

## Case Study: 'Better at Home' - simulated learning for parents and carers

The 'Better at Home' project was introduced to support transition to home for technology dependent children with complex health care needs by providing training and support to parents and unpaid carers.

Many of these children require complex medical interventions including tracheostomy, gastrostomy and children who are ventilator dependent. There were three elements to the project:

- WellChild Parent Trainer Role
- 'Better at Home' Simulation Suite
- eLearning materials

Whilst all three elements of the project were evaluated (Appendix 1), this report will focus on the evaluation of simulated learning in the 'Better at Home' suite. The project was a collaborative partnership funded by the charity WellChild and included the development of a simulation suite at Edge Hill University and the role of a WellChild Parent Trainer seconded by Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust.

The 'Better at Home' simulation suite is a purpose built flat consisting of a living room, bathroom and bedroom (Appendix 2). A range of equipment, which is commonly used in the home setting, is available including a portable ventilator, suction equipment, enteral feeding pump, self-inflating bag valve masks and oxygen.



The suite has been built within a classroom and has CCTV cameras fitted in each room of the flat to enable observation and recording of scenarios; there is a debriefing area in the suite where parents and carers can review video footage of their performance. They are able to practice clinical skills, emergency scenarios and communication skills in a safe, supportive environment.

Prior to attending for simulated learning, parents and carers have received training and achieved competencies, where relevant, in skills such as tracheostomy care, emergency tube changes and basic life support. Bespoke high fidelity scenarios are designed to meet the needs of individual families and carers following consultation with the WellChild Parent Trainer who has worked with the child and family. Simulated learning is facilitated by a Senior Lecturer and the WellChild Parent Trainer.

## Key Outcomes

A formal evaluation of the WellChild 'Better at Home' project was undertaken in March 2015 by Dr Paula Keating, Senior Lecturer at Edge Hill University (Appendix 1). The use of the 'Better at Home' suite was evaluated to ascertain the experiences of parents and carers who engaged in clinical simulation.

Some parents reported difficulty accessing the 'Better at Home' suite due to time constraints and geographical location as Edge Hill University is approximately 20 miles from Alder Hey NHS Foundation Trust. This was addressed by the Trust who provided transport for parents/carers where required. The main benefits parents and carers reported were:

- The ability to practice emergency clinical skills in a realistic environment.
- The ability to practise in a 'safe' and supportive environment which resulted in perceived enhanced levels of confidence of parents/carers in caring for their child.

## Background

Edge Hill University is based in Ormskirk, Lancashire and has a Faculty of Health and Social Care (FoHSC) which delivers a range of programmes including BSc and MSc pre-registration Adult, Child, Learning Disability and Mental Health nursing. Senior Lecturers Dr Paula Keating and Brenda Harris, who are both registered Children's nurses, were involved in the project which was a collaborative partnership between Edge Hill University, Alder Hey NHS Foundation Trust and WellChild. The project was funded by WellChild in 2013, initially for 2 years. Following the evaluation, a full time WellChild Parent Trainer post was funded for a 3 year period commencing from August 2016.

The increasing number of technology dependent children with complex health care needs and hence parents and unpaid carers who require additional training and support to transition from hospital to home led to this project. Evidence has shown (Appendix 1) that children with complex healthcare needs are 'Better at Home', hence the title of the simulation suite.

## Key Aims

To support parents and unpaid carers of technology dependent children with complex healthcare needs in the transition from hospital to home by providing training and simulated learning to build confidence and competence. Supporting transition to home can reduce hospital length of stay and enable the family unit to remain intact at home (Appendix 1). The WellChild Parent Trainer role also aimed to provide training for the wider family network who support the child and parents by providing them with training and simulated learning.

## Key Stages of Set-up

The 'Better at Home' simulation suite was designed and built at Edge Hill University in 2013 following the provision of funding by WellChild.

WellChild Parent Trainer was appointed (0.5 wte) in 2013 for 2 years.

WellChild Parent Trainer was responsible for providing support and training for parents and carers of technology dependent children with complex care health needs at Alder Hey and home. The Parent Trainer was responsible for identifying families who would benefit from accessing simulated learning in the 'Better at Home' suite.

Simulated learning scenarios were devised and facilitated by Brenda Harris, Senior Lecturer at Edge Hill University in collaboration with the WellChild Parent Trainer.

Evaluation of the project was undertaken by Dr Paula Keating, Senior Lecturer at Edge Hill University in March 2015.

Since the evaluation, WellChild have continued to fund a WellChild Parent Trainer, Esther Bennington who commenced in post in August 2016 and is based at Alder Hey NHS Foundation Trust.

## How it Works

Competency based training is provided by the Trust for parents and carers in clinical skills such as tracheostomy care, gastrostomy care and basic life support. The WellChild Parent Trainer, Esther Bennington, identifies parents and carers who may benefit from simulated learning to consolidate their skills in preparation for transition to home and will offer access to the simulation suite.

The WellChild Parent Trainer provides support and training for parents and carers in key skills but also provides a wide range of advice and guidance. Training is provided in hospital and at the 'Better at Home' suite but also in the community where required. This may be for family members at home or in the child's school.

Prior to the session, the WellChild Parent Trainer will provide a brief clinical history to enable the development of a bespoke simulated learning scenario by Brenda Harris, Senior Lecturer and to ensure that the relevant equipment and resources are available within the suite.

On arrival at the 'Better at Home' Suite, the Lecturer and Parent Trainer will discuss the parents and carers aims for, and expectations of, the session in the debriefing area. The Lecturer will then introduce them to the suite and manikin and demonstrate any relevant equipment where required. Once parents/carers are comfortable with the environment, the first simulation will begin. On average parents/carers will participate in two to three scenarios of increasing complexity. Most parents and carers will work in pairs for the first scenario to build confidence but will then participate on their own.

The scenario is controlled by the Lecturer and recorded for debrief but the Lecturer and Parent Trainer will observe the scenario live on CCTV. Parents and carers, who are not participating, may also observe depending on the outcomes of the session. The video is viewed in debrief area after each simulation and the discussion is led by the Parent Trainer with support from the Lecturer. Most sessions last 2-3 hours depending on the number of parents/carers participating in the session.

## Resources

WellChild have funded the build, some equipment, eLearning packages and the WellChild Parent Trainer post at Alder Hey. Senior Lecturer support for simulated learning is provided by Edge Hill University.

## Key Challenges

- The main challenge is access to the suite due to time constraints for families and geographical location.
- Flexibility in timing of sessions has addressed these issues for some families but not all. Evening and weekend access has been offered.
- Alder Hey have, on occasion, provided transport to enable parents/carers to access the 'Better at Home' suite.
- The appointment of a full time WellChild Parent Trainer, Esther Bennington, at Alder Hey from August 2016 has increased the number of parents and carers accessing the suite in recent months.

## Key Learning

The evaluation of the project by Dr Paula Keating in relation to the 'Better at Home' simulation suite (Appendix 1) identified that:

- Parents/carers should continue to be provided with access to the 'Better at Home suite' at Edge Hill University to support their skills training.
- The use of the 'Better at Home' suite should be maximised by using the facilities for the provision of training for paid carers and other professionals.
- Consideration should be given to the development of a mobile 'Better at Home' suite/facility to broaden access to simulation training for carers.

## Sustainability

The programme is continuing to provide simulated learning for relevant parents and carers who are provided with the opportunity to access the 'Better at Home' simulation suite. Simulated learning is facilitated by Brenda Harris, Senior Lecturer and Esther Bennington, Parent Trainer Alder Hey NHS Trust.

## Next Steps

- To continue to offer access to simulated learning to relevant families and carers to support the transition of their child from hospital to home
  - Explore ways to improve accessibility for parents and carers
  - Development of a wider range of scenarios
  - Consider the provision of training by Edge Hill to agencies that provide paid carers to support families.

## Supporting Material

**Appendix 1** - Evaluation of the WellChild 'Better at Home' project

Dr Paula Keating, Edge Hill University, March 2015

**Appendix 2** – Photographs of 'Better at Home' suite

## Relevant Websites

<https://www.wellchild.org.uk/>

For more information contact:

Brenda Harris

Senior Lecturer, Edge Hill University

[harrisb@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:harrisb@edgehill.ac.uk)

01695 657 036