Developing support courses for carers of community patients in a hospice setting

The Government’s end of life strategy identified families and carers need for information, practical and emotional support. Evidence suggests that when carers are supported early in their role crisis can be avoided. This project was developed by Faith Rylands, Community Palliative Care Nurse Specialist and Caroline Archibald, Associate Community Nurse Specialist, in response to carers describing feeling unprepared for the challenges.

**Our Aims**

- To explore the emotional impact of caring for someone at the end of life by offering cooking course and carer support group
- To empower carers through support and knowledge so they can feel part of the patients care
- To offer support through meeting other people in the same situation and providing practical information to carers to help look after themselves

**What did we do?**

A weekly carer’s support group and a cooking course were piloted in 2014. Carers were invited via the community team, or referred by District Nurses, GPs or local carer charities.

The contents of the course were developed following discussions with colleagues and request from carers. For example, managing medications and self-care. Weekly evaluation forms were completed by the participants resulting in carers being offered 1:1 support as some expressed a preference for this over group support.

**Results**

Each course ran once in 2014 with positive evaluations. Changes were made according to suggestions: changing the title from carers support to Friends and Family and providing an evening course for those who were unable to attend during the day.

**What is the future?**

Positive feedback from the courses continued post bereavement in some cases, demonstrating the lasting impact of the support. The intention now is to continue to respond to the carer feedback by ongoing development of the courses.

In the future we will:
- Run more frequent courses in 2016
- Set up courses in different locations across the County
- Train and support RGNs and Multidisciplinary Team Assistants to run courses

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"The knowledge and information that I’ve gained have given me valuable tools to use and keep in my personal rather than medicinal just in case box"