

ACTIVITIES

Evaluating activities



To get the real benefit from activity provision you must assess their impact and use this for continuous improvement. In this issue, Rosemary Hurttley explores how to evaluate activities and why it is important.

Evaluation as part of the ongoing activity planning cycle (to assess, analyse, adapt, activate, achieve and appraise) is essential where the reviewing of success helps you to monitor the progress of activity provision, as a transforming and evolving service.

Evidence demonstrates that effective activities that maximise physical, social, cognitive and learning opportunities provide the potential to reduce the frequency of depression, falls and dependency. They can also improve quality of life, assist the spiritual journey and even reduce the burden of care. All of this is achieved by active engagement of the manager, supported by senior management, who co-ordinates the environment, the philosophy of care and the culture of activity provision. This requires co-operation between residents, staff, the activity co-ordinator and relatives; the local community should also be involved, where possible.

Activity provision involves understanding the importance of relationship-building and creativity, using a mixture of qualities and abilities that identify and define the resident and bring about changes such as greater confidence, relaxation, enjoyment, a new interest, manageable behaviour or formation of new friendships. To engage residents in activities requires an ability to be creative, spontaneous and resourceful, engaging with people at different levels. It also requires the ability to be reflective and understand what motivates people and how to plan activities thoughtfully, to specific aims and evaluate their success based on agreed activity choices.

Make time to evaluate

In environments where resources are limited, more emphasis is often placed on undertaking activity and the outcome rather than on the person and the process. Person-centred and relationship driven activity planning, its delivery and evaluation requires time to reflect on what happened and how it has impacted on the individuals and the wider community of relationship. Having enough time is necessary to reflect on the approaches used and the responses observed and reported. This is set in the context of a good understanding of individuals, illuminating the resident's personal experience of the activity from their unique perspective.

To evaluate or appraise something means to assess it and find out its value.

This must be done against the stated aims to understand and analyse whether the activity met them. The overall activity programme can then be periodically reviewed to find out its value for the residents and the home. This evaluation is part of quality control and forms part of the cycle that will inform future interventions.

The process of evaluation

There are three parts to the process of evaluation: asking questions, observing, and measuring achievement and monitoring change. This final part must be undertaken during the activity process as activity isn't static and it should affect mood, motivation, wellbeing or sense of achievement.

Key principles of evaluating activity

- Evaluation is part of quality control and forms part of the cycle of planning – delivery – monitoring – evaluation.
- Set aside time to review activities regularly to find out their value for all involved.
- Evaluation should be objective using objective information involving all interested parties, from the resident's perspective, from goal planning to evaluation.
- Make all interested parties aware that their contribution to the evaluation process is valued.
- Collect the same information each time you evaluate the programme so that it acts as a baseline for future comparison.
- Evaluation monitors progress or deterioration, consider this when planning the next activity.
- Information can be used to inform individual care plans to assist with person-centred care.
- Outcome-based, best practice requires that a resident's current activity and social needs, choices, interest and abilities are regularly assessed, reviewed and documented. They must be monitored weekly and amended accordingly to meet individual, wellbeing needs and levels of satisfaction and to enhance meaningful relationships.

1. Asking questions: is the activity of interest, relevant, pitched at the right level, communicated clearly and does it provide enough challenge or enjoyment?

2. Observing:

- **Participation** – How much does each resident take part and what is the level of help, support and prompting required?
- **Engagement** – How aware is the resident of the purpose of the activity, how motivated, absorbed and interested are they?
- **Interaction** – To what degree is the resident aware of, or responds to, others?
- **Memory recall** – How much prompting is required for some activities, where relevant?
- **Orientation** – How aware of self, others, time and place is the resident?
- **Mood and wellbeing** – How much are the following signs observed: enjoyment, humour, assertiveness, making choices, boredom, anxiety and restlessness?
- **Physical abilities** – What are the levels of strength, stamina, mobility, range of movement, co-ordination, ability to grasp/release an object and use tools?

If residents have dementia or depression it is also necessary to observe non-verbal behaviour.

3. Measuring and monitoring changes: where changes have been observed this will enable action to be taken to adapt the individual components of an activity. This can be developed from monitoring the outcomes listed above.

For residents with dementia, there are examples of formal ways of measuring outcomes that can be useful.

Purpose of evaluating activity

The manager must understand the importance of activity being person-centred, therefore involving time and commitment to assess abilities, understand biography and motivation, and negotiate with residents or relatives to meet individual preferences. They must also encourage the activity staff to reflect on their practice and how it can be improved. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess against the overall aims of the activities carried out as part of the range of activities

provided throughout the week. These include maintaining old interests and opportunities, exploring new ones, balancing one-to-one and group activities, allowing regular events and space for one-off events and maximising participation levels and physical and mental stimulation. Evaluation will also enable managers to find out which activities are of value to the residents and provide a basis from which any changes can be made, if required.

From an organisational point of view, the evaluation process will enable managers to assess the involvement and development needs of staff, plan for future resources and allow the home's budget to be balanced efficiently. Evaluation will help to determine whether the programme is meeting the requirements of new guidelines for regulatory assessment and other policies. Considerable information will be gathered over a period of time and will be evaluated to improve future programmes.

Change is necessary

All activity programmes need to develop over time to meet residents' changing needs. A crucial part of that planning is knowing which resources, both human and material, will be needed and allowing managers to set realistic objectives as they plan for the coming year and build it into the business plan. Future planning should take into account any changes in the composition of residents regarding age, abilities, interests, gender, ethnicity and numbers of residents. It should always strive to maximise and engage with the

wider environment.

Managers need to focus on outcome-based activities at the heart of care, in a culture of on-going quality improvement. This should be set around what residents want. The goal is to give control and ownership to residents through the provision of a range of interesting choices that meet personal preferences and challenge the individual to the edge of their abilities. This involves engaging a range of other partners inside and outside the home to enable residents to enjoy a full and stimulating lifestyle with a variety of options to choose from, based on assessed abilities and interests, regularly monitored and evaluated as an integral part of 24-hour care. **CMM**

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East Sussex, Brighton & Hove Registered Care Homes Association 26th Annual Conference – 17th October 06 Winter Gardens, Eastbourne

The Social Care Time Bomb

The challenges ahead for the care sector are as formidable as ever. In the months ahead care homes will have to cope with:

- > **Changes to CSCI regulation and inspection**
- > **The impact of the governments white paper on care**
- > **Increasing numbers of people requiring care and support**
- > **Recruiting & training staff & registration of care staff by the GSCC**
- > **New fire & employment regulations**

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