

Partnership working to provide bespoke renal welfare and debt management service

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Background

For many patients the combination of the symptoms of end stage kidney disease (ESKD) and the commitment and side effects of regular dialysis can make working a challenge. Significant financial problems can develop quickly and add to the considerable burden of ESKD. We have established a relationship with Auriga to address the needs of our ESKD patients. Auriga is a not-for-profit subsidiary of Severn Trent Trust Fund, a charity established to help vulnerable customers of Severn Trent Water. They provide expert welfare and debt advice to improve client's individual well-being and financial status.

Methodology:

The partnership between the renal department and Auriga commenced in 2016, initially covering just our 1000 haemodialysis patients during a pilot phase, with implementation of a contract to cover all ESKD patients and those within the pre-dialysis phase in 2017. The team provide basic training to clinical staff to facilitate meaningful signposting and referrals, with contact of all referred within 5 days. Follow up is then either face-to-face in a clinical setting or at home, or via phone. The team comprises 3 experienced advisors with administration and management support. They manage individual caseloads and link in with clinical staff where necessary.

Results

During this period Auriga have been referred 1,135 cases, demonstrating the previously unmet demand within the patient group. They have realised over £1.9 million in benefits and a further £290k in the form of grants. This is a full service encompassing far more than signposting. Help is provided to fill in the often complex forms for benefits, debt management, housing and other grants. To date 37 patients have also been represented at tribunal in appeal for Personal Independent Payments, an intimidating process. Grants have been realised from various charities for household goods, holidays and even specialised visual equipment. Auriga are particular specialists at working with utility companies and ensured that all customers are facilitated to access funding or discounts particular to their individual circumstances. A recent independent assessment of the service by the Money Advice Service identified an amazing £14.52 realised for patients for every £1 invested in the service. Success of this partnership has led to further work by Auriga to work closely with the UK utility sector to extend this service to as many UK renal patients as possible.

Conclusion

The partnership working between us and Auriga has allowed the service to flourish. Auriga staff quickly developed specific understanding of needs of renal patients, producing an efficient service maximising access to entitlements. Initial support for many rescued patients from financial distress, but progression has allowed clinical staff to work closely with Auriga at an earlier stage in a patient's journey to provide prompt access to support. This allows patients and clinical staff to focus on clinical matters in a complex transitioning phase without the additional concerns of financial distress.