

Using social marketing techniques to deliver the Next Steps hospital discharge scheme to support the health needs of our ageing population in order to reduce health inequalities and promote independence and well-being.

Central and Eastern Cheshire PCT has the fastest growing ageing population in the North West. The increase in the number of older people and those with health conditions that reduce independence will result in a proportionate increase in conditions relating to ageing, such as falls and associated fractures in those aged 65+. Following an older person's discharge from a hospital stay it is frequently observed that the process could be enhanced by linking to and signposting to relevant local community services plus other sources of health promotion information that could support a person's ongoing health and well-being. Central and Eastern Cheshire PCT, in partnership with Mid-Cheshire Hospitals Foundation Trust and Cheshire East Council worked together to encompass hospital care, health promotion and community-related services in order to devise a scheme that would meet a range of health and social needs.

The Next Steps scheme was launched within Leighton Hospital in March 2008, as a means of providing relevant local community information and health promotion on discharge from hospital. The scheme is low-cost, yet high impact in its scope. The Next Steps bag includes both core information supporting the national healthy ageing initiatives and local information which signposts to useful community-based services. From the outset it was decided that the Next Steps scheme should embed social marketing principles at its core, using insight in order to create a marketing mix that would respond to our target audiences' existing behaviours and barriers to change (competition).

A clear scheme Next Steps 'brand' was also developed to ensure that the new scheme has a robust, attractive and motivating identity that both the target audience and professionals would recognise and relate to. The final intervention mix is; *'informing'*, giving bespoke information – chosen by older people for older people; *'encouraging'*, supports people over a number of time frames, coming out of hospital, as they recover, maintaining a healthy lifestyle; *'educating'*, Using a variety of media that makes accessibility easy; *'empowering'* - giving people a reference tool that they can add to in the future.

In order to develop the scheme and to ensure that the information provided was beneficial, each recipient is asked to complete a full evaluation of the pack and its contents six weeks after receiving it. These results are then collated, thus providing ongoing insight into how our target audience uses information.

To date (October 2010) 1500 Next Steps bags have been distributed.



From an initial investment of £1000, the potential cost savings to the NHS and Social Care are significant. Based on the cost of GP appointment of £25, potential costs savings of 1150 saved GP appointments = £28,750. Based on the cost of inpatient stay for an older person, per day = £340, potential cost

savings of 1150 saved bed days = £391,000. We know that on average, 93% of recipients who receive a bag use the information, so that would put savings between, £26,737 and £363,630

The evaluation of the scheme has shown dynamic results which have wide implications for shared learning about our population, their health needs and the ways in which future hospital provision, community services and health promotion can be targeted, which has far exceeded the initial scope of the evaluation outcomes. This shared learning can now be further disseminated within all aspects of the commissioning process in order to further enhance the better health outcomes for our population.

For further information please contact:

Emma Leigh
Public Health Manager
Central and Eastern Cheshire PCT
01606 275319
emma.leigh@cecpct.nhs.uk