MAKING IMPROVEMENTS

Suraiya Chowdhury, Diabetes UK Leadership Programme Manager, talks to two of the charity’s Tomorrow’s Leaders programme alumni about the improvement work they have been leading on.

Supporting community nurses and empowering patients:

Diabetes specialist nurse (DSN), Elizabeth Dutch, moved from a large community-based team in Brighton to working independently in Wirral Community NHS Foundation Trust. Here, she recognised a lack of education and support available to the community nurses caring for housebound patients with diabetes.

Lizzie started accompanying them on house visits and eventually rolled out a group education programme. She also worked to review the community diabetes caseload, and modify treatment regimens and identify patients who could be supported to be more independent. She streamlined the process further by working with IT providers to embed a self-management pathway and simplify recording.

Lizzie has empowered more patients to take over their own care, reducing DSN visits. With colleagues, she has enabled their department to order magnifying glasses that have helped her patients to take control of their diabetes, as they are now able to read and adjust their own insulin.

Reflecting upon the improvements, Lizzie says: “It’s been most rewarding to see people being able to become more independent. Some patients, who were seeing a nurse twice a day, could now go on holiday or even go out for the day with their relative.”

Lizzie’s top three tips to any DSN taking on a service improvement project:

1. Introduce yourself and your job, so that people understand what you are doing.
2. Understand what people want from you.
3. Research and understand the demographic before you start making changes.

Lizzie is focusing on building her experience now and is working with people with Type 1 diabetes and also homeless people in Liverpool. She continues working in service improvement, as she will be the QOF lead for diabetes for the practice.

Improving uptake of diabetes education:

Ellen Mitchell, diabetes dietitian based at the Countess of Chester Hospital, has been working to improve the education available to patients, improve uptake and access.

Historically, Diabetes Essentials, a diabetes education course, has been delivered in community venues, and has often been perceived as an optional extra. Ellen has been working to integrate the course into the care pathway, establishing it as an essential part of diabetes care.

Ellen is currently piloting a newly diagnosed group education clinic at GP practices across Runcorn and Widnes. Standardised and audited education sessions are now delivered monthly within GP practices, serving as precursor to nurse appointments and paving the way for practice nurses to reinforce learning and follow-up.

Incorporating sessions into routine care means GP practices have taken more ownership of the programme, resulting in more cohesive care, as patients can be booked onto the programme when they come in. Ellen’s model has also meant better QOF reporting and more dietetic support for practice nurses, while patients can also access peer support and education.

Ellen’s top three tips for others leading service improvement are:

1. Communicate and get to know key people, so that they buy into your idea. Have clearly defined roles so that others feel part of the process.
2. Shadow the service. This will give you a sense of what is already being provided and what resources are available. It also leads to much better working relationships.
3. Know the IT system. Technology can be a barrier to implementing change. Keep things simple, understand what is available and what is actually needed.

CHARITY’S COMPLICATIONS CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS RISKS

Every week there are more than 169 amputations, and more than 30 people developing sight loss as a result of diabetes. Diabetes UK’s online campaign, Be in the know, aims to raise awareness of complications among people living with diabetes and the general public.

Since the campaign’s launch in July, more than 600,000 people have been led to a wealth of tailored information on the Diabetes UK website. Of those, 163,000 people went on to view personalised resources and content through Diabetes and Me, to learn more about reducing their risk of diabetes complications. This information includes real-life stories and videos from people who have experienced complications.

For free flyers and posters go to www.diabetes.org.uk/up-bitk