

Date: 20 February 2008

LEEDS RECRUITS OLDER PEOPLE AS RESIDENTIAL HOME INSPECTORS

Older people's residential homes in Leeds are in future to be inspected by the people who know most about their care – older people themselves!

In a pioneering move, older people in Leeds are to be recruited to visit residential care homes and nursing homes throughout Leeds, to carry out an audit of how well people's dignity is promoted and protected by care and nursing staff.

The 'Dignity Watchdogs' will be knocking on doors to interview residents and staff and make an assessment of how well people are treated with respect and courtesy, how their rights as an individual are upheld, how their privacy is protected and how people are able to complain without fear of reprisal.

'Dignity in Care' is a national campaign being led by the government to promote high quality care services that respect people's right to courtesy, offer a personalised service, reduce loneliness and isolation and have a zero tolerance of all forms of abuse.

As part of the campaign, Leeds City Council, Leeds Primary Care Trust and independent care home owners from the Leeds Care Association have come together to work with Age Concern Leeds.

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Age Concern will recruit, train and support a group of older people to visit care and nursing homes to conduct the 'Dignity Checks'.

The recruits will be assisted by staff from Leeds City Council's Adult Social Care Service and Leeds PCT. They will jointly develop a questionnaire that will get to the heart of whether residents are being treated well.

Carol Wardman, Chief Executive of Age Concern Leeds, welcomed plans being made for the audit and said:

"We are delighted to be involved in this important project. Dignity in the care of older people is at the heart of all that Age Concern does. Respecting dignity, choice and individuality, often in the smallest of ways, can make all the difference to the quality of life of someone in residential care. I hope that this project will raise this issue to all those involved in choosing and providing care."

The Dignity watchdogs will be trained to observe and record instances such as where staff may be patronising towards residents, using first names without permission, or delivering personal care, such as changing dressings, in a lounge rather than the privacy of the resident's own room. The findings from the project will be used to develop better practice and to help plan better services for older people in Leeds.

Councillor Peter Harrand, Leeds City Council's Executive Board member with responsibility for Adult health and Social Care and Older People's Champion said:

"Dignity and respect should lie at the heart of all services for older people. An audit of this kind has never before been done in care and nursing homes in Leeds and its findings will be carefully analysed so that, where changes in behaviour are needed, we will make them.

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“The people who will be carrying out this audit will all be volunteers and who could do this job better than older people themselves? They will be making an important contribution to making sure people who are in care in Leeds are valued and treated with all the politeness and good manners they deserve.”

Notes for editors

The Dignity in Care campaign has laid down 10 ‘Dignity Challenges’ to all who work in health and social care. They are:

- Have a zero tolerance of all forms of abuse;
- Support people with the same respect you would want for yourself or a member of your family;
- Treat each person as an individual by offering a personalised service;
- Enable people to maintain the maximum level of independence, choice and control;
- Listen and support people to express their needs and wants;
- Respect people’s right to privacy;
- Ensure people feel able to complain without fear of retribution;
- Engage with family members and carers as care partners;
- Assist people to maintain confidence and self-esteem;
- Act to alleviate people’s loneliness and isolation.

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