Training for Staff who Care for Clients with Learning Disabilities and Dementia

Stacy Dicks (Assistant Psychologist)
Susan Jackson (Community LD Nurse)
Alannah Pasokhy (Occupational Therapist)
Neil Catty (Occupational Therapist)
Dr Matt Symes (Consultant Clinical Psychologist)
West/North Hampshire Community LD Services

Introduction

• People with learning disabilities are at greater risk of developing dementia of the Alzheimer type than the general population.
• There are protocols for assessing dementia, but a lack of approaches and understanding of post-diagnostic support.
• Person-centred care is more likely if staff are well trained, supported, and working as a consistent team.
• Therefore the aim of the training package was to enhance care staff’s knowledge and awareness of dementia and confidence with their support approaches.
• The training package entails educational and interactive elements enabling the participants to spend time thinking about their client. A work book was also developed for participants to encourage interaction and act as a record for their reference.

Results

• Participants rated statements below before and after training (1 = ‘very poor’ to 10 = ‘excellent’)
  1. My current understanding of the different types of dementia is...
  2. My current understanding of the progression of dementia is...
  3. My current understanding of the difficulties a person with dementia may face is...
  4. My current understanding of how to support a person with dementia with the difficulties they face is...
  5. My current awareness of the support offered by the Community LD Service to a person with dementia is...
  6. My current awareness of support services available to the person with dementia and me is...
  7. My overall level of confidence in supporting someone with dementia is...
• Ratings on all items increased significantly following training (p < .05).
• Qualitative feedback showed an appropriate balance between information about dementia, and resources promoting person-centred care.

Method

A training package was developed and delivered to three staff teams (n=17). The training covered:
• The nature of dementia
• Communication
• Eating and drinking
• Environmental factors
• Participation and engagement in activities
• Posture, mobility and falls prevention
• Behavioural and emotional difficulties
• Additional support services

Discussion & Lessons Learned

• A multidisciplinary training package increased staff confidence and knowledge of dementia.
• Focus of future research should be to determine how increased awareness and confidence translates into better dementia-care practice.
• Participants should have the opportunity to give anonymised feedback about training experience.
• Clinicians engaged in practice-based research need dedicated time alongside clinical work.