

## Focus on Specialist Dementia Units: June 2018

### Strathbeg Ward, Royal Cornhill Hospital, Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership

#### Introduction

This paper sets out a summary of improvement work being undertaken in collaboration with Strathbeg Specialist Dementia Unit. This work was commissioned by Chief Nursing Officer Directorate at Scottish Government and is being led by Focus on Dementia, the national improvement programme for dementia in Scotland, based within the ihub of Healthcare Improvement Scotland. Focus on Dementia are working together with the team at Strathbeg and national partners including Alzheimer Scotland, NHS Education for Scotland, Scottish Care and the Care Inspectorate.

#### Background and Context

Strathbeg is a 12 bedded all-male Specialist Dementia Unit. It is managed by Mental Health Services in Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership. Strathbeg is a re-enablement and rehabilitation ward and aims to discharge patients into community settings. Admission to Strathbeg is generally following referral from the dementia assessment ward. In 2016, Strathbeg was selected as one of the four demonstrator sites for Focus on Dementia.

#### Understanding What Matters

Demonstrator sites have used the Experience Based Co-design model to help them identify improvement priorities relevant to their local context. A range of participatory approaches, including patient observations, interviews and co-design events have been undertaken to identify areas for improvement which matter most to people with dementia, carers and staff. The advantage of using this model is that staff, patients and carers will identify the areas which matter most to them, therefore promoting greater engagement and support for changes and improvements which will ultimately lead to longer term sustainability. By supporting staff to improve their knowledge and skills in participatory and improvement approaches, they will be able to continue to use these skills as part of everyday improvements in practice.

#### Experiences of Staff working in the Unit

Julia Wells (NHS Grampian Nurse Consultant Older Adults Mental Health for HSCP) and Stephanie Kennedy (Senior Charge Nurse, Strathbeg) have shared their experiences of the work to date.

Julia has been involved in this process from the outset. Julia has described some of the learning from this process as *'fascinating'* and she reflected on some of the findings and challenges of this work including:

- Carer trust is fragile and easily lost.
- The resilience of the team is a key factor in maintaining a happy work environment and ultimately impacts on good quality care delivery.
- Activity is viewed as important by carers and staff.
- Maintaining stress and distress training has been challenging due to staff retention and has led to reviewing how staff training is delivered.

When discussing the process, Julia explained *"The carer feedback we have received has been really enlightening and has made us as practitioners challenge our assumptions about what causes carers stress. For example laundry going missing is a big challenge for the ward for a variety of reasons."*



Stephanie  
Kennedy

Julia  
Wells

*We have families approach us with concern about clothing items, I had always thought that they were distressed because the laundering of clothes allowed them to feel involved. However, feedback revealed that families felt that clothing was so important as it was the remaining part of identity that their loved one had.*



Some of the team from Strathbeg Ward

*Our nursing staff at all grades, really enjoyed both the staff event and co-design event and were really animated at these events and delighted to be given the voice to identify improvement themes and appreciated the opportunity to be honest. This process has also been a fantastic opportunity for cross team working with significant input from Psychology, OT, Speech Therapy and Physiotherapy who have all brought different aspects to the process both during data collection and now improvement work. It has been a valuable opportunity to have all these disciplines involved alongside the staff who work in the ward daily to prioritise themes for improvement.*

*Over all to date this project has been thoroughly enjoyable and has allowed us to grow both individually and as a team, in data collection through observation and interview, co-design and now improvement work."*

Stephanie Kennedy joined the Strathbeg team in January 2018 when this work had already been underway for some time. Stephanie commented 'I have been particularly impressed by the energy and drive around the project'. Stephanie has also reflected on the challenges of engaging with patients and carers to gather their feedback, however added that 'we receive lots of conversational feedback, much of which I have been able to capture on our monthly Care Assurance Tool'.

As a result of the experienced based co-design methods, the following priorities for improvement have been identified by Strathbeg: **stress & distress, activity** and **resilience**.

## Conclusion

This programme has used innovative person centred approaches to identify meaningful changes that respond to the local challenges and improve patient, carer and staff experiences. It is now embarking on the next phase using the model for improvement to implement identified change ideas. Focus on Dementia within the ihub at Healthcare Improvement Scotland, in conjunction with a range of national partners, will continue to work with all members of the team in Strathbeg.

## Appendix One: Experience Based Codesign Methodology in Practice in Strathbeg Ward

