Good Practice Example – introducing ICT into a residential setting

IDEA DETAILS

- **What do you base this on?**

Prior to their Get Connected grant Hardwick House's only use of ICT was a sole computer in the manager's office with no access to the internet.

Therefore the plan was to introduce computers and internet access into the residential home for residents and staff.

- **What views were expressed by service users and carers?**

When I first started talking about the possibility of having the internet with both staff and residents having access, the idea was met by a very mixed response.

Some residents said that they were 'too old to learn something new' others said they would not be interested as 'they would not be able to work one.'

Some staff members were of the same opinion; they did not use a computer at home and appeared reluctant.

Other staff who use the internet at home were very excited about the prospect and immediately could see the benefits to residents and the care team.

- **Who are your other key stakeholders and what do they think about your idea?**

The feedback from residents' families was without doubt positive. Many family members live a long way away. Some have incredibly busy lives. They thought that providing residents with individual emails would open a whole new avenue of communication.

OUTCOMES WANTED

- **What are your intended outcomes and how will these be measured?**

In getting Hardwick House connected we aimed to improve communication for residents, through email and Skype and to support the staff in a quest for continuous learning. Not to mention supporting the residents having fun!

ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN TO ACHIEVE THE OUTCOMES

- **The actions I undertook to achieve my outcomes?**

When I first thought about what I would need here at work to achieve my objectives, I was pretty much in the dark. I asked for advice from two suppliers and they were able to discuss the hardware and software I would need.

I felt strongly that our intended outcomes would not be achieved if we did not give serious thought to 'who would be using it'. The touch screen computer which has a large screen simplifies everything down to the basics, which seemed to cover this.

We were then able to discuss how to help those residents who would physically find using a computer hard. We discussed using accessible equipment; giant mouse and large keyboard, partially for those with visibility issues and those with arthritis.

WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED?

- **Briefly describe outcomes you achieved. Were there any that were less successful?**

The first signs are outstandingly positive, with staff support and interest from families the residents are using the computers, and with encouragement from the staff they are seeing the benefits.

Within a week of the computers arriving we had residents set up with emails. There was a real buzz of excitement when the first email was opened and it contained three pictures of the snow taken that morning, it introduced a whole topic of discussion over lunch.

There has been a real air of positivity at Hardwick House, over the 'Getting Connected' project. Residents have been looking at Google earth, looking up houses where they have lived. They have also been passing the time looking up comedy moments on YouTube, we have introduced internet café mornings to our monthly activities sheets.

Residents are using email with our support. Within a short space of time I can see some residents will become independent on the computers.

Skype has been another means of communication used by residents with support. For residents to be able to talk and see friends and families abroad has had an amazing experience.

Our residents are very astute people were amazed that they could contact family and relatives all over the world for free.

As for staff training and supporting them with the whole internet of reference material, this outcome will be achieved over a longer period of time. The initial impact is lower but equally important

- **Were you surprised by what actually happened when you tested this good idea?**

I have been surprised at how much of an impact Skype and emails have had on the residents. I have been fortunate that a number of the care team are computer literate and have therefore been able to help residents find their way online. But even after one training session, staff who seldom use computers are confidently helping residents.

Not only have we seen the benefit for the resident using the computer the impact ripples out, noticeably with more discussions within the whole house.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

- **Do you think this practice is sustainable and why?**

My personal impression is that as time goes on the internet is being used for more and more. As the benefits for the benefits for ICT, these far outweigh the low cast to maintain such a solution.

Five years ago, I didn't have an email address, now the emails come through on my phone and I do my banking online. I can't believe I ever coped without having the internet.

I think the pressure for residents to be online will come from their families and in a few years it will be an expected facility.

- **Why and how could this practice be taken up by others?**

In applying for the Get Connected grant there has been a step by step process to go through. This has been a simple process, and it has helped me clarify my objectives for my home. I have received very good support from the organisations involved.

I am so pleased I applied for the grant, I am sure that my home would have had to get connected during the next five years, and this way I have been able to do so with excellent support.

- **What is your evidence about its affordability?**

The Get Connected project has fully funded the first year of ICT equipment but there will obviously be a financial impact for future years.

This can easily be justified if the expected outcomes are achieved. The monthly cost of internet access is not massive, and I am assured that an on-going technical support package can be negotiated, tailored around our needs. As staff become familiar with the technology it is hoped that one day they'll be able to provide the majority of ICT support for Hardwick House.