

Integrating dementia services with the NHS Health Check

Integrating the NHS Health Check Programme with wider health and social care services for high risk groups.

The ambition

Peterborough set out to ensure that during an NHS Health Check people identified at risk of, or diagnosed with dementia, were connected with the services they required.

The background

Peterborough is a Cathedral City on the river Nene in Cambridgeshire. The city was an industrial centre noted for its brick production. Industrial employment has now fallen and a significant proportion of new jobs are in financial services and distribution.

The city's population is 183,631 and this is expected to grow to 207,900 by 2021. The population is 70.9% white British¹ and the city ranks 71st in England on the Index of Multiple Deprivation³. Life Expectancy is slightly below the national average at 82 years for females and 78 years for males².

Estimates suggest Peterborough has over 1,000 people living with dementia in the community with only 45% of them having been actually diagnosed. National research has indicated reluctance within primary care to diagnose dementia due to a perceived lack of follow on



services. The Peterborough public health team also identified a significant gap in knowledge across health and social care professionals, regarding the potential for lifestyle changes to reduce the risk of developing vascular dementia.

The NHS Health Check provided an opportunity to promote Peterborough's investment in dementia services, including the new Dementia Resource Centre (the centre combines the NHS Memory Clinic with advice, information and support from the Alzheimer's Society). It also provided a platform for addressing the knowledge and skills gap among professionals.

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How did Peterborough develop their solution to integrate the NHS Health Check and dementia services?

Developing dementia friendly communities was a core outcome within Peterborough City Council's Strategy for "People with dementia and their carers". The NHS Health Check provided an opportunity to address a key part of this aspiration by raising awareness of dementia and addressing stigma.

Peterborough's NHS Health Check programme manager became a member of the council's Dementia Steering Group. This allowed for a more joined up approach with the NHS Health Check, with the dementia awareness component being used to support the development of broader dementia services.

The City Council and partners from the dementia steering group worked together to promote the dementia friends initiative and the NHS Health Check. Both initiatives supported the start of a dialogue about dementia and encouraged people to learn more through the Alzheimer's Society.

Delivery of the NHS Health Check

An NHS Health Check launch event was held on 13 April 2013. All GP practice managers and clinical staff attended. Presentations covered the inclusion of the dementia awareness component within the NHS Health Check. Training packages were downloaded from the national NHS Health Check website and leaflets and guidance were provided to all attendees. NHS Health Check leaflets, which included the dementia awareness component, were then distributed to all practices.



The leaflets were sent out with NHS Health Check invitation letters.

A GP referral pathway from the NHS Health Check was developed for people with concerns around memory loss. The NHS Health Check has been set up to signpost people to dementia services. As of February 2014, the service has signposted people to the Alzheimer's Society. This organisation provides a range of activities and groups from community locations across the city.

From Autumn 2014, the NHS Health Check service will start to signpost to the new Dementia Resource Centre. This new centre will provide access to advice and information from the Alzheimer's Society, assessment and diagnosis from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT) NHS Memory Clinic and post diagnostic support groups and activities for both people with dementia and their carers and loved ones.

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Data has been collected monthly and practices facing challenges have been identified. In order to support these practices in implementing the change to the NHS Health Check, a clinical coach (CHD clinical nurse lead) was employed by Peterborough's Public Health department. The coach systematically visits all practices to provide support and address issues regarding the new dementia component of the NHS Health Check.

Primary care experience high staff turnover which can affect consistency in the quality of the NHS Health Check Service. The clinical coach also supports addressing this issue by ensuring all staff can access the training modules available on the national NHS Health Check website and that only those aged 65 and over receive the dementia awareness information.

Outcomes

Peterborough City Council found dementia to be a natural fit for the NHS Health Check programme and a great opportunity to increase dementia diagnosis rates, as well as discussing dementia in the same way as other long term conditions.

The NHS Health Check delivered dementia awareness raising to 1,840 people during 2013/14. This made up 25% of the total number of the NHS Health Checks delivered. Peterborough aims to sustain or increase this number during 2014/15.

The dementia component has been embedded in the NHS Health Check programme within the 25 GP practices in Peterborough. This was achieved without additional payments. Peterborough City Council engaged with practice managers right from the start of the project, ensuring primary care staff knew exactly where to signpost people for further information. These two features were key to the project's success.

The Alzheimer's Society and the CPFT NHS Memory Clinic will be co-located in the new Dementia Resource Centre (one of the first in the region). Once established the Alzheimer's Society will record how many people are signposted to the centre from the NHS Health Checks programme. This will give further feedback regarding the success of the project.

It should be noted that Cambridgeshire County Council has studied and adopted the Peterborough model for their 78 GP practices, although they are using different financing options.

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References

1. 2011 census
2. Reference iginform. Local .gov.uk
3. NHS England Index of multiple deprivation 2010 – Value 15.9 compared to England 22.1

To find out more about the 'Living Longer Lives' Programme:

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