

## Engaging Communities around death, dying and bereavement - A Partnership Project

Merseyside and Cheshire  
Clinical Networks

*The ability to have frank and open conversations with professionals all working toward a common goal, that is encouraging the community to discuss death and dying more openly*

### Background

In 2008's End of Life Care Strategy called death "the last great taboo in our society", and identified a "lack of openness and discussion about death and dying". It is to break this silence that the Dying Matters Coalition was established nationally- first talking about death doesn't bring death closer. It's about planning for life.

The North West Clinical Pathway Group (2008) identified as one of its 11 key recommendations; **"A public campaign should be established to raise awareness about end of life care resulting in a more open conversation within society which also engages people's views about death and dying."** North West Multi - Professional Education and Training Levy (MPET) monies were identified to engage the public at the local level and build on the work of Dying Matters Coalition.

Simultaneously (2008/2009), the **Conversations for Life programme** in collaboration with NHS Cumbria and a multi-sector steering group launched the first, community-based awareness project in the Northwest to raise public awareness of the need to overcome the taboo of talking about death and dying in order to have a say in our future care. In 2009, the pilot project received a national endorsement from the Department of Health End of Life Care programme and in 2010 received initial support to engage other communities via a facilitated process and materials.

*"Already have had more conversations about death, funerals and inheritances with friends and family in the last 2 weeks than I have had in the last few years!"*

- Participant Quote

### Planning

The evaluation of the MCCN Dying matters week in March 2010 identified the need to engage with the community as an ongoing initiative rather than just a one week campaign every year. In 2010 meetings were held which included Hospice clinical managers to discuss how to develop and take forward raising public awareness of issues related to End of Life such as advance care planning and death & dying.

The plan was to work through either the local Hospice or End of Life Care Locality group with a named individual taking the lead in organising a number of community engagement events. This approach has been given broad support across the Network as it doesn't focus on just one period of time such as the national Dying Matters week **but will be continued over weeks and months and will work beyond health services.**

#### To support the Hospice/Locality lead(s):

Mary Matthiesen, Director of the Conversations for Life programme held a workshop for all Hospice/Locality leads explaining the concept of community engagement and how to go about identifying and engaging with up to 30 community leaders. The Conversations for Life programme delivered materials & facilitation to aid in this effort, facilitated local engagement events, produced summary reports / actions plans and follow up sessions.

*"I had no idea other organisations were doing more than we were to raise this awareness"*

- Participant Quote

### The Facilitated Process



Publicity and media support was available to aid the community-based plan

### Community Led Engagement



### Outcomes

135 community group leaders have been engaged by the following lead organisations:

- Halton Haven Hospice
- Liverpool PCT / Marie Curie Hospice, Liverpool
- VCA Wirral
- Queenscourt Hospice, Southport
- Western Cheshire (pending)
- Woodlands Hospice

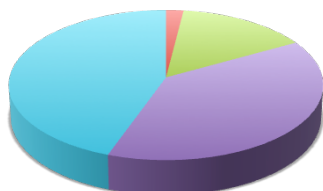
### Community identified focus areas

- Information – Local services and resources
- Outreach – branded promotional material
- Public & Staff Education
- Leadership/Sustainability

### The Evaluation Process



How likely are you to implement your new knowledge / skill(s) and speak to others following the session?



- 1 = Not at all (0%)
- 2 = Maybe (2%)
- 3 = Likely (15%)
- 4 = Very Likely (39%)
- 5 = Definitely (45%)

### Emerging sustainability models and next steps

It is important to be able to embed this initiative within current groups for it to be sustained. We are looking within community-wide organisations (i.e., LINKS - local Involvement networks or CVS), and possible lottery funding or other funding streams.

