

'Challenging Behaviours' in dementia care – needs based approach.

A group of interested people have been working together locally to look at some of the issues involved in responding to 'challenging behaviours' in dementia care. The group consists of people from the NHS, social services and the voluntary sector and includes paid workers and volunteers. This multi-agency collaboration has resulted in the development of a workbook aimed at helping staff to improve their understanding of, and responses to, people with dementia and 'behaviours that challenge'.

The workbook aims to help people involved in dementia care to understand the person with dementia and the needs they are expressing through their behaviours. Experience from looking after people with dementia suggests that we can usually improve their care – even when their behaviour makes this difficult.

The workbook acts as a guide through the areas that are helpful to think about e.g. getting to know the person, understanding their situation, describing behaviour, taking risks, making and reviewing plans and getting help from others.

In each area 'Warning Signs' are indicated; i.e. possible causes of problems in dealing with challenging behaviours. 'Signposts' are then suggested; i.e. ways of improving responses and care. The workbook then gives examples from experience with space in each section for comments.

There are some principles that are returned to again and again. These are:

- All behaviour, including 'challenging behaviour', has meaning
- The more we know someone the more likely it is that we will be able to respond to them effectively.
- Where and how someone lives has a big effect on how they behave.
- The behaviour of staff and carers has a large effect on the nature and extent of challenging behaviour shown by the person with dementia.
- Carers and teams work better when everyone is trying to deal with situations in similar ways.
- Everyone can get stuck and may need advice and support at some point.

As well as taking a systematic approach to understanding the person, their situation and their behaviour and needs, the workbook also gives pointers for further reading and names of people to contact for help.

A series of workshops are being held to publicise the workbook and give some guidance and practice in its use. The next workshop is aimed at staff working in the non-statutory sectors with people with dementia. This full day event will be held in the **MHCR training rooms, Seaton Burn on Thursday 19th August 2010 from 9.30 to 4.00pm**. For further details please call Alan Steele at Mental Health Concern on 01912170377. Should you wish to attend please send expression of interest by email to reception@mentalhealthconcern.org by Monday 2nd August 2010.