

Programme 'a rigorous but rewarding process'

By Margaret Stobbart-Rowlands

AS BUDGETS are squeezed ever tighter the onus is on care home owners and managers to find fresh ways of making their home stand out from the crowd to both commissioners and the public.

As they tighten their belts many owners and managers may look to cut back on training, particularly in a sector with a reputation for high staff turnover.

The Gold Standards Framework is a programme that offers the care home industry an opportunity to better equip individual staff members and the whole organisation to deliver high quality care for all of their residents, particularly those nearing the end of life, and reduce hospital admissions and deaths.

The GSF in Care Homes Programme enables improvements across the whole organisation. It involves every member of staff in the training process to improve end of life care on three levels – for the individuals involved, for the home

as a whole and for the health and social care community around the home.

The care provider obtains not just a better trained and motivated workforce and better systems of working, but also improves collaboration and communication with GPs, district nurses and other health and social care professionals.

These simple but important steps enable staff not only to better plan their residents' care but also avoid crises caused by unexpected events. With plans in place staff feel better able to cope. Many of the homes that have completed the training programme have increased the number of residents fulfilling their wish to die in the home rather than in hospital. This in turn gives staff a real sense of satisfaction from delivering genuine, individualised care to their residents.

Almost 1,500 homes have now completed the training programme. More than 100 homes a year are going through the

accreditation process. It's a rigorous but rewarding.

Having completed the training, homes must undertake self assessment against 20 clear standards of best practice, submit a portfolio of evidence of integration of the principles and standards of GSF, and receive a supportive visit from a quality assessor.

The GSF Centre sends a letter to the CQC and to the local commissioners informing them of the award, and Age UK and all of the four major care homes organisations endorse the Quality Hallmark Award.

In January the latest round of successful homes will receive their GSFCH Quality Hallmark Award – recognition of the outstanding end of life care they are providing for their residents – at the GSF Annual Care Homes Conference.

This quality recognition provides families and crucially commissioners with a tangible assurance that the home is delivering personalised care and reducing inappropriate hospital



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admissions and deaths. It also provides owners and managers with the opportunity to initiate discussions with commissioners about paying a premium price for premium care.

■ Margaret Stobbart-Rowlands is the GSF's care homes project manager.

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