

Communicating Wellness in Domestic Assistance

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Monash City Council located in the inner eastern suburbs of Melbourne provides CHSP respite, social support, domestic assistance, personal care, Occupational Therapy, home modification and maintenance services to more than 2,500 clients. Of these clients, around 1,500 clients receive domestic assistance to remain independent at home. With a workforce of around 99 home care workers, Monash City Council set out to better articulate their wellness approach with clients receiving domestic assistance over the last 3 years.

Back in 2019 Monash liaised with their Positive Ageing Reference Group (PARG) which consists of older persons in the municipality to understand how best to share the wellness message.

During that consultation, it became clear that the messaging on Wellness didn't resonate with the representatives on the PARG. The group workshopped the concept of wellness within the scope of domestic assistance and considered ways to communicate a wellness approach for existing and new clients using a co-design approach.

The outcome of the workshop resulted in a new approach which is both empowering and positive e.g., doing with, not for; and the domestic assistance BeWell at Home promotion was created.

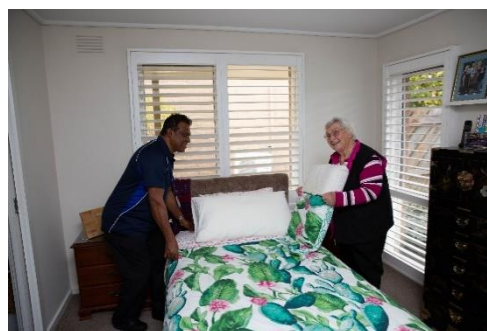
Fast forward to 2021 and Covid, the team at Monash connected online to discuss hot topics, including the concept of wellness.

While reflecting on their approach to engaging clients in the more practical aspects of their care, it became evident that the organisation needed to reinforce their messaging around their approach to domestic assistance.

Communicating change requires a thoughtful approach that is best achieved when those impacted by the change are involved in developing the change message.

It was acknowledged that their current communication contained images that were passive, thus sending conflicting messages to the clients and care worker about the wellness approach.

This prompted the creation of a series of positive images to promote wellness in client and care worker newsletters, client manuals and on the Monash website.



The final products included images that reflect the consumers, staff, and service approach to BeWell at Home.





Activity analysis – shared tasks

To support key messages the team considered how typical activities could be broken down and shared with clients. This activity analysis helped care workers to understand where active interactions could be initiated and formed the basis for visual material to promote the wellness approach with clients.

Active interactions included:

- Client drying dishes and care worker wiping bench;
- Client with pillowcase handing to care worker making a bed;
- Client handing out washing on low line and putting in pegs or handing pegs;
- Client with equipment and cleaning products ready for the visit; and
- Client dusting while care worker is vacuuming.



Engaging clients in their Service

As part of the roll out of the original BeWell messaging, Monash had developed three videos to support the induction of care workers.

Additional training has since been held online to build workers confidence and skill to engage clients in their service.



As in the original induction material, this education focused on the regular interactions that support staff have with clients from the initial greeting to initiating discussions about client priorities. This involves understanding the client's story and what's important to them to enable them to remain independent at home.

Reflective Practice as a Continuous Improvement tool

Reflective discussion is a great way to identify opportunities for continuous improvement. For Monash, this has resulted in changes to their communication material and service delivery approach.

Monash continue to promote wellness messages through their BeWell @ Home newsletter to clients and staff alike.

Reflections

How do you describe wellness to clients? Do they understand your approach to service delivery and their involvement in the delivery of their own care? Do your images reflect the diversity of your consumers, service and the community in general? Are the images empowering and positive? e.g., doing with, not for.

Further information about creating inclusive Communication Practices is available at:
<https://www.esdt.com.au/connecting-through-inclusive-communication-practices.html>

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