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NICE Shared Learning Awards 2008



Enthusiasm for life: creative stimulation and behaviour change for older people and others

Aim

Upstream was conceived by local GPs who saw the need to complement what health and social care professionals provide for older people. In a climate of ageing demographics and rising NHS costs, a creative approach has found the answers lie with people themselves. Upstream aims to reduce isolation and depression among older people and others, increase self-confidence, prolong active life and independence, rigorously evaluate and disseminate outcomes, and influence local practice and national policy.

Objectives

- To inspire individuals and groups to learn skills, make friends, improve health, reduce unnecessary GP visits, inappropriate medication and unplanned hospital admissions - using Upstream mentors and stimulating creative, learning and social activities.
- To change behaviour and expectations among communities and authorities concerning people's individual and collective potential, whatever their age.
- To demonstrate to GPs and PCTs the high quality contribution the third sector makes to professional priorities in delivering health and well-being.

Context

With a keen eye on WHO reports, National Strategic Frameworks, White Papers and local government plans, Upstream focuses on GPs' concern that well-being should be balanced between mental, physical and social health, the existence of hope and the will to live. Community consultations, work with frontline NHS staff, and programmes self-tailored by participants ensure a collaborative project with everyone responsible for success.

Results

- Upstream comprehensively delivers NICE guidance on 'Behaviour Change' in terms of: careful planning based on needs and skills, social context and motivation, shared education, interventions at all levels, evaluation including cost-effectiveness.
- 1,000 people in mid-Devon have participated.
- Disseminated Devon-wide by third sector consortium commissioned by Devon PCT and County Council.
- The DH and NHS Live recognise Upstream as a successful innovation; Upstream presents to national and regional conferences.
- Graduated from grant funding to commissioned social enterprise, a prime example of sustainable third sector initiative in genuine working partnership with the public sector.

Monitoring and evaluation

An independent evaluation by the Peninsula Medical School, published by the Royal Society of Health, 2006, found clinically significant improvements in mental health, dramatic changes in behaviour, and other health benefits. The School is now researching cost-effectiveness Devon-wide. Continuous feedback from NHS staff and participants inform service delivery and 'consultation conversations' encourage grassroots self-evaluation. All agree that Upstream's uniquely creative approach addresses individual needs holistically and effectively.

Key learning points

- Success derives from motivation and self-confidence: enthusiasm for life.
- The approach works with other interconnected issues: falls prevention, obesity, intergenerational, community safety, families.
- Commissioners need a 'leap of faith' to invest in different approaches and the third sector must earn trust with high quality provision.
- The third sector should not be seen as a 'cheap' option but as a cost-effective option.



SHARED LEARNING AWARD ENTRY SUBMITTED BY

Organisation Upstream in the Community

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