

CASE STUDY: END OF LIFE COMFORT BOXES (West Integrated Board)

Most people want to die at home. However the timely provision of equipment and information to those at the end of life and their carers has long been an issue. Often down to the phoning around and delivering by the district nursing teams, with a burden on carers to leave their dying relative or friend to go and collect drugs and equipment from various places.

It was clear from the beginning that the Covid-19 pandemic was an overwhelming common challenge to all. The requirement to isolate and the need to free up professional time so that expertise could be used more appropriately were big issues and professionals were concerned that there would be many patients with end of life needs that it would not be possible to meet.

In the past, whilst all involved had the best of intentions, there were many different people from different organisations providing care at the end of life and it could take a very long time to get anything done. The pandemic moved fast though and there was limited time.

A small group of professionals and users with a can-do approach believed new ways of working were needed so people could have as dignified a death as possible. Their priority was to give patients, carers and health and social care professionals the tools to do as good a job as possible in unknown circumstances. There was continuous conversation across multiple agencies and users during what turned out to be a really short development phase.

They prioritised medicines for symptom control first, and then considered what would be of practical help. On 25th March they began to develop the idea of “comfort packs”. Using existing networks to reach out to lay representatives on the West Integration Board and Practitioner group it was agreed that a pack of practical supportive aids and information would be of value. Practitioners on the ground were asked what should be in such a pack and national guidance was scanned for the best advice and information formats available.

Packs contained washing aids, emollient creams and lip care, non-foaming toothpaste and a soft toothbrush, continence products and information of end of life care, bereavement and how to get help - all the practical pieces of kit which would be supplied by multiple agencies once it was recognised that someone was at the end of their life.

The development of a pre made up “comfort pack” that contained everything necessary which could be delivered to a patient’s home was to ensure timely support and free up health professional time.

The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) was involved in identifying funding, and

purchasing the items identified as necessary. The necessary agreements and signoffs from across the system were processed via the newly set up CPC system.

The voluntary sector were key partners providing volunteers to break down bulk orders and vehicles to take them to the Primary Care Networks, via Shelterbox, the ordering and final distribution to patients homes was sorted by Volunteer Cornwall who provided DBS checked drivers.

In just two weeks, by 9th April, End of Life boxes had been distributed across Cornwall to support ALL patients who had been identified as being in the last week or two of their lives.



“Being able to provide some practical items to ensure dignity, comfort and support within a few hours, to someone in their final phase of life has been highly appreciated”

“I have used the end of life comfort boxes on a number of occasions during the Covid response and found them very helpful. They have been particularly helpful during those immediate crisis situations.”

“There is only one chance to get it right”

Positive outcomes

- Timely response to need - the right support at the right time for people
- Empowering carers and families
- Partnership working with the voluntary sector
- Embedded trust across agencies - those on the ground were enabled to express their views and opinions irrespective of roles and titles
- Wide ranging involvement because it didn't rely on physical meetings