



Uniting SA Hawkesbury Gardens Aged Care



Residential Aged Care



Salisbury North,
South Australia

Goal

To strengthen palliative care services by enhancing staff knowledge, improving communication, and fostering supportive relationships with families throughout the end of life journey.

Highlights

- Improved staff confidence in discussing end of life care with residents and families
- Enhanced communication processes, including bedside handover and inclusive team discussions
- Developed comprehensive palliative care resources
- Increased integration with local palliative care services and general practitioners, resulting in better coordination of care

Uniting SA, a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to offering choices in independent living, home care, and residential aged care, has been serving the South Australian community since 1919. Located in Salisbury North, Hawkesbury Gardens is one of its vibrant residential aged care facilities, providing a supportive environment where diversity in ability, age, ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation, intersex variation, and gender identity is embraced. The organisation strives to create a welcoming atmosphere for everyone.

Through participation in the ELDAC Linkages program, Uniting SA sought to strengthen their approach to care for individuals throughout their life journey and set several objectives for themselves. A revision of policies, procedures, and tools to better equip staff in delivering compassionate care was a priority, as was restructuring admission information packs to engage residents and their representatives in end of life planning and the development of advance care directives.

"We have gained greater confidence in communicating with residents and their loved ones within palliative and end of life care."

Recognising the importance of support during bereavement, they aimed to provide resources that clarified planning for when a resident passed away. Additionally, changes were made to the clinical information technology system to improve the capturing of resident preferences for end of life care and to facilitate better data collection and analysis.

Although Uniting SA faced challenges such as staffing availability and hesitance from residents and their families to engage in end of life discussions, they made significant progress by establishing linkages with the local palliative care service, leading to increased referral rates and enhanced learning opportunities for staff. Integration with the Ambulance Service improved advance care directive availability, and local general practitioners became more involved in the palliative care journey from the outset.

Uniting SA focused on upskilling their teams, resulting in greater staff confidence in facilitating end of life discussions. Enhanced resources and improved documentation practices contributed to better management of palliative and end of life phases, yielding positive feedback from families and residents alike.

The introduction of bedside handover processes improved communication during care delivery, while the inclusion of non-clinical staff in discussions about residents' care ensured a collaborative approach, recognising the vital role of the entire team.

To further improve service delivery, Uniting SA redeveloped their palliative care data systems and created branded information packs for new residents, promoting end of life planning and advance care directives. The service enhanced their referral pathways with the local palliative care service, along with the integration of general practitioners into the multidisciplinary team processes. This has increased assessment and planning at an earlier point in each resident's palliative journey.

The organisation also developed escalation tools and quick education resources to empower staff in understanding and communicating palliative care effectively. The improvements across all areas have increased confidence in their staff teams who are more confident and better able to talk with families and to support their residents and their families to have end of life discussions with family and representatives, providing care right through until end of life.

Key outcomes

- Elevated satisfaction levels among families and residents, as evidenced by positive feedback
- Established effective referral pathways and improved documentation of resident preferences for end of life care
- Strengthened training programs leading to noticeable growth in staff practices related to palliative care
- Enhanced data collection systems that better reflect resident needs for improved service delivery

"Our organisation has enhanced its information given to residents admitted to our facilities regarding end of life wishes and advance care directives."

"We have greatly enhanced our support and the information we can share on bereavement."

The ELDAC Linkages program has enabled our service to build in more team involvement across all levels of staff via multi-disciplinary and operational meeting structures, shared multirole education sessions and resources and skill enhancements which improve confidence and thereby outcomes for residents.

We have been able to enable the development of revised and enhanced organisational palliative care policy, improved clinical information technology templates, enhanced multi-disciplinary meeting processes and resident and representative information kits on end of life planning and bereavement has contributed to the goal achievement so far.

Education on subjects around palliative care has contributed to outcomes as confirmed by staff and recipient feedback.

The benefits of the program extend to familiarity and rapport with our local specialist palliative care service making the referral process more streamlined and familiar. Our clinical staff are more inclined to engage now with the service given the linkage .

The inclusion of our non-clinical staff in communication about residents care within daily operations meetings now includes maintenance, environmental, lifestyle and catering staff. Each role has its own contribution when supporting end of life care. Our service aimed to enhance the outcomes of palliative experiences by acknowledging the role the whole team can play, that everyone counts, and everyone is involved. We are more aware of education opportunities and clinical placements within South Australian palliative care services to expand on knowledge and outcomes for residents representatives and staff. We greatly appreciated the support of our ELDAC Linkages Facilitator who guided us through the project and assisted in us achieving our goals.

Most importantly, our learning has been evidenced in the shared resident experience within their end of life journeys. For example, one relative stated, "all of the staff were so good I would like to hug every one of them."

Matthew Wood, Residential Operations Manager