Support from day one

www.carers.org
In 2006, evidence had shown that few unpaid carers were being identified at an early stage and carers’ assessments were not taking place. This was despite various government policies, strategies and guidance in Scotland recognising unpaid carers as vital providers of care who should be supported in their caring role and advised of their rights.

In response to this, The Princess Royal Trust for Carers developed the Moffat Project: Preventing Crisis for Carers in partnership with Carers’ Centres from The Trust’s Network in Lothian, Borders, Glasgow and East Ayrshire.

As a result of the Moffat Project’s ground-breaking work, almost 3,000 people were identified as carers and more than 3,500 health and social care staff were trained in carer awareness. There was also an increase in the number of carers reporting that discharge plans (i.e. plans for what would happen to the person they were caring for once they left hospital) were put in place, and that those plans took more notice of carers’ views.

The work had a significant impact on the rates of carers who found out about their right to a carer’s assessment, and many carers were directed to other organisations that could help them further — especially Carers’ Centres and social work services.

We would like to acknowledge the generous financial support of the Moffat Charitable Trust** and the work of the Carers’ Centres Involved in the Project, without which the positive outcomes for carers would not have been achieved.

Jamie Moffat of the Moffat Charitable Trust said:

“Carers play a vital role in society, which was why I was happy to support the Preventing Crisis for Carers Project. I’m delighted that the work identified so many carers, and put them on the path to further help and support. I’m also pleased that so many health and social care workers took part in carer awareness training, as this will hopefully benefit carers for years to come.”

WHAT WAS THE MOFFAT PROJECT?

The Moffat Project comprised pilot projects operating in four NHS areas across central Scotland: Ayrshire and Arran, Borders, Greater Glasgow and Clyde, and Lothian. Participating centres were members of The Network of Carers’ Centres — namely The Princess Royal Trust VOCA L, Carers of West Lothian, Carers of East Lothian, Borders, Glasgow West, Greater Pollok, Glasgow South East, Renfrewshire and East Ayrshire Carers’ Centres — who led the work in partnership with health and social care professionals.

Our shared aim was to make sure that all carers who came into contact with health professionals were identified, directed to appropriate services and advice, and made aware of their rights. Moffat Project workers in the different areas shaped and adapted the programme to local circumstances so that it met the needs of individual areas.

The Project investigated:

• Who is the person caring for this patient?
• Do they know where they can go for help?
• Are they aware of their local Carers’ Centre?
• What benefits do they need?
• Is there training available to help them with their caring?
• Do they need someone to talk to when it all becomes too much to cope with?

WHAT DID THE MOFFAT PROJECT SET OUT TO ACHIEVE?

The Moffat Project set out to achieve ambitious goals:

• Identify new carers, ideally at an early stage
• Provide support and information for carers within the hospital setting
• Set up greater inclusion of carers in hospital discharge plans
• Create pathways to refer carers onto The Princess Royal Trust Carers’ Centres, social work services or other relevant agencies
• Enhance better working between agencies to support carers
• Inform carers of their right to an assessment (and working with statutory agencies to improve the number and quality of assessments being offered)
• Raise health and social care staff’s awareness of carers
• Provide training for frontline staff on carers’ issues
• Reduce the readmission rates to hospitals of people being cared for.

WHERE WE WERE THREE YEARS AGO IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM WHERE WE ARE NOW, AND I THINK, BECAUSE OF THE CONTACT THROUGH THE (Moffat) PROJECT, PEOPLE HAVE A MUCH MORE HEIGHTENED AWARENESS OF CARERS’ ISSUES...

HEALTH WORKER
THE MOFFAT PROJECT’S SUCCESSES

Glasgow Caledonian University independently evaluated the Project’s results using a variety of methods and collected quantitative and qualitative data through questionnaires, focus groups and interviews at the beginning, middle and end of the Project.

The evaluation found that the majority of the aims of the Moffat Project were achieved and the following describes how this happened.

Identify new carers, ideally at an early stage

Moffat Project workers identified almost 3,000 people as new or ‘hidden’ unpaid carers. They also noted a reduction in the number of carers stating that they were never identified as such during the hospital stay of the person they cared for (66% of carers had never been identified prior to the Moffat Project, compared to 50% afterwards – Figures 8 & 9, full report***).

Provide support and information for carers within the hospital setting

Moffat Project workers identified a wide range of services and support that they provided to carers, including advice, information, emotional and practical support. They also referred carers to numerous other services, helping them to work out what support was available to them (Table 10, full report***).

Set up greater inclusion of carers in hospital discharge plans

As a result of the Moffat Project, there was a significant increase in the percentage of carers reporting that discharge plans were put into place. They also stated that more notice had been taken of their views and needs (nearly 60% reported a discharge plan in place, compared to 35% before the Project started – Figure 15, full report***).

There was, however, no increase in the number of carers reporting that discharge plans had been followed through once the person they were caring for left hospital (page 65, full report***).

Create pathways to refer carers onto the Princess Royal Trust Carers’ Centres, social work services or other relevant agencies

Moffat Project workers created pathways and evidence suggests that these pathways will remain in some areas (page 65, full report***).

EXAMPLES OF HELP

John1, 79, cares for his wife, Ann1, 79, who has been in several hospitals since December 2009. She was initially admitted to hospital having fractured her arm, but other health problems included a stroke in 2006 which had left her with speech difficulties, atrial fibrillation and pressure sores which had led to a lower leg amputation. The Moffat worker listened to John, supported him with a complaint against the hospital, referred him to his local Carers’ Centre and the Pension Service for help with benefits, provided information about NHS guidelines for the treatment of his wife’s condition, and also provided information about respite and care homes.

1 Names have been changed

Inform carers of their right to an assessment (and working with statutory agencies to improve the number and quality of assessments being offered).

The Project had a significant impact on the number of carers advised about their right to an assessment (65% of carers informed during the Project’s duration, see full report, page 15***). Carers also reported that the experience of receiving a carer’s assessment was more helpful towards the end of the Project and that they were more likely to receive additional support as a result (full report, page 66***).

Raise health and social care staff’s awareness of carers and provide training for frontline staff on carers’ issues.

Some 3,574 professionals were provided with training on carers’ issues. Project participants worked with at least a further 676 health and social care staff to improve support systems for carers (table 12, full report***).

Enha nce better working between agencies to support carers.

The evaluation found mixed results. The interviews and focus groups with carers indicated some improvement in partnership working, and referrals to carer organisations were more likely (full report, page 66***). Carers themselves felt agencies were working together more effectively towards the end of the Project.

Reduce the readmission rates to hospitals of people being cared for

This was acknowledged as the most ambitious aim of the Project. During the evaluation, health and social care staff commented that this aim could not be measured or achieved in such short timescales, given how complicated the system changes needed for this would be.

WHO WERE THE CARERS?

During the time of the Project, Moffat Project workers identified almost 3,000 carers:

- The average age of the carers was 61, with a range of 9 to 90
- 18% of carers were supporting someone with dementia
- The other most common conditions were stroke, cancer, mental illness and heart disease
- 69% were women and 28% were men (the gender of the remaining 3% was not identified)
- Nearly half (48%) were caring for a spouse or partner and 26% were caring for a parent
- More than one third of the carers provided seven or more hours of care per day
- 13% of carers were in their first year of caring

One 42-year-old woman had given up work to care for her 79-year-old mother who had dementia, and her 80-year-old father who had cancer. Not surprisingly she was prone to depression and very stressed.

MOFFAT PROJECT WORKER

A total of 246 carers were referred to me during the Moffat Project. I phoned or sent letters to all carers, and I offered them a chance to discuss the project at the end, a meeting to which all the meetings took place in the hospital, but I did visit carers in their homes and some came into our Carers’ Centre.

“I met a great deal of carers who were looking after people in very difficult circumstances. I met a 43-year-old woman whose husband had suffered a stroke and she had been left to run the family business, as well as take care of him, her home and her two children.

“Another carer who was referred to me was a 79-year-old woman who was looking after her 85-year-old husband who had Parkinson’s disease and cognitive impairment. She herself was going to hospital three times a week for kidney dialysis.”

MOFFAT PROJECT WORKER
CONCLUSION

Overall, the Moffat Project met or exceeded all but one of its aims. It helped to create or strengthen effective partnership working between the NHS, social work staff, and Carers’ Centres from The Princess Royal Trust for Carers’ Network. There were several important improvements during the two years the Moffat Project was running:

- Professionals had an increased awareness of carers’ issues, were more likely to identify them and do so earlier than before (this means that support can be put in place at an earlier stage to prevent crisis situations developing and carers can maintain their caring role).
- Professionals reported changes to the ways of working, such as information sharing, which directly benefited carers.
- Carers were provided with more information, including information on their right to a carer’s assessment, and were identified at an earlier stage.
- Carers reported feeling that professionals had more recognition of their expertise in caring and understood their needs as a carer.
- Carers felt more able to have a say in shaping the services they, or the person they cared for, received.
- Carers felt agencies were working together more effectively by the end of the Project. Some important areas did not improve. There were no changes found on the impact of caring on carers’ physical or mental health. Nor was there an increase in confidence in the caring role or knowledge of the condition for which they were providing care.

However, recent research into a similar area indicated that the early identification, support and referrals provided by the Moffat Project may mean carers will access training at an earlier stage in their caring role (which can have a positive impact on health, wellbeing and the ability to keep caring****). The Princess Royal Trust for Carers is currently running a project with certain Scottish Carers’ Centres to identify older carers who are new to caring to ensure they get training and support at an early stage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation of the Moffat Project identified improvements to practice and policy which will make significant differences for carers:

- Identification of carers should form part of care pathways from admission through to discharge planning.
- Carers’ awareness training should be mandatory for health and social care staff.
- More work needs to be done to combine discharge plans with community care packages so that support for carers continues once the person they care for has left hospital.
- Primary and acute health care settings need dedicated carer support workers.
- Enhanced partnership working benefits carers and so high level strategic coordination between health, social work and carers’ organisations should be standard practice.
- Professional and regulatory bodies should be asked how carer awareness can be included in professional education programmes for health and social care workers.

WHAT NEXT?

It is testimony to the practical benefits of the Project that funding has been made available to continue the work of the Moffat Project. In the Borders and Lothian NHS areas, health boards and social work departments have taken financial and practical steps to directly fund project workers for a limited time.

In the Borders, two of the project workers will continue in their current role for another two years, and in Lothian the health board has committed funding from its Carers Information Strategy to continue to fund a full-time project worker for one year. Plans are also in place to fund future work to develop carer awareness training for senior health staff.

NHSAyrshire has provided funding to continue Moffat Project work at the Ailsa Hospital in the form of a monthly drop in for carers of someone with a mental health problem.

ALEX’S STORY

Alex is 85 and cares for his sister Nell who is frail and partially sighted. Nell recently celebrated her 100th birthday.

The Moffat Project referred Alex to his local Carers’ Centre in September 2009 while his sister was in hospital.

Alex is very independent as a carer, but he did feel his sister would benefit from some company. As a result of his referral to the Carers’ Centre, Nell now attends day care at the Dwan Community Day Care Centre three days a week, providing Alex with valuable respite from his caring role.

GRACE’S STORY

Grace, 57, cares for her husband, George, 74, who has a neurological condition similar to MS. George was in hospital following an accident. Grace didn’t feel that health and social care workers were taking enough notice of what she needed while planning for George’s discharge from hospital.

The Moffat worker gave her some information and as a result, she spoke to nurses, physiotherapists and occupational therapists so that she had more of an input into the discharge plan.

The Moffat Project worker asked that Grace got a carer’s assessment, he referred her to the Older People’s Advice Service and provided her with information about grants so that she could get her home adapted. He also spoke to her about moving and handling training, provided by her local Carers’ Centre, so that she can move her husband at minimum risk to herself.
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REFERENCES


** The Moffat Charitable Trust was formed in 1999 following the death of Jim Moffat, the co-founder of A.T. Mays, the travel agents. A.T. Mays, which was founded in Saltcoats in the mid 50s as All Travel by Mr Moffat and his wife, Margie, grew to become the third largest travel agency group in the UK, employing more than 2,500 people. It was sold by the Moffat family to The Royal Bank of Scotland in 1988. The Moffat Trust received a bequest from Mr Moffat’s estate and it is the income from this bequest which it distributes each year. In addition, Margie Moffat made a substantial donation to the Moffat Trust during 2007 which has greatly increased the funds available for distribution for charitable purposes.

*** The full report is available online at: www.carers.org/professionals