

A gold standards case study

Oakfield Nursing Care Home is a 28 bed home, in rural Lancashire, catering for patients who are Elderly Mentally Infirm (EMI), physically disabled patients, as well as those with general nursing needs. Six years ago they joined a local End of Life Care (EOLC) steering group. Deputy matron Jan Elliot says the GSF Care Homes Programme was mentioned early on and the home was immediately attracted by two potential benefits.

'We really liked the idea of getting the whole team involved, from the matron to the cleaners and kitchen staff and everyone in between,' says Jan. 'The other thing that really appealed was the way the GSF helps homes anticipate potential problems. Being a rural home, we really need to be prepared for weekends, so any help in anticipating problems would be really important.'

Jan and her colleagues approached the owner of the home and spelt out these and other potential benefits and the owner committed to the programme. Jan and her now retired fellow deputy matron Linda Wright then started attending the workshops.

Explains Jan: *'The workshops were very informative and we knew most of the other homes involved. It was great as people could share problems and come up with solutions. The workshops really helped set us on the way to filling all the relevant paperwork and cascading the programme throughout the home.'*

In between the workshops the coordinators held team meetings and study sessions, put up boards in the home explaining the programme and started writing letters to all patients and their families explaining what

GSF was all about. Now patients and their families receive a pack about GSF on admission. The periods between workshops also gave Jan and her colleagues time to customize some of the key tools and forms to suit Oakfield's specific needs.

'It was hard work,' recalls Jan. 'and there were some members of staff who found it more challenging than others. But in time everyone was committed to it —including the cleaners and kitchen staff. One cleaner in particular will notice a resident's change of condition and alert colleagues.'

Staff at Oakfield already had a good relationship with their local GP's, but Jan says that GSF helped them work even more closely. It has also given them the confidence to work closely with their local palliative care teams and other specialists.

Jan says Advance Care Planning (ACP) was one of the early benefits of the programme:

'We would previously document patients' wishes but nothing was formalized. Now we sit down with the patient and their family as soon as possible after they come in and it is reviewed every month.'

'It's very helpful to know what people want, making it easier for patients, staff and families and helping to avoid crises.'

Recently, at a weekend, a male patient was close to death. An ambulance crew were called out by the local GP. But Oakfield staff explained the patient and his family did not want him to go to hospital and staff would look after him in the home. The crew read the ACP and other associated documents and agreed it was best for him to stay in the home.

'The man died peacefully in his bed surrounded by his family a few minutes later. Before we did GSF we probably wouldn't have had the confidence to do that and the patient would have died in the ambulance.'

More patients now die in the home than in hospital, and due to anticipatory prescribing and all round improved planning, crises are averted.

Oakfield decided to go forward for accreditation. Putting the portfolio of evidence to support the good practice together was hard work, says Jan. She recognizes that with hindsight it would have been better to collect this along the way. Despite a few sleepless nights she was proud of the portfolio she delivered.

In June this year Oakfield was one of a select group of homes to be awarded the GSFCH Quality Hallmark Award, achieving beacon status. The plaque hangs proudly by the front door, the local paper reported news of their achievement and they use GSF on all their paperwork.

Jan says that their two local hospices now recognize the quality of Oakfield's end of life care and are sending palliative care patients to the home, and commissioners take the home's GSF Quality Hallmark Award into account.

Jan says: *'GSF has really pulled us all together as a team, both in the home and with our health and social care colleagues.'* **NRC**

If you have a case study you would like to share, email a synopsis and your contact details to:

maria.roberts@markallengroup.com