

Exploring The Importance of Community Connection in Rehabilitation



Authors

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Background

Hospital at Home (H@H) support the rehabilitation of people acutely ill in their own homes. Unique in NHS Scotland, Forth Valley H@H also supports individuals' social connection to their community through person-centred Community Link Work.

Method

A Community Link Worker (CLW) is employed for 22.5 hours per week to support individuals to connect to their community using Good Life Conversations (Russell, 2017) to explore what is important and what they enjoy. The CLW connects individuals to local groups and activities of interest, provides emotional support, and signposts to enabling services, eg welfare benefits, transport assistance and carer support.

Results

From February to August 2023, the CLW received 28 H@H referrals, providing 42 home visits and 50 support telephone calls. The CLW connects individuals with a range of activities based on their interests, offering opportunities to meet local people (see fig. 1). Patient case studies/feedback (fig. 2 & 3) and staff feedback (fig. 4) have been collected.

Conclusions

The CLW role impacts positively on individuals' mental health and longevity by connecting them to their community (Hold-Lunstad, Smith and Layton, 2010), and impacts positively on the staff team. Other services that focus on the clinical wellbeing of frail and/or palliative care patients would also benefit from a dedicated CLW to focus on social connection to provide holistic support.

For Further Information contact

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Figure 1

Community Activities Accessed

Townbreak (dementia support) **Snowdrop Café Trinity-Falkirk (Community Café)**
Dial-a-journey **Food pantry** **Food train**
Keep Larbert and Stenhousemuir Beautiful (lunch club)
University of the Third Age **Dementia Friendly Dunblane**
Local Church **Peer Support and Lunch Club**

Figure 2

Beryl and Ron's Story

The CLW visited Ron* and Beryl*, as due to Ron's mobility and incontinence they no longer felt connected to their community. The CLW signposted to welfare benefits and informed that incontinence pads could be supplied by NHS instead of being purchased. Due to safety concerns the CLW made them aware of telecare, which was later installed, and Beryl was

signposted to her local Carers Centre. They were supported with Blue Badge and Dial-a-Journey applications. Thanks to the CLW, they learnt of a local lunch club and history group and started attending. Beryl commented that they had missed mixing socially and is looking forward to going back to the groups again.

Figure 3

Feedback from Individuals Referred to CLW

"You have been so patient and understanding! Your support has been fantastic"

"I appreciate that you are listening to me as it helps me vent"

Figure 4

H@H Staff Feedback

"[The CLW] networks with other agencies, providing a service that we at H@H wouldn't always be aware of"

"Provision of a service like this deals with spiritual, emotional, practical and social needs, providing links with agencies for example day care or a befriending service; this has an unquestionable impact on our patient's wellbeing"

"The Community Link Worker... frees up time for me as a practitioner to be able to deal with clinical needs. This resource is invaluable within the H@H team"

References

Russel, C. (2017) "The Good Life Conversation", Nurture Development. Available at: www.nurturedevelopment.org/goodlifeconversation/ (accessed 06.09.2023)
Hold-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Layton JB (2010) "Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review". PLoS Med 7(7): e1000316. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316> (accessed 06.09.2023)

