



Press Release
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Advance care planning proves the key for people nearing end of life

Hospitals, care homes and GP surgeries that work closely with their patients and residents to plan their care as they approach the end of life, are matching the preferences of significantly more people as well as experiencing ground-breaking improvements in the quality of care.

The critical importance of Advance Care Planning in the delivery of effective, personalised and compassionate end of life care, was the focus of a major conference in London today (25 September) - The Bi-Annual National Gold Standards Framework (GSF) Conference.

Caroline Abrahams, Charity Director for Age UK, one of the keynote speakers at the conference, said: ***“Better end of life care for individuals depends on good communication and the willingness and ability of health and social care professionals to take a person-centred approach. It should be the cornerstone of professional education and workforce development in health and care services. The Gold Standards Framework plays a crucial role through its training and accreditation programme in enabling front line health and care staff to initiate difficult conversations regarding the development of a person’s end of life care plan, and ultimately deliver care that meets their needs and wishes.”***

Advance Care Planning is one of the key foundations of the GSF training programmes that are helping all those providing end of life care to ensure better lives for people and recognised standards of care. It is the largest national programme to help improve care for patients approaching the end of life, helping health and social care professionals provide coordinated, personalised care for patients and their families and reduces hospital admissions.

Twelve care homes were receiving Quality Hallmark Awards for the first time today, while 48 homes are reaccredited-and for the first time 19 homes are being reaccredited six years on, demonstrating real sustainability. Presenting these homes with their awards, Professor John Young, NHS England National Clinical Director for Integration and Frail & Elderly Care, said: ***“It is a great pleasure to be presenting the GSF Quality Hallmark awards to more than 50 care homes today. I applaud the winners of these awards as they lead the way in providing skilful and compassionate end of life care based on a foundation of individual plans agreed between resident and those caring for them. We can all learn from their work.”***

Since its launch in 2004, more than 2,500 homes across England and Wales have completed the GSF in Care Homes Training Programme. Almost half of all nursing homes in England have undertaken the training. During that time, more than a million care home residents and their families have felt the benefit of improved care, in line with their preferences, and almost a quarter of a million care home staff have enjoyed a sustained boost to their confidence, a new set of skills and a sense of satisfaction in being able to deliver the care their residents want and deserve.

For many, the dream of being cared for in their preferred place, often their home, remains a dream. Four GP practices, which between them care for more than 50,000 people have also been accredited. Macklin Street Surgery in Derby, Saltaire and Ilkley Moor Medical Practices in West Yorkshire and Spilsby in Lincolnshire, have all witnessed a significant increase in the number of patients on their palliative care register, including a much higher proportion with a diagnosis other than cancer and have all seen a dramatic increase in the number of patients being cared for in their preferred place right up until the end of their lives as well a substantial fall in inappropriate, crisis hospital admissions.

Dr Ian Livingstone of Saltaire Medical Practice, said: "The GSF programme has helped us change the culture of the practice. Now, with better planning, communication and coordination, we have increased the number of people dying in their preferred place and significantly improved the support we provide their carers."

Wards from two acute hospitals, Furness General and Royal Devon and Exeter, and four community hospitals: Blandford, Falmouth, Cambourne Redruth and Liskeard have also been accredited. With a third of hospital patients being in the last year of life, the achievement of these wards is valuable in demonstrating that it is possible to identify this patient group as well as successfully plan and assess their care.

Professor Keri Thomas, GSF National Clinical Director, said: "Our focus at GSF is that every person for whom it is appropriate should be offered the chance to have advance care planning discussions by their usual healthcare provider and that this becomes their action plan for care. We believe that this is possible and this will contribute to better end of life care for our whole population as part of a national momentum of best practice. Only by establishing people's wishes and preferences for care can we start to deliver the compassionate, coordinated care that people need and deserve. The award winners at today's conference provide a clear example of what is possible for others to follow."

Notes to Editors

The **Gold Standards Framework Centre** started in 2000 in primary care, now runs training programmes in end of life care in all settings, and is the biggest and most comprehensive programme to improve care at the end of life.

Gold Standards Framework gives outstanding training to professionals providing end of life care to ensure better lives for people and recognised standards of care.

GSF helps health and social care professionals feel better equipped to deal with the challenging task of looking after patients until they die by providing a framework for earlier identification, assessment of needs and then planning of care of those people in the last years of life.

Among its key aims are offering everyone the chance to record an Advance Care Planning discussion to clarify their needs and preferences.

More information on the Gold Standards Framework can be found at: www.goldstandardsframework.org.uk
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