

PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Peer Support for people living with stroke	Date Project started: July 2006
Project Lead (MI): Gaynor Smith	Date Project closed: Ongoing
Project Lead (Other): Connect	

Brief description of aims of project:

- Reduce the isolation and anxiety of people with stroke in Lambeth and Southwark
- Increase the confidence of people with stroke to engage in social and community life
- Enable people with stroke to develop, deliver and influence services
- Increase the skills, confidence and opportunities of people with stroke

Reason for change:

Local people living with stroke reported that the life-changing impact of stroke was poorly addressed by health and social care services. The transition from hospital to home and the longer term challenge of re-engaging with life was often accompanied by a sense of isolation and confusion about what support was available. People living with stroke reported how much they valued the opportunity to share their experiences with other people who had personal experience of stroke.

In line with the growing self management policy agenda there was a need for service users to be able to have significant influence on statutory service provision, promoting approaches to 'disability mastery', identifying and delivering a wide range of resources and opportunities for people living with stroke.

What we did (action taken):

Connect, the national communication disability network, was awarded a tender to develop and pilot a peer support service:

- Recruit, train and support people living with stroke to become peer supporters.
- Develop and pilot a brokerage system to take referrals and coordinate requests for peer support from local health and social care professionals and people living with stroke.
- Evaluate the pilot project.

Impact, display data baseline to current:

- Sixteen local people currently act as peer supporters providing home visits to people with stroke and regular sessions on the stroke units.
- 69 referrals for peer support received
- 48 local people have received peer support.

Outcomes / Learning:

Outcomes:

- increased confidence and well-being of people living with stroke accessing the peer support service
- equitable access to peer support service for all people living with stroke across Lambeth and Southwark, including people from BME communities and people living in care homes
- increased opportunities for people living with stroke in Lambeth and Southwark to contribute directly to service development and delivery

Learning:

- significant time and resources are required in order to raise the profile of the new service with a view to attracting referrals
- potential referrers need clear information regarding the skills and training of the peer supporters to allay any anxieties about using the service
- training and support needs to be given to referrers to complete risk assessment forms and provide sufficient background information about client being referred
- careful management of communication issues for peer supporters is essential
- thought needs to be given about how to manage cancellation of session by peer supportee or peer supporter due to unforeseen circumstances
- good liaison with commissioners and planners is important in order to ensure that the scheme has a high profile

How has change been sustained:

Lambeth and Southwark Primary Care Trusts, together with Guy's and St. Thomas' Charity, have committed to supporting the development of a local Stroke User Involvement Network that will sustain the innovative and far reaching methods of engagement achieved by the MI, and in addition facilitate a new phase of development in these approaches. This new phase will aim to embed peer support and other Network activity in the local community, enabling people who have experienced stroke to participate more fully in mainstream activities, and engage with the plurality of agencies that work with people with stroke.

Contacts for further info:

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