

Social work role in community longstay residential unit, respite service and day centre

Bellvilla Community Unit is a 50 bed unit in Dublin for men and women over the age of 65 providing long term care, respite services and a day centre. The social work service receives referrals from all three services in Bellvilla and offers a professional service to residents/clients and/or their families to ensure that their emotional and social needs are met alongside their medical and health/nursing/care needs. A psycho-social assessment is conducted by the social worker, who operates as part of the wider multidisciplinary team.

Social work support, using counselling skills and person-centred care practice, focuses on working *with* the older person, and their family. Developing a professional relationship allows information pertaining to the values and preferences of the older person, and their families, to be obtained and communicated within the MDT. This guides the care provision for the older person by Bellvilla. Person centred care views the older person as being at the centre of decisions regarding their care and sees them as experts, working alongside the MDT to get the best outcome for them. As a number of our clients live with a cognitive impairment/ a diagnosis of a dementia when they are referred to us, it can be valuable to utilise the pre-existing supports in their lives e.g. their family etc.

Some examples of referrals to the social work dept. include:

An older person attending the *Day Care Centre* may require assistance to continue to live well at home. As a social worker I can provide support, an application for a home care package, referral to befriending service, referral to Care & Repair (home repair) service and an increase in time spent at the Day Care Centre. I may also assist the older person with the emotional and practical aspects of applying for long term care.

When an older person is admitted for a *respite* stay it can often provide the opportunity to assess the interventions required before they return home. It can also be a good time to organise repairs/cleaning within the home. It can also become apparent at this time that there may be a family member experiencing carer stress which is having a significant impact upon themselves, their relationship with the older person and the care provision overall. A referral to Family Carers Ireland and/or the Alzheimer's Society of Ireland, if appropriate, can provide support after the respite stay concludes.

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When an older person is admitted to *long-term nursing home care*, they, and their family, often need support to adjust to their new circumstances following the move from home or hospital. They may need support to come to terms with illness or to explore difficult decisions - for example, end-of-life care-planning. As the social worker for the service, I coordinate Family Meetings within the first month of a new resident's admission to Bellvilla – this is a multidisciplinary meeting with the resident and their family in attendance (where appropriate). When a particularly vulnerable resident would benefit from the protection offered by Wardship I coordinate the application, when there is no family available.

Empowering the residents and clients of Bellvilla to self-advocate is an important focus of the social work role. I facilitate the monthly Resident's Committee meetings which create the space for residents to share their views on their experience of Bellvilla.

Bellvilla Community Unit adheres to the National Policy with regards to the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Abuse. As a member of the multi-disciplinary team (MDT) I assist in coordinating preliminary screenings and safeguarding plans to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our residents, as required. The team includes including nursing, health care assistants, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and a GP service.

I am also a member of the Compassionate End of Life (EoL) Care committee in Bellvilla and play an important role in contacting families after their loved one has died in Bellvilla. The rationale for this contact is to request their feedback on the EoL care provided by Bellvilla and it can also create the opportunity to provide additional social work support post-bereavement.

I work collaboratively to ensure that clients/residents receive the care/service which meets their social, physical, emotional and spiritual needs. All of the staff team are trained to promote the values of caring, compassion, trust and learning.

More about Bellvilla

Bellvilla provides three services for older people:

1. Bellvilla Community Unit has 37 *long term care residential* beds for men and women aged 65 years and older and who have been assessed and approved as being in need of long term nursing home care by the Nursing Home Support Scheme.
- Deirdre McNally, social worker

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2. Bellvilla provides a *respite service* for men and women living in the local area – 10 beds are available for people who live at home and who require short term residential care. The purpose of this is often to provide rest to the older person and/or their family who may be caring for them. A respite stay generally lasts for 1 – 2 weeks in duration. It provides a valuable service in helping to keep older people living at home for longer periods in the community. It often provides support to both the older person and their family/carer.
3. Bellvilla also operates a *Day Care Centre* for older people living in the community (Dublin 6/8/12 areas). A range of services are offered within the Day Care Centre including gardening, bingo/quizzes, current affairs discussions and Yoga. Transport is provided by the Day Care Centre for those who are unable to attend without it.