heath Hayes and Cheslyn Hay, said: “I think the service is already making a big difference.

“That’s clear just from the really positive feedback we are getting from patients, their relatives and carers,” she said. “I think a lot of that is down to the fact the patient has the same person coming to see them all the time. That continuity of care can be vital especially to patients experiencing dementia and to their family and carers.”

Two teams of Eldercare Facilitators operate across Cannock and Stafford and the surrounding area, taking referrals from GPs in the area and then contacting patients directly, before going out to their home to carry out an assessment and organising a personalised care plan.

“We organise everything for them basically,” said Tracey. “Booking them into a memory clinic at a nearby venue using an electronic calendar as well as making sure the patient and their carer are aware of all the care available to them, signposting them to services like Alzheimer’s Cafes, the Carers Association, MAZE, Respite Care and any websites or online resources they can access for support.

“One of the things that is clear to me having spent some time now meeting patients in the area I work and talking with the other Eldercare Facilitators at our monthly meetings is how badly the area needed a service like this.

“People are just so happy to have someone who will go out to them and spend some time with them showing a genuine concern and listening to them,” she said. “It’s a very rewarding job, especially with the feedback as positive as it is.

“It’s just wonderful to hear that ‘thank you’ and know you’re making a difference to people.”

The Memory First pilot developed by Cannock and Stafford and Surrounds Clinical Commissioning Groups in partnership with South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and led by GP First, was awarded £80,000 of funding in the NHS Innovation Challenge Prize earlier in the year.

Gnosall GP, Dr Ian Greaves, who led the development of the service said: “With an aging population the old models of dementia care are not sustainable.

“Keeping the patient under the responsibility of the GP, supported by secondary care expertise, when needed, is a real shift.

“The engagement of all 162 GPs across the 41 practices was key. We highlighted dementia as the area in which we could jointly have the greatest impact on patient care and the health economy.”

Chief Officer for Stafford and Surrounds and Cannock Chase Clinical Commissioning Groups Andy Donald said: “With an aging population putting extra pressures on health care services, putting the patient at the centre of their care, we have to start doing things differently, more innovatively.

“Part of this scheme uses smartphone apps to help patients and their families to monitor their care which is just one example of the innovative approach we’re taking.”

Director of Clinical Services at Douglas Macmillan Jeanette McCartney said: “The Memory First model for providing care for patients in the primary care setting, truly supports the patient and their carers by providing holistic support both pre and post diagnosis.”

Emma Hodges, Deputy Chief Executive of St Giles Hospice, said: “We were delighted to be able to lend our support to this innovative programme of care. Although the Eldercare Facilitators are funded by the NHS, we were able to use our expertise to identify and recruit the very best people for the job.

“Under the scheme, two teams of Facilitators, managed by ourselves and our colleagues at Douglas Macmillan Hospice, champion patients, their families and their carers, and work to ensure they get the support they need at such a difficult time.”

Case Study

Valerie Burgess, 65, and her husband John, 67, from Cannock have both benefitted from the new service.

John, who lives with his wife at Wellfield Close in Cannock, was first referred into the service by his GP after the couple grew concerned that his short term memory was diminishing.

“We first encountered the service two or three months after we were referred by John's GP,” said Mrs Burgess. “It’s been a really good experience for both of us.

“Tracey came to the house to see us and explained how it all worked and what she was going to be able to do to help us.

“She did a short assessment on John and at the end of it referred him to a consultant.

“One of the best things about the service has been that Tracey has followed us through the process since day one.” She said. “That made a big difference to both of us but especially to John.

“When you’re suffering from something like short term memory loss like John was, having someone professional with you there all the way through the process, from your assessment to those consultant appointments - which Tracy attended with us - is really reassuring.

“It can be quite worrying thinking you have Alzheimer’s.

“I knew John was anxious, but I don’t think I realised how anxious he was until we went through the process,” said Mrs Burgess. “Tracey understood that and how difficult it can make life when you think you are being ignored or thinking people don’t understand what you’re trying to say.”

“Our experience of the whole service has been that it’s been really supportive and helpful all the way through,” she said.

“Having Tracey come to us in our own home and the appointments somewhere local made the whole process so much easier as well. If we had had to travel, with the worry that came with everything, it would have been so much more difficult.”

Mrs Burgess said as well as arranging John’s appointments at the memory clinic and attending them with the couple, Tracey provided them with a variety of further information that signposted them to other groups they could contact if they were in need of any further support or care.

“John was told that he didn’t currently have Alzheimer’s but he would be assessed again in 12 months.”

Mr Burgess said the only way he could describe the service he had received was ‘fantastic’.

“Tracey came to see us straight away and she explained everything and then came back to assess me and then made all my appointments.”

“Everything was explained to us in simple terms we could understand first time.

“All my working life my memory has been important to me,” he said. “I used to work selling car parts and it was essential I was able to remember the specific number of each and every part in case I needed to look something up quickly.

“So starting to lose my memory was really, really worrying to me,” he said.

Mr Burgess said the support he and his wife had received from Tracey had been ‘absolutely marvellous’.

“She’s been fantastic,” he said. “She made us feel so comfortable every step of the way.

“It made me feel that much better to know I had the same person looking out for me at every step.

“I had my appointments at a local surgery too, Park House in Cannock, which made everything easier,” said Mr Burgess. “The doctor that did my test was very good.

“He took it on his own back and when he gave us the results and told me I didn’t have Alzheimer’s it was him that suggested we followed up the appointment with another in 12 month.”

Ends

Attachments

- Eldercare Facilitator Tracy Malcolm and John Burgess 2 [Eldercare Facilitator Tracy Malcolm and John Burgess 2](#)
- Eldercare Facilitator Tracy Malcolm and John Burgess 3 [Eldercare Facilitator Tracy Malcolm and John Burgess 3](#)
- Eldercare Facilitator Tracy Malcolm and John Burgess [Eldercare Facilitator Tracy Malcolm and John Burgess](#)
- Eldercare Facilitator Tracy Malcolm and Valerie and John Burgess [Eldercare Facilitator Tracy Malcolm and Valerie and John Burgess](#)
- Stafford and Cannock GPs put 'Memory First' with [Stafford and Cannock GPs put 'Memory First' with](#)
- Valerie and John Burgess [Valerie and John Burgess](#)