Workplace Innovation

Juniper is in partnership with fellow aged care provider, Brightwater, in an innovative cross cultural training program aimed at minimising staff turnover, maximising staff engagement and improving working relationships in aged care.

The program "Culture, Communication and Relationships at Work", aims to create positive cross cultural communication and improved working relationships within our organisations.

The aged care sector is experiencing an increase in the number of staff who come from diverse cultural backgrounds and must appreciate the need for all staff to know and understand cultural differences across the work place. Juniper is currently involved in a pilot program that aims to promote understanding between staff and enhance service delivery to residents particularly important when there is a growing demand for aged care services but a shrinking workforce.

Juniper’s The Residency in Northam has been participating in the “Culture, Communication and Relationships at Work” program since August 2011 and across both organisations there are in excess of 160 staff from three sites involved - two from Brightwater and one from Juniper.

The program "...opens up your mind to learn about yourself and others," says Karen Mildwaters, Enrolled Nurse. Adds Multiskilled Carer, Neshi Waylor, "[it] helps us to understand and accept our differences. Acceptance is important as it enables us to work together."

Vaughan Harding, Chief Executive of Juniper commented that the cultural composition of Australian society has changed dramatically in recent decades and is reflected in the increasing diversity in the aged care workforce. He emphasised the importance of improved cross-cultural understanding and communication between care workers, care workers and supervisors and, care workers and aged care residents.

With the help of The Residency staff and the other groups, a suite of project material has been developed and trialled - a Facilitator’s Guide, Participant’s Workbook, interactive activities and film clips. The Pilot will continue until mid December 2012.

The program is funded by a 'Social Innovation Grant' from the Government of Western Australian Government. At its conclusion, the materials will be further analysed after feedback and focus groups from the participating sites.

We look forward to seeing the material from the pilot project and adopting the program for application across Juniper.

For further information on the “Culture, Communication and Relationships at Work” project, contact Margaret Antonucci, Manager Training and Development.

Resource material will be available to the whole aged care sector.