

Submission report

VOLUNTEER SERVICE FOR NURSING HOME RESIDENTS

- A buddy system that ensures social care for elderly

Overview

With the limited resources in staff that juggle a lot of daily tasks, Rokilde nursing home in Kristiansund municipality, Norway, struggled with providing their residents with more than basic medical care. This resulted in residents feeling bored and longing for something to look forward to in their daily life. This led the Rokilde nursing home management to look into how they could facilitate more “active ageing” for their residents, going beyond just their physical well-being.

This service provides the nursing home the ability to deliver individual social care through the involvement of the local community. Buddies are recruited through the local newspaper and word of mouth to be matched up with suitable residents at the nursing home. Each buddy is carefully selected for each resident based on an evaluation sheet and an initial test meeting. The purpose is to match individuals that share the same interests and curiosities in life. As part of the service, each department at the nursing home assigns a nurse responsible to greet and support the visiting buddies at all times. It's also been established a 25% position for a buddy coordinator.

As we age, we gradually lose the context of worklife, neighbors, friends and family. The buddy's aim is to reduce loneliness by simply engaging in conversation, going for walks and encouraging participation in organized social activities. With this new service, the resident has a committed friend visiting every week, resulting in a meaningful and richer everyday life for both buddy and resident.

To ensure seamless implementation and efficient operation of the new service, both staff and recruited buddies are provided with instructional material. Each department gets a diagram showing how to operate the service, describing the entire process from recruiting of buddies to an established buddy-resident relationship. They are also provided with a calendar and poster to keep track of visitors and staff responsibilities.

New buddies are invited to a kick-off meeting where they receive a folder describing their new role and practical information. Both buddies and responsible staff wear buttons to communicate their role on duty, making it clear who to look for and who to ask for help. Finally, the buddies receive simple feedback forms to evaluate visits and help the nursing home to continuously adjust and improve the service.

Process

This project followed a standard design process with insight, ideation and implementation phases.

User insight

We started by gathering insight about residents, families and staff, and all their challenges, needs and wants through workshops and qualitative in-depth interviews. The insight revealed that the employees felt frustrated with being unable to fulfill the residents' social needs. The residents and their families shared the same frustration. The residents felt bored and was longing for something to look forward to in their daily life. They all expressed a wish for more resources. The next step was to look at how they could successfully engage volunteers to the nursing homes by designing a well-functioning system. (sitat)

"If there suddenly were standing ten volunteers on our doorstep, we wouldn't have the routines and capacity to welcome them." – the mangager at Rokilde nursing home

Ideation

"It's wonderful to be a part of a process shaping my future workplace" – nurse Ida

The ideation phase was kicked off with a workshop where staff, volunteers from other organizations and potential volunteers co-created a draft for a new buddy service. In the first part of the workshop the participants created an ideal user journey for the volunteers where their needs and wishes became evident. In the second part, the staff worked with how they could meet this ideal journey by converting the volunteers' needs and wishes into concrete employee tasks. Finally, they placed the new tasks into a service blueprint. The designers developed the concept further into a holistic service ready for piloting.

Implementation

To secure a seamless piloting and implementation, the designers developed instructional and supporting material for both staff and buddies. The pilot was announced in the local newspaper where they asked the local community to participate as buddies in a pilot running from October to December 2014. They quickly recruited seven buddies. During the pilot period they evaluated every visit and adjusted the service along the way.

Benefits

The user centered and collaborative nature of the design process ensured a service that truly met the needs and wants of the residents, staff and volunteers.

The new buddy system has resulted in residents always having something to look forward to, feeling less lonely and engaging in more social activities. Many of the residents express that they are truly touched by the connection they experience with their buddy, and that they choose to spend their time to hang out with them. The buddies also express appreciation towards their new friendship, considering the value they gain from getting to know their new elderly friend and learn about their life experiences.

“Had it not been for Ildrid, my buddy, I’ve never gotten around to go to the porridge party. She’s so kind and friendly” – resident Dagrunn

“I have received flowers from a woman who’s here just for me! Someone who cares about me” – resident Inger

“What a great guy! Imagine that this young fellow wants to visit an old lady like me. I’m looking forward to the next time!” – resident Liv

Finally, the new service has also had a great impact on staffs’ workday, reducing workload to free up time to focus on physical care, as well as giving them the insurance that their residents are better cared for socially.

“This is great! We see how important this is for our residents. In addition it eases our conscience in a busy workday” – employee Ingrid

Effects

“This is so rewarding. I’m glad we can continue being buddies, it’s great fun!” – buddy Marit

The pilot proved to be an immediate success and gradually converted into a fully operating service, that later has scaled to all the five nursing homes in Kristiansund municipality. Starting with seven buddies at one nursing home during the pilot, they can now happily report that over 30 buddies are regularly visiting the seniors in all nursing homes in Kristiansund.

The project and the effect good design has had on the nursing home have resulted in a great enthusiasm among the management and staff. This has led the nursing home to initiate an even bigger design project to co-create a new way to organize the whole workflow and task management at the nursing home. The success of the volunteer service also led to this new project being fully funded by the government and is ready for piloting.

As a result of the volunteer service project, Rokilde nursing home also received funding from the county governor to produce an booklet about the process and result to inspire other nursing homes and municipalities to work this way.