



Vitality Home Health: Home care services in the Sevenoaks and Gravesham area of Kent – Upskilling staff to meet changing care needs.



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Introduction

Vitality Home Health offer home care in the Sevenoaks and Gravesham area of Kent. They have seen an increase in requests for support with people living with multiple complex health care needs, especially with percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy (PEG), balloon retained gastrostomy tube (BGT) and the administration of subcutaneous anticoagulant therapy. They have four people who they currently support at home with PEG.

Vitality acknowledges the challenges and shortage of nurses and other healthcare professionals which adds pressure to their district nursing and NHS community teams, especially as their customers sometimes must wait a long time to be seen and are unable to spend time with people who are in distress. Vitality have appointed through international recruitment some highly skilled internationally educated nurses as they recognise the acuity is increasing in domiciliary care.

In exploring more positive outcomes for their customers and staff they have taken steps to develop and upskill eight of their staff to undertake specialised PEG training with the oversight and guidance from their own clinical director, GP, [Abbots nurses](#), hospital dietitians, and the local Care Quality Commission (CQC) officer.

Staff have undertaken eLearning training at the cost of £125 each (£1,000 for the eight staff members) and competencies were signed off by their own clinical director and Abbots.

Challenges

- Additional pressure on district nurses which results in some people waiting a long time to be seen. District nurses unable to offer quality time with people they see.
- Vitality acknowledges and values the importance of the UK legal system and professional regulation. However, international staff recruited by Vitality are PEG trained in their country of origin, however the training is not recognised in the UK so unable to practice.

- Additional cost for the organisation. This includes training, insurance, organisational time and an additional cost to the staff member (+£1.30ph). The council and health are not forthcoming with funding for upskilling staff; however, they will fund for PEG medication and feed. In addition, continuing healthcare (CHC) funding is still a challenge for customers.
- Have currently undertaken a 'fair cost of living' exercise, Vitality needed to increase charges for people paying privately. The exercise came out at £48.75ph, though Vitality charge £34.00ph. This meant a monetary loss to the organisation. They also recognise the cost-of-living crisis and the impact this may have on some people.
- Their care workers are not seen as a recognised professional.

The benefits of this approach

- Upskilling and supporting staff with their continued professional development gives staff members job satisfaction; the staff feel valued that they are invested in and supported which is retaining staff. Other staff are keen to have this opportunity and we have also seen an uplift on staff's wellbeing and retention. One senior member of staff told us:



I do believe that staff now feel more valued as a result in upskilling, and we have not lost any staff to other providers for at least six months who have been upskilled. We have received calls of interest within recruiting new staff as we are able to voice that we up skill staff to provide more complex care. These staff are from other providers who have voiced they are bored and feel undervalued”.



- Collaborating with other local partners to problem solve can reduce risk as informed decisions are decided together. Vitality's digital electronic system supports this joined-up approach.
- Upholds organisational reputation and means that we are seen as a leader in our field/area. It helps us to demonstrate how we are providing person-centred care which is meeting the needs and wishes of people needing care and wanting to stay as independently as possible at home.

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