

The Donald Coburn Centre

The Donald Coburn Centre, operated by Anglican Retirement Villages, is based in Metropolitan Sydney and cares for 180 residents.

Donald Coburn has a strong resident focus shown by its commitment to obtaining and responding to resident feedback, and by the high level of satisfaction from residents. The home shares its experiences with homes internal and external to the organisation, and maintains close relationships with industry.

Effective governance

A structured approach is used to develop better ways to operate, with brainstorming and problem solving techniques applied to determine the best approach. A risk assessment is used to determine priorities for action. Objectives are established during planning and outcomes are reviewed to determine whether the changes are producing ongoing benefits for the residents or the organisation.

A resident advocate has been appointed to represent the residents in management meetings, and during reviews of plans, policies and processes. For example, the resident advocate participated in meetings to develop and review the 2003–08 strategic plan and updating the mission and vision statements. This open communication enables residents to contribute to the future direction of the home.

Continuous improvement systems have evolved, with new performance measures added as they are found necessary. Management at all levels use information from Quality Specification Reports in making decisions. The home employs an epidemiologist / biostatistician to assist the further development and review of data collection tools and reporting systems.

Resident focus

Residents, relatives and stakeholders are encouraged to participate at all levels of care, planning and decision-making. Donald Coburn achieves continuous improvement through literature searches, information and performance monitoring through audits, surveys, incident reports, meetings, quality circles and comment and complaints forms. Staff and management attend to verbal comments promptly. Once feedback forms are collected, respondents are contacted in writing and are kept informed from the initial complaint to the outcome. Feedback is included in plans for improvement and outcomes feature in the home's newsletter.

Donald Coburn has established a Residents' and Relatives Committee. Resident feedback initiated a major project to enhance and extend the garden areas for resident use, including the incorporation of a 'sensory area'. This development will enable residents to access outdoor areas independently and safely.

Feedback from residents and relatives indicated that changes in staff were disruptive to residents, particularly residents with dementia. A target has been set to reduce agency staff use to below 10 per cent of total staffing hours. The home has engaged the services of two recruitment agencies. In a four-month period, the Centre used 87 fewer agency staff registered nurses and 38 fewer assistants in nursing staff than in the same period the previous year. This provides regular relief staff, improving the consistency and continuity of care for residents.

Clinical care

Donald Coburn uses clinical indicators to set benchmarks and monitor levels of care, and shares these results with other homes. Where the results appear less favourable than other services in the group, action is taken to seek improvement. A falls prevention committee was formed consisting of staff, a physiotherapist and a training coordinator. In July 2002 a program was introduced to collect research into resident falls and identify risk factors and management strategies. There has been a marked reduction in both the number and severity of falls, particularly for residents experiencing second and subsequent falls.

The home has been part of Anglican Retirement Village's pilot development of interactive education packages for staff delivered through a satellite network. This innovative approach provides staff with the opportunity to participate in training at a time and pace suited to them. The approach is being considered as an example for use in other areas of the industry.

Diversional therapy

An initiative to significantly increase diversional therapy hours was driven by resident and relative feedback. Donald Coburn is achieving this through diversional therapy interventions and the provision of additional diversional therapy hours extending into the evenings. From December 2001–02, diversional therapy hours increased by 33 per cent.

A music therapist has been employed to encourage residents to develop music skills. A bell choir consisting of 10 residents was formed. The choir meets weekly for lessons and practice and performs for residents, relatives and the community. Residents have responded positively to the program and shown improvements in wrist and hand movement, coordination, self-confidence, concentration, and teamwork. A recent resident survey produced results of 100% satisfaction with music therapy, and 98% satisfaction with the diversional therapy provided.

Donald Coburn's diversional therapy initiatives have led to a significant reduction in the number of anti-psychotic, anti-depressant, sedative, and pain relief medications prescribed to residents.

Specialist services

The home has appointed a sensory loss coordinator who is a qualified audiometrist. Responsibilities include the assessment of all residents, the care and planning for residents with sensory loss, the delivery of specialised programs, and support and training for staff. Residents' ears are checked four times each year. Registered nurses receive training and competency assessments for ear syringing. A series of hearing loops have been installed throughout the home to enable residents with hearing difficulties to transmit radio and television broadcasts directly to hearing aids.

The Donald Coburn Centre is participating in the national palliative care project (involving the Edith Cowan University and the Department for Health and Ageing) to develop national guidelines to assist staff working in residential aged care in the delivery of palliative care. The initiative has increased staff knowledge and skills; facilitated a shared approach with family involvement; reduced the transfer of residents with palliative care needs; and the home has provided feedback in the development of high-quality education material for the industry. The epidemiologist / biostatistician is involved in the collection and presentation of data. Donald Coburn is collaborating with the Longueville Private Hospital and Bodington Nursing Home to develop a survey tool and conduct focus groups for relatives to provide information on the relatives' experience of palliative care.