

A model for good practice

By Dr Mo Eyeoyibo, Consultant Psychiatrist at Optima Care

Optima Care's high-acuity community living setting The Chilterns is helping to drive change in the low secure sector by shifting the focus of traditional risk management strategy in favour of improving individual lives as opposed to cost management and protecting an organisation's reputation.

Traditionally, when assessing individual needs and goals, providers would design a rehabilitation pathway focused on the risk an individual posed to both themselves and to society.

Denise Banks, Clinical Services Manager at The Chilterns, wants to shift the balance in favour of a much more person-centred approach that focuses on improving lives whilst being mindful of the risks.

"It's fair to say that the health and care industry has struggled to achieve this balance due to the associated costs of providing the level of staffing support required in the community to ensure safety, not to mention the potential reputational cost if things go wrong," adds Denise.

Denise and I are working together to devise a way around this issue with a view to deliberately introducing our new approach into the care pathway at The Chilterns.

A team effort

So how exactly will it work? A MDT approach will be applied to all pathways which involves an Occupational Therapist (OT) first identifying an individual's interests and then investigating what facilities are available locally to help meet those needs.

Together with the team's clinicians, the OT will then identify the aspects that might prevent that individual from achieving.

The end result is a risk management strategy focused on helping individuals achieve their goals: effectively allowing them to get involved in community-based activities that, under traditional risk management strategy, would not be possible.

Befrienders with benefits

A key aspect of this model is the introduction of a 'personal assistant' or 'befriender' type role – someone assigned to an individual, alongside their support worker. Befrienders tend to be volunteers, whereas Personal Assistants might be paid out of an individual's personal budget – just for a few hours a week – whilst having their main employment elsewhere. Either option obviously allows for more cost effective 2:1 in the community.

Coaching a personal assistant or befriender is a more affordable option than relying solely on trained professionals to provide the level of intensity required to support certain individuals in the community. It is also a much more workable solution insofar as it doesn't take away that level of trained support from the other people we support in our settings.

The personal assistant or befriender would be coached to the stage where they become an important part of an individual's life, working alongside the MDT, their family and also part of the reflective / emotive outcomes processes led by Optima Care's Clinical Psychologist.



Dr Mo Eyeoyibo

To provide a practical example of the benefits of this approach, under traditional risk management strategy we would have perhaps avoided permitting someone with a forensic / sex offending history to attend college. However, the model we are proposing would allow such an individual to have the required contact with this environment, whilst managing the risk. It's all about positive risk taking in the community in a managed manner.

Denise and I are currently looking at the model empirically and plan to share our methodology later in the year with a view to introducing it fully within The Chilterns' care pathway, in addition to liaising with other provider partners – in the secure sector as well as in the community – to ensure continuity of experience for the individual.

The Chilterns hosts a cross-industry working group

The Chilterns is hosting an event on 24th September entitled *From confinement to community: helping to ensure a smoother journey for all individuals on the secure pathway*. This will represent the inaugural meeting of a cross-industry working group, bringing together providers and also community, crisis and forensic teams across the South East with a view to ensuring improved partnership working and a consistency in framework support. The first discussion topic will focus on putting in place the ability to facilitate swift admission and treatment support to individuals in crisis (low secure to secure).

If you would like to attend, or to find out more, please contact Suzanne Clarkson on 07799 873 586.

