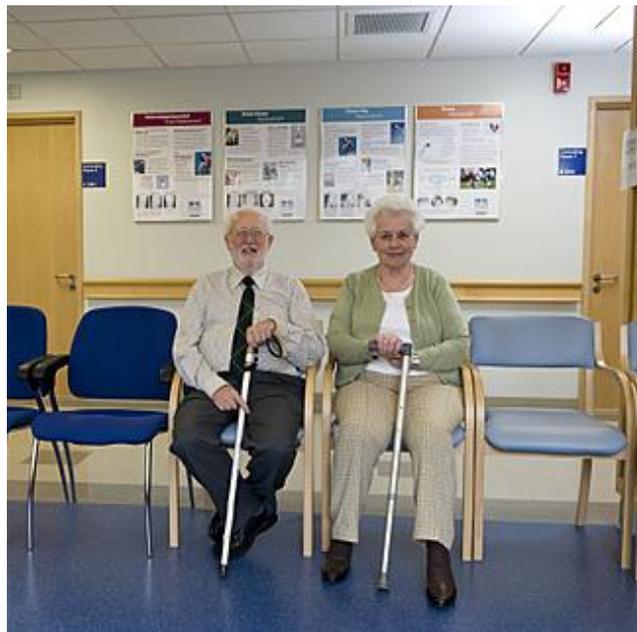


# Embedding carer support in the hospital discharge hub Fife Health and Social Care Partnership

November 2022

In the Victoria Hospital in Fife, a dedicated carer support worker is based within the discharge hub to support carers while the person they care for is in hospital and to help them prepare for discharge. Fife Health & Social Care Partnership commission Fife Carers Centre to deliver this service.

In this impact story we explore the role of the carer support worker in the Victoria Hospital.



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“Thank-you for listening to us and our concerns about moving Mum to a nursing home. We had promised not to send her there. You explained the Discharge pathways and assessments clearly and made us think about what was really best for Mum, to keep her safe and prevent her being readmitted to hospital again.”

Service user

## Background

In the Victoria Hospital in Fife, a discharge hub operates to reduce delays and ensure a seamless pathway out of hospital to another facility or to the community for patients requiring an ongoing package of care. The discharge hub is a multidisciplinary team that includes patient flow coordinators, social workers and bed administrators.

Hospital staff had previously identified issues of carer stress, particularly within the medicine of the elderly wards. In 2017, Fife Health and Social Care Partnership commissioned a pilot with Fife Carers Centre to test the role of a hospital carer support worker in the discharge hub, just before the Carers Scotland Act was brought in with specific duties to involve carers in hospital discharge.

The pilot initially focused on supporting carers in medicine of the elderly wards, however hospital staff quickly identified the need for support in other departments. The pilot was deemed successful and support is now offered to carers across the Victoria Hospital.

## Approach

The hospital carer support worker is embedded within the discharge hub and identifies carers in need of support via daily team meetings with any involvement recorded on the electronic patient board. Staff across the hospital can also make referrals by completing a form and emailing the carer support worker.

### **Supporting the emotional wellbeing of carers**

The carer support worker arranges a face to face meeting with the carer where possible to discuss the caring situation and develop an understanding of any concerns the carer has and provide information about what additional support might be available. If ongoing support in the community is needed a referral is made to Fife Carers Centre where an adult carer support plan can be completed.

### **Supporting involvement in hospital discharge**

Planning for discharge can be a challenging time for carers especially where there are differences in expectations between the carer and staff e.g. related to package of support required for the cared for person. The carer support worker can attend discharge planning meetings with the carer to support them to have their voice heard and will spend time discussing the options and the impact this might have on both the patient and carer.

### **Staff engagement**

A key part of the role is ensuring that staff are aware of the importance of involving carers and of the support offered by the carer support worker. Presentations to staff groups are held on a regular and ongoing basis, including with allied health professionals, hospital social workers and charge nurses.



## Impact

The impact of the service has been captured through case studies and verbal feedback received from carers and staff. The carer support worker also maintains a database that monitors referral numbers and the support provided.

The role of the support worker has had a positive impact on carers, staff, and the system.

## Carers

### Reduced carer anxiety.

Carers' anxiety is reduced as they have someone who has the time to listen and focus on their needs.

### Improved understanding

Carers gain an improved understanding about why changes are happening and types of support being offered to aid decision making during discharge planning.

## Staff

### Improved understanding on support required at home.

The carer support worker has the time to spend with carers and build trusted relationships. Carers often divulge new information that provides essential insight into what support is required at home and reduces resistance to accepting a package of care.

### Early involvement and support for discharge

Referrals are received from all hospital departments, including the admissions unit, and from a wide range of professions. This enables earlier conversations with carers and the opportunity for earlier involvement in decision-making.

## Systems

### Reduction of repeated admissions.

There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that by ensuring both patients and carers have access to the support required following discharge that repeated admissions can be reduced.

### Spread of service

The success of the service at the Victoria Hospital has impacted the wider system as the service has now spread with hospital carer support workers based across all acute and community hospitals.

## Impact of service

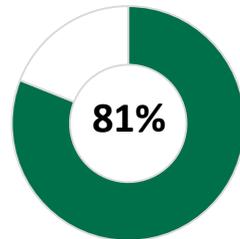
Since the pilot, the service has continued to grow.

252

In the first year of operation in 2017/18, the service received 252 referrals.

551

In the first ten months of 2022, they received 551 referrals in Victoria Hospital alone, with 791 total across the Fife Hospital service.



There has been an 81% increase in referrals in 2020/21 compared to first year.

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*“Thanks for all your support whilst Dad was in Hospital and planning his discharge home with Carers. It has made a big difference to us all that we had not appreciated until we met with you.”*

Service user



## Key enablers

- **Ability to provide a quick and responsive service**

Referrals can be time sensitive and it is important that the service is able to respond quickly. This has been made possible by staff recruitment to provide a five day service.

- **Face to face engagement with carers**

As a member of the discharge hub, the carer support worker has access to meet with carers in all hospital wards and departments. Face to face contact enables the worker to build strong and trusted relationships with carers that supports the sharing of information.

- **Recognising the importance of continuous networking with staff**

Being visible is a key part of the role, and the carer support worker works continuously at networking and building trusted relationships across the workforce. For example, there is ongoing engagement with charge nurses to ensure that carers are identified during ward rounds.

- **Staff awareness of carers**

A staff training programme implemented by the carer support worker has generated good awareness of the role of carers and buy in for the service across the workforce. This is demonstrated by the number and range of staff and departments making referrals.

## Opportunities for improvement

- **Development of a Fife wide service**

A Fife wide service is now in development with carer support workers based in all six acute and community hospitals. The approach may need to be adapted to ensure the service meets the differing needs within community hospitals.

Established carer support workers are providing training and shadowing opportunities for new staff members to build capacity. A key challenge for new carer support officers will be to work to build the reputation in the new sites to encourage referrals and ensure carers have access to the service.

## Further information

More information on the service can be found on the [Fife Health and Social Care webpages](#). Fife Carers Centre have produced a [case study film](#) about the role of the carer support worker.

The Unpaid Carers Improvement Programme is part of Healthcare Improvement Scotland's Improvement Hub (ihub). Visit [our webpages](#) to read more about our improvement work.

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