Delivering the Occupational Therapy Activity Toolkit to improve quality of life of residents with a dementia in a residential care home; utilising community projects and social care students: a pilot service development.

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Rational
Clinicians recognise resident’s quality of life could be enhanced through homely environments and meaningful activity. Care home residents should have active roles in choosing and participating in meaningful activity which promotes wellbeing. Exploring life histories, engaging in familiar activities and maintaining community links can improve quality of life and resident’s connectedness to their self-identity. To maintain resident’s personhood; access to meaningful activities, opportunities to feel useful and valued and family/community links were deemed important. If care home staff have a better understanding of meaningful activity, community occupational therapists could be better utilised.

OUTCOMES/THMES

Resident’s quality of life
Pre: 5/10 residents have control, activity staff have more control.
Post: 9/10 choice, control and dignity were encouraged when engaging.

Life history work
Pre: memory boxes outside each resident’s room.
Post: activity staff exploring using life history work.

Home environment
Recommendations from Residential Environmental Impact Scale:
- Use indoor, outside space and equipment better
- Orientation boards
- More sensory equipment/ rummage boxes
Since recommendations:
- Developing outside space
- Activities are accessible

Occupational therapy toolkit:
Pre: no prior knowledge
Post: “Handouts were beneficial reference points for exchanging ideas and experiences” Enabled staff to identify new ways of working, new activities.

Job/staff satisfaction
Pre: “Would like to do more”, not always recognising opportunities
Not enough time
Post: Staff better understand engaging residents
Re-thinking their working day,
“Valuing small things we do with residents”
Recognising they were already engaged in meaningful activity
Reflected and desire more training.

Impact on the NHS trust
“By empowering care home staff to see patients as people with histories and lives we are enabling them to improve the quality of their care, and the range of activities utilised with patients. For the Trust this will reduce referrals and will help the care home staff to work with Trust staff with confidence.” NHS Operational Service Manager.

Limitations
- Some staff have limited understanding or confidence with meaningful activity.
- Time to plan and engage
- Needs senior staff driving changes
- Needs staff training

What happened next
- Activity coordinator supervision sessions running and pen pal services
- Developing social media pages for homes
- Developing and delivering training to other residential homes
- Supporting college students to volunteer with residential home activity coordinators
- “Keeping you in mind” linking college students with residents to develop relationships

Why Occupational therapy?
- Utilises a holistic approach
- Advise and adapt environments
- Enable and encourage meaningful activity
- Use the occupational therapy toolkit
- Problem solving
- Grading activity

“Should there be no doubt a positive shift in staff thinking and understanding following this training and their reflection on it. I have seen this as a very supportive, worthwhile and very interesting experience which is creating positive results.”
Residential Home Manager

“I feel much more like I work with the residents rather than for the residents.”
Residential Home Staff