Palliative Care: A focus on Identification – Workshop 1 PPS & SPAR Tool

The Supportive and Palliative Action Register (SPAR) is a traffic light system designed to support care home staff with early identification of changing palliative care needs in residents. SPAR utilises the Palliative Performance Scale (PPSv2) to measure and track a resident's changing needs over time, supporting communication between care home staff, the resident's family and the wider primary care team.

This helps staff optimise opportunities to proactively manage care for those residents who would benefit from a palliative care approach; enabling planning and co-ordination of care.

The workshop will give delegates an understanding of how SPAR and the PPSv2 tool can be used together to identify any significant decline in care home residents, in particular, those homes with a social care model. Delegates can test their understanding of the tools by taking part in an interactive assessment using SPAR and the PPSv2 tool and will have the opportunity to discuss the potential benefits and challenges of utilising the tool in their area.

Do view the presentation follow the link:

If you would like any further information about this workshop or the content within the presentation please contact:

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As part of this workshop delegates were asked to gather into groups and answer the following questions:

Q 1: What benefits can you see in using the PPS with the SPAR tool within care homes?

• Visual evidence of present condition/decline	• Help prevent crisis – support staff
• Recognition of changes within resident	• SPAR easy recognisable system – non jargon for care staff
• Ease of use for staff	• Provides evidence of change
• Improved documentation	• Encourages action rather than doing nothing
• Evidence that resident has deteriorate/stayed stable	• Back up from staff
• Potential to reduce hospital admissions/A&E attendance	• Gives staff ownership
• Reduces delay in treatment	• Plots change over time to show family
• Adding SPAR onto the PPS tool would improve care	• Straightforward, can be used by care staff – no need for clinical training
• Gives a bird's eye view of residents	• Helps staff to recognise change
• Currently only senior carers use PPP – this could involve all carers	• Support the allocation of staff – residents with an amber or red SPAR would require more support
• More proactive care – helps to avoid reactive/crisis care or decisions	• Supports continuity of care/recognise change quickly

• Gives staff a voice, confidence and knowledge	• Empowers care home staff
• Supports partnership working	• Identify needs quickly
• Informs decision making	• Common language
• Helps remind staff of the important next steps	• Busy staff can forget what they need to do – this prompts
Better outcomes for the patient/ resident	• Factors in slight variation in assessment

Q2: Can you see any negatives from using these tools in a care home?

• Would be best to audit after used	• Staff not aware of the actions to take
• Patient/resident not being properly assessed by staff	• Physical recording of SPAR – how much time would it take?
• Some carers may require support to complete	• Need to ensure all involved probably most effective if completed by the hands on carers they are most likely to notice change
• Seems a lot to take in at once	• Training required
• Consistency – change over staff	• Management buy in – support from staff
• PPS require a change in the language	• Some of the levels jump
• Require reflection which is good but takes time	• Limited time in care home setting

Q3: Could you envisage using these tools, if so how and in what environment?

• Long term care	• Any service
• Fife are implementing this over the whole of specialist palliative care services	• The traffic light system is very good – easy to use
• Could be standardised for use in prison services	• Home carers should all have SPAR training
• Acute OT service	• Any nursing or residential home
• Complex needs hospice	• Care at home
• Home care	• Could be used to trigger MDT discussions (including for homecare teams)
• Good for managing frailty	

For more information on identification tools please follow the link to view the Identification Tools comparator: