



Reshaping Care for Older People Community Capacity Building / Coproduction Case Study

Stirling – Town Break Stirling Group

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Town Break provides support services for people with early - moderate stage dementia throughout Stirling District. This small local charity has been operational for around 20 years and offers social support through day clubs and a one-to-one befriending service. Volunteers are critical to the service which has 5 part time members of staff. Over recent years, Town Break's referrals have sharply increased resulting in a lengthy waiting list for a befriending match. To deal with this gap, the alternative model of 'Friendship Group' was established, involving both the person with dementia and their carer in a monthly, social activity. In addition to responding to the referred need, this model offered an opportunity for partners or other family members, to spend social time in a safe and understanding environment, something which many carers say they miss.

Town Break has been innovative in its approach to providing tailored services which help combat social isolation and enable people with dementia to feel respected. Currently 63 people use the weekly services and the Friendship Group offers an opportunity for those on the waiting list to begin to become involved once a month, with 26 regular attenders at the moment.

Referrals for Town Break services are received from a variety of sources, including GPs, health visitors, community mental health team, social services, relatives and carers. Following assessment by staff, volunteers are matched with service users and/or attendance at a day club offered.

Additional funding was received from Clackmannanshire and Stirling Change Fund for one Services assistant post to support these existing services, and to support the co-ordinator in developing the monthly Friendship Group. The group meets in a local church hall and involves a talk, input or activity, time for chat over tea and coffee, followed by some musical entertainment or sing song. The surroundings are set up to be welcoming and pleasant and tables are set with flowers, cake stands and home baking. Town Break staff are also available to give information or advice and materials are displayed about services and resources which may be of use to people with dementia or their carers.

As identified in Scotland's *National Dementia Strategy 2010*, 2 of the 5 key pillars of post diagnostic support are:

- Support to stay connected to their community

This involves working closely with people to maintain and build on their existing social networks, to enhance their quality of life and maximise the natural support they receive

from those around them, helping to avoid isolation and reducing future reliance on care services.

- Peer support from other people with dementia and their families and carers

This is highly effective in helping people come to terms with the illness and find coping strategies, and in maintaining their wellbeing and resilience.

Town Break understands the importance of maintaining social relationships, creating new peer support networks and receiving information and advice at an early stage after the diagnosis of dementia. The negative effects of social isolation can be profound for both the person with dementia and their carer, as both may withdraw from previous activities and social connections. The Friendship Group offers a safe opportunity for someone with early stage dementia and their carer to continue to be active and to share their experiences with others in a similar situation.

Outcomes

Of the 4 Key Themes identified in Stirling and Clackmannshire's Change Plan, the Town Break service contributes towards **Proactive Care and Support at Home, Self-Directed Care and Support**. It also has resonance with 3 of the 4 cross cutting themes identified in the Plan:

- Community Capacity Building
- Dementia Care
- Supporting Carers

The Plan identifies a number of Key Partnership Changes which are required to progress each of the Key Themes and these include:

- Expand the range of service available to help people to stay at home for as long as possible
- Ensure sufficient levels and appropriate models of day support are available to meet service users' needs
- Work with local third sector service to support 'light touch' interventions and support for older people in their communities
- Increase personalisation support such as befriending and access to social activities to counter isolation
- Increase provision of asset-based, community-led support, including peer support across all partners

The Town Break service is a positive example of these themes in action. It works with the person with dementia and their carer in a 'light touch' manner, discussing jointly how best to provide support. The Friendship Group also provides opportunities for new relationships, friendships and peer support for both the person with dementia and their carer, helping to counter the sense of loss in other aspects of their lives. Town Break provides the framework within which mutual support and understanding can be developed increasing confidence and increasing capacity to cope.

The 'light touch' approach of Town Break also enables low level monitoring of both the person with dementia and their carer, identifying at an early stage any changes or

deterioration, helping prevent the need for crisis intervention. Town Break staff can also signpost to or alert other statutory services, as appropriate.

Success

The Town Break service has identified its 4 key outcomes as :

- Improve the lives of individuals with dementia and their carers
- Increase communication skills, interaction and participation of clients both at the Day Club, Friendship Group
- Improve the quality of client and carer experience in continuity of service
- Improved smooth integration of clients between services and decrease stress level of carers

The Change Plan specifically identified that strengthening the use of community capacity and co-production approaches so that older people and un-paid carers are valued and supported to enjoy full positive lives would constitute a demonstration of local success.

Engagement of third sector partners in the development and provision of services has been promoted through stakeholder events and whilst The Plan recognised that relationships are still developing, building community capacity will be strengthened through:

- Co-production approaches established from more detailed local research and a broader base of consultation, planning and monitoring of local health and social care systems for local older people and their carers
- More co-ordinated and increased capacity to support people at home, in liaison with voluntary and community organisations
- Increased involvement of leisure services to help provide more opportunities for older people to participate in activities

Statistical information from Town Break is recorded about numbers of attendees and carers, age, gender, numbers of groups, source of referral and other services received.

Qualitative information will be gathered through a series of questionnaires – measuring changes and improvements in confidence, isolation, self-esteem, stress, mood, feeling supported, social life and impact on person with dementia. The short questionnaire is completed at the initial one-to-one assessment meeting, prior to the service user and carer attending the Friendship Group. This will be repeated after several months and if/when a couple leave the group. Information will also be gathered from verbal feedback to staff and volunteers and observations, where appropriate.

Ray and George

Ray and George have always been a very active couple who very much enjoyed socialising through their local church, going to bingo and outings to see films. They are both very outgoing, fun loving people and when Ray was diagnosed with early stage dementia, it was a terrible blow to George. Ray was not aware of the changes in her behaviour or her lack of memory and George was less keen to go out and about as he was embarrassed. He felt very down and they both become quite withdrawn. Ray was referred to Town Break but did not consider that she needed services and did not want to attend either the Day Club or link with a befriender.

When the Friendship Group started, the Town Break Co-ordinator suggested both Ray and George go along to the group. The Co-ordinator told Ray about the plans for the group and immediately Ray agreed to go as she would be accompanied by George, as she had been to many social activities and events, all her married life. From the first meeting, the Friendship Group became an important part of both Ray and George's life. Ray loves the anticipation of going to the group and regularly asks if it is the day for their group. When she is at the group her strong, lively personality is evident. She clearly enjoys the social aspect of being out with her own home, meeting new people and engaging with George in this positive social situation.

George has also found the group very positive. He enjoys the opportunity to be in a social situation with Ray, where they can have fun in a safe and secure environment, where no one is embarrassed or withdrawn. He has met other carers who share the same sense of sadness and loss and this has helped his own emotional resilience. Whilst no one can take away his own sense of loss, he feels supported knowing that others understand his situation.

