

P30 THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION – A HOSPICE'S JOURNEY

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The End of Life Care Strategy highlighted the importance of public education and the Dying Matters coalition was created to encourage people to talk about dying. This describes the experience of one hospice in taking forward this initiative, explaining the approaches used and identifying some of the achievements and challenges faced. One of the aims of the current hospice strategy was for the hospice to develop a role in public education. A core group of enthusiastic staff including health and social care practitioners, educationalists and fundraisers met to explore how we could begin to address this aspect of the strategy. The underpinning philosophy of our approach was to work in partnership with our community, but how to get started was the first challenge. In 2009 an initial event was held by the group in a local market town on a Saturday morning. However, just four people attended. The group met, reflected upon the approach adopted and the lessons learnt. An opportunity arose to attend an open day at a local crematorium and this proved much more successful with greater levels of interest from the over 500 people who attended. This led to a change in strategy through attending local events organised by other organisations and having a 'stall' manned by staff, as well as responding to invitations from individuals/groups, such as a local General Practice patient participation group. This has achieved greater success with people asking questions about how to approach a discussion about dying with a family member or friend and also it is breaking down perceptions of the hospice. The group has also encouraged hospice volunteers to support this initiative and they have been interested and enthusiastic. The journey has had highs and lows and the challenge is to keep momentum going.