



Funding Guidance

Funding dementia services with money from the NHS and other government sources

If your Group is interested to offer a service to people with dementia, before you start detailed planning about when you will offer sessions and who will meet and greet, buy the cakes etc. you should find out about your local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). If the information isn't easy to find you could simply ask a large GP practice or clinic in the area for contact details. If you can, find a named person you can talk with about your ideas and ask for a meeting. This will avoid you making elaborate plans to provide a service on a Tuesday and Thursday only to learn that the greatest local demand is for weekend sessions.

Commissioners in the NHS, which includes GPs in local primary care centres, take their lead from the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE). In June 2019 the guidance from NICE stated that animal assisted interventions were an appropriate tool in work with people with dementia. This is exactly what 'Tea with a pony' is. Perhaps your local commissioners will be inclined to think animal assisted services means cats and dogs but you can encourage them to think big! Many people over the age of sixty have childhood memories of horses pulling carts to deliver coal and milk; the idea of having tea with a pony may be especially attractive to them.

Partnership working with commissioners, including working with GPs via social prescribing, is often based on a contract between the purchaser of a service and you, the provider of a service. Such a contract is usually called a service level agreement (SLA). Depending on the worth of the SLA, local commissioners may want to meet with you periodically to ensure all is working as it should be.

There are key values that underpin agreements with commissioners. The most important is that you provide a 'person centred' service. This is mentioned in the NICE guidance. You will need to demonstrate how you ensure that any local person with dementia is helped to decide for themselves if they want to come to RDA and, if they attend, that they can decide whether or not to join activities – that these decisions are not taken only by carers, whether relatives or professional care staff. NICE guidance also states that carers require services; therefore, you should be able to show how your 'Tea with a pony' sessions will also support them.

Commissioners are keen to demonstrate they spend public funds wisely. They will prefer providers who work cooperatively and collaboratively with others and focus on working towards planned outcomes or goals. Evaluation is important to them. RDA UK can assist you to collect evidence that your service is effective.

Entering the world of commissioning can be rather off-putting if you are inexperienced and stumbling across jargon. However, it is a brilliant way of reaching out into your community, in conjunction with others, and providing a service to those in greatest need, and with another source of funds.