

Enabling emotional and psychological wellbeing in care home staff in Perth and Kinross

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Introduction

The impact of the pandemic on the care home workforce is still unfolding. During the pandemic the Perth and Kinross Health and Social Care Partnership worked closely with local care homes and became aware of the effects on staff of the additional emotional and psychological demands faced in caring for vulnerable residents and dealing with excessive loss.

This project involved health, social care and care home colleagues and adopted a collaborative, inclusive and participatory approach to develop an emotional and psychological support pathway and offer a range of supportive resources and reflective spaces.



What we did

By involving the staff concerned, listening and co-designing a range of resources were offered to respond to their diverse experiences and needs.

Resources

A bespoke booklet with information on 'normal reactions to abnormal circumstances' and self-help resources was developed, along with a local resource website and signposting poster. These were distributed to all care homes.

Fast Track Pathway

A fast track pathway to psychological services via GPs was agreed for care home workers struggling emotionally for more than 3 months.



Project ECHO Care Home Recovery Group

Building on an existing care home ECHO network, 4 online sessions were provided consisting of an informative presentation and facilitated discussion.



26 staff from 9 homes attended.

- Impact of Covid on staff wellbeing. Consultant Clinical Psychologist
- Psychological fallout. Mental Health Nurse Consultant
- Person centred care for residents and staff. Chaplain
- Supporting resilience. Palliative Care Practice Educators

Individual reflective sessions for care homes significantly affected by Covid

Facilitated reflective sessions were tailored to meet the needs of individual care homes.

Facilitators from PKC Learning and Development Team used a range of approaches and reflective tools.

A 'gratitude' gift bag was given to everyone attending.

The sessions offered a safe space for staff to reflect, share their thoughts and experiences and gain support from each other.

Reflective sessions were held in 3 care homes with 40 staff participating.

Manager reflective sessions

Care home managers have faced an increased burden of responsibility throughout the pandemic. A number of managers expressed a need for a safe space to share and reflect.

Co-designed sessions were facilitated to support reflection on experience, consider challenges faced and identify learning for the future.

2 sessions were offered and 11 managers attended.

There was interest in ongoing peer support using 'Spaces for Listening'.



What happened?

Feedback demonstrated that those involved felt valued, were able to reflect on shared experience and feelings, were better able to understand and deal with the effects on them as individuals and as teams, and consequently felt stronger and more resilient.

The ECHO group created a poem to reflect their experience.

They benefited from the connection with each other, other care homes and HSCP partners which raised awareness that they were not alone.

It has been great to connect and realise that we all feel the same and that we are not alone in feeling this way

When we spoke about person centred care I always focussed on the residents needs but it made me realise the importance of thinking about myself and looking after myself


Great to have a session for me. I found it calming as I have tried to be everything to everyone. Made me reflect on my own needs

It has helped me. It has given words to my feelings

It made me feel I was not alone

Made me feel human again. I have been pulled in so many ways

So good to talk and let my feelings out



These are my hands

These are the hands that have coped in a Pandemic
These are the hands that now look dry
These are the hands that help us care
These are the hands that felt sorrow and joy

These are the hands that stayed with you to the end
These are the hands that stroked your hair
These are the hands that provide loving care

These are the hands that help
These are the hands that love

These are the hands that make me complete
These are the hands that have held it together
These are our hands

This poem, inspired by Michael Rosen's 'These are the Hands' poem, was written by a group of Care Home staff who had come together through Project ECHO to reflect on the impact of the pandemic on staff wellbeing. The group were invited to consider their own hands and the 'journey' those hands have been on through the pandemic.

As a team we have grown together and learned better coping mechanisms

Conclusion

By creating safe spaces for reflection, openness and honesty this project offered opportunities for care home staff to take time to process their experiences and recognise the importance of self-care and maintaining their own well-being.

Group discussions and the range of resources provided offered suggestions to support this going forward. We sought to facilitate a supportive community of practice which acknowledged the impact of multiple loss and change.

As a consequence of this collaborative approach staff were engaged in the process and as a result felt valued, listened to and supported, enabling them to feel stronger and more resilient going forward.

