

PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING
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Introduction

The services and functionality of a care home is affected by many factors. These days the patients visiting a care home must take care of many challenges as they may face new problems every time. In the UK care homes offer a variety of services and are visited by many patients around the year. This makes the workplace of a care home prone to many problems which may result in utter dissatisfaction among the patients, care home employees or the other external stakeholders. The problems that the care homes face in social and health-care contexts will be examined in this study. The impact of the problem on various stakeholders will be examined, and a variety of approaches will be offered to address the problem. The approach's execution and intimation to stakeholders, as well as its supervision, will be evaluated.

Complex problem at the workplace with its scope and impact

Over the last decade the people of the UK have experienced different experiences in a care home. This is because many people are now visiting a care home which has resulted in the degradation of service level in the care home (Bradshaw *et al.*, 2021). As a result of this the **patient experience** has been affected. The growing number of patients and stable number of caregivers has increased the work pressure on the caregivers. This has impacted their performance because of which the patients are not experiencing the same level of treatment in a care home. With the growing competition in the healthcare sector and many new care homes coming in every area the patient's expectancy has also risen. Patients are paying huge money to the insurance company to avail the benefits and best services, which the employees of a care home are not able to cope with. The change in patient experience in a care home has impacted the business of a care home which has happened due to the low footfalls and patient's visits. The problem of patient experience has a wider scope for a care home as it may impact the business and existence of the care home. The patient experience will affect the care home relationship with the insurance company, pharmaceutical company and other companies related to the business of the care home. The patient expectation from a care home has increased these days. As stated by Darby *et al.* (2017), patients expect a better infrastructure, clean and hygiene place and professionally developed employees from the helpdesk to the doctors. With rising competition, the employees of care

homes need to change themselves and learn new skills so that their performance can be competitive in the healthcare sector. Their training and development program will help them in developing new skills like soft skills and better interpersonal skills.

Analysis of the problem for the decision making process

The problem of patient experience in a care home is subject to different factors like increasing patient expectation, rising insurance cost, and increasing competition among the care homes. The lack of proper skill development for the care home employees is also one of the important factors that has resulted in the degradation of the care home. These factors will help in making a sound decision making process which will help in analysing the problem and will also help in finding a potential solution for this problem. The decision making process to solve this problem is as follows

Problem definition: The problem in the care home workplace is the patient experience. The patients expect to receive best in class services from the care homes like best infrastructure, well behaved employees, and doctors, etc. (Gracem,2021). This problem is experienced by many care homes and this problem needs to be solved to reduce the patient turnover.

Limiting factors: The important limiting factors involved in this problem is lack of training and development of employees. The employees of care homes should be trained in developing skills like soft skills and interpersonal skills.

Potential alternatives: Some of the alternatives include communicating with the patients prior to their visits, developing a better infrastructure and training employees with updated skills.

Alternative analysis: Communication with employees prior to a patient visit can be a good alternative but it may not prove to be a good alternative for a new patient who has not experienced the care home (Clarke *et al.*, 2019). The development of infrastructure and training of employees can be a better alternative as this will enhance the customer experience.

Selection: The selection of alternatives can be done from the two alternatives like development of infrastructure and training of employees. Among these training of employees will yield better results as it will have a long term impact on employees and patients.

Implementation: The implementation of the alternative can be done by organising a training and development activity for employees. This will help employees in knowing new skills which they will implement in their workplace.

Monitoring and control: The monitoring and control would be done on the basis of setting KPIs. This will help the management in finding out the success or failure of the training program. This will also help the management in knowing the need for further training.

Alternative solution

To solve the problem of patient experience different solutions can be proposed which can help in reducing the bad experience of patients. The range of alternatives available to solve the problem includes improvement in **communication with patients**. By improving communication like reminding the patients for their appointment, taking feedback and reminding them about their next visit will help in developing good experience in patients (Spacey *et al.*, 2018). Apart from this **developing the care home infrastructure** will also help in enhancing the experience as this will help the patients in feeling comfortable while waiting in the care home and getting different tests there. **Training and development of employees** at the care home is also an alternative which will help the employees in developing an environment where patients can feel better while interacting with the employees of the care home (Hayward *et al.*, 2020).

Decision making technique for evaluating the range of alternatives

Cost benefit analysis is one of the widely used decision making techniques which will help in finding the best solutions to the problem that care homes are facing. The cost benefit analysis will help in understanding the cost required to implement the solutions and the benefits that the care home can reap from it. Of the three alternative solutions the cost benefit analysis for them is discussed as below:

Improving communication: This solution is the cheapest solution among all. This will require increasing the frequency of communication from the care home to the patients. The communication will include pre-visit period, during the visit period and post-visit period. The cost involved in this solution is low and the benefits can be seen from the patient reaction during the care home visit. Quantitatively, the increase in the number of re-visits for patients and increase in the new visits will reflect the benefits from this solution.

Improving infrastructure: According to Zander and Boniface (2017), development of infrastructure will be a costly solution as it will include buying new machinery and developing the care home infrastructure. The purchase of new equipment and development of infrastructure will help in offering better services to patients. The benefits received from this solution can be found by knowing feedback from patients receiving care from the care home.

Training and development of employees: Training and development of employees for skill development will be less expensive as compared to the development of infrastructure. This solution will result in greater benefits for the care home workplace because the soft skills and good interpersonal skills will give patients a better experience from the front office till the end of the treatment (Bushfield, 2020).

Among all of the above mentioned solutions, ***training and development of employees for their skill development*** is the most feasible solution. This solution will give a better experience to patients in a longer run and the cost benefit analysis of this solution is better than the two solutions discussed.

Implementation plan

The training and development of employees for their skill development can be done by hiring a specialist. The specialist will be an external individual who will have a vast experience of providing training and developing soft skills and interpersonal skills in individuals. The training of the employees would be conducted in a phased way some employees would be trained first and some will be trained later. The training would be conducted on the development of soft skills and interpersonal skills. It will also focus on the behavioural aspect of employees as the trainer will train them in understanding the behaviour of the patients and treat them since their behaviour (Jones *et al.*, 2019). The training will have role plays in it which will help the employees to understand any situation by enacting that situation. As a result of this the employees will get the experience of implementing the soft skills to their patients in their mock drills.

Stakeholder's communication plan

Stakeholders are the most important individuals or group of people for any organisation. These people's lives are impacted by the functioning of the organisation, hence any productive step taken by any organisation should be communicated to all the stakeholders and its benefits need to be communicated. For UK care homes to improve the working culture by conducting training

and development of employees the care home first needs to develop a communication plan so that the stakeholders can get the knowledge regarding the same. The communication to the stakeholders can be done in the following ways:

Offline and online communication: The development in the care home after the training is done to the existing patients and prospective patients can be done either by communicating directly or by sending emails or newsletters to them. This will help them in knowing the development in the care home and the patients will visit the care home to experience the new development. This method will help in word-of-mouth communication from the patients who will experience the new development in the care home (Parekh *et al.*, 2018). This will result in marketing of the care home from the existing patients and will help the care home in the development of more clients.

Presentation: The new development arising from the training of employees can be shared with the insurance companies, providers, and pharmaceutical companies in the form of online presentation. This method will help in enhancing the relationship with the suppliers, insurance companies and pharmaceutical companies. The presentation will be developed keeping in mind to satisfy the different stakeholders so that their services to the care home will be improved.

Monitoring and evaluation techniques

The monitoring and valuation technique which can be used by the care home to review the development done by implementing the solutions mentioned above is Key Performance Indicators. This method will help in quantifying the results by setting the achievement target. The KPI can include following parameters:

Duration of stay in care home: The increase in the duration of stay in the care home will reflect the successful implementation of the solution. This will also show that the patients are feeling more comfortable in staying in the care home which reflects the good patient experience.

Increase in new registration: The success of the solution provided can also be measured by the number of increases in the new registration in the care home. The increase in new registration is only possible due to the increase in word-of-mouth communication from the existing patients.

Conclusion

The report concludes that the UK care homes are currently facing many problems out of which patient experience is the most challenging one. To face this complex problem different solutions were discussed and one among them was proposed which was developing the skills among the employees of the care home. The implementation of this solution was discussed along with the process of communication plans to stakeholders through online and offline communication and presentation. The success of the solution would be measured through KPIs which will include care home stay duration and increase in the new registration.

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