

Newham Social Welfare Alliance

Supporting front line staff in Making Every Contact Count

BACKGROUND

The Newham Social Welfare Alliance (SWA) identifies key social welfare issues that can have a detrimental effect on vulnerable residents' lives and provides interactive training and support for frontline staff to help find solutions.

The aim of SWA is to build capacity and knowledge in all 'first point of contact' staff and volunteers across the Council, NHS, voluntary organisations, and community and faith groups.

The SWA, which is coordinated by the Public Health Team, delivers a rolling monthly training programme to develop staff and volunteer knowledge, skills, and information to enable them to better support residents about health and wellbeing issues, social welfare issues and dealing with crisis situations.

Front line staff helped shape the Core Conversations module and have identified the priorities and subject areas for the ongoing training programme.

The programme also aims to enhance and strengthen relationships between different front line staff groups and the different voluntary and statutory services who come into contact with residents, particularly vulnerable residents and residents from underserved communities.

"When we talk about breaking down silos between services or organisations, we need to do this by building relationships between frontline staff rather than relying on governance structures"

AT A GLANCE

- The SWA supports front line staff across organisations to provide residents more holistic effective initial support and refer to specialist services where needed
- The programme helps build stronger relationships, creating cross sector networks, enabling warm referrals to services.
- 1665 individuals from nearly 300 organisations are more confident to have core conversations about welfare rights and wellbeing issues
- Collaborations include: Mental Health Community of Practice; Newham Food Alliance, Anti-Poverty Alliance, Small Grants Programmes, Migrant Health operations group.
- Peer support for front line workers and engagement of senior officers as well as front line staff from across the services has been key to the success
- Attendances and training content requests are a litmus test of the current challenges residents are facing. SWA continues to evolve, change and respond to mirror the social welfare landscape in Newham.
- Thrive London have adapted the Core Conversations, training session co-produced by Newham VCS partners to offer specific sessions focusing on Mental health in the context of the Cost of Living crisis.
- The training seeks to enhance people's existing ability to quickly build a relationship with the person they are aiming to help, form a holistic understanding of the challenge at hand, and co-create solutions to overcome them.

Case study contact

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About this document

This case study has been developed by [Bromley by Bow Insights](#) and [Transformation Partners in Health and Care](#) who are working together to support the integration of social welfare advice into the health and social care system.

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"Thank you to everyone in the alliance for coming together and sharing ideas and information and providing a great platform to network and collaborate to support local residents"

HOW IT WORKS

- The project was developed by a multi-agency project steering group, co-ordinated by public health.
- Regular multisector short interactive training sessions are delivered in partnership with specialist staff from the relevant council, health, social care, housing services, and voluntary sector advice organisations on a range of subjects prioritised by the SWA members.
- These include bitesize training and introductions to; Core conversations, welfare benefits, housing and homelessness, mental health, debt and money advice, immigration and NRPF etc
- Courses are delivered online with an average attendance of 16 staff from all levels across statutory and voluntary sector organisations. This includes people from health, local authority, schools, community and family services.

KEY FACTORS TO SUCCESS

- Strong leadership and co-ordination from local authority public health.
- Cross sector project group established to develop and steer the programme with representative from statutory and voluntary sector
- The interactive training was codeveloped with front line workers from the different sectors.
- Training is structured around active learning and problem solving, by working through case scenarios etc
- Membership of the Head of Housing and Homelessness on the SWA project group helped influence the plans to develop a specialist pathways team to support specific cohorts of residents with their housing needs.

IMPACT

1. Improved partnership working

Improved collaboration, connections and new referral pathways and networks formed between statutory and voluntary sector staff in developing and co-delivering the training

2. Increased awareness of services

93% of residents are confident to some degree to refer to appropriate services after attending the training sessions.

3. Stronger and more knowledgeable borough

The alliance network has increased levels of trust, awareness of appropriate resources and services, and willingness to cooperate on the part of both the voluntary sector and the council.

4. Supporting informed decision making

Feedback from the courses has influenced service delivery processes in key council departments including housing. It has informed a number of programmes, networks and community of practices to be developed via the public health team.

"Multi-agency working breaks down when services and organisations don't feel a shared sense of purpose. Staff will never get referrals right if they don't fully understand the services they're referring to"

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