Service Evaluation of the Wellness Package: A 12 month Longitudinal Retrospective

In 2014, Penny Brohn UK received funding from the Department of Health to offer the ‘Wellness Package’ to people with cancer and their close supporters. The Wellness Package comprised 60 self-management Living Well courses, reaching 519 people, and 12 months of Follow-Up support. Our Research & Evaluation team carried out an evaluation of the services to understand and measure the impact. Data was collected pre-Living Well course, and 6 weeks and 12 months later. In short, the results showed that:

- Concerns and wellbeing improved
- People were more able to self-manage their health
- People changed the way they accessed healthcare services

This is just a snapshot of the results. In May 2016, we also published a full report, which you can find on our website www.pennybrohn.org.uk. The report comes at an exciting time, with building momentum around the need for health and social care system to link better with the voluntary sector, as outlined in NHS England’s Five Year Forward View. We hope the report provides useful evidence and shows Penny Brohn UK’s role in the culture change within health and social care. If you would like to find out more about the report, please contact Research & Evaluation Lead, Dr Helen Seers: helen.seers@pennybrohn.org.uk.

About Penny Brohn UK and the Wellness Package

Penny Brohn UK is the leading UK charity specialising in helping people to live well with cancer, particularly focusing on self-management education, supporting and enabling people to find their own route through the experience of cancer. Penny Brohn UK’s services are designed around a whole person model known as the Bristol Whole Life Approach. The Bristol Whole Life Approach addresses each part of a person; mind, body, spirit and emotions, recognising that these parts are interconnected and work together to support the immune system. If people keep themselves well in each of these areas, they are able to take back some control over their health and wellbeing, build their resilience and live well with the impact of cancer.

The Wellness Package incorporated Penny Brohn UK’s flagship Living Well with the Impact of Cancer course (Living Well course) and additional Follow-Up support including one-to-one appointments with a Nutritional Therapist and Doctor, Follow-Up Days and regular email communication with hints and tips on how to live well.

The impact of the Wellness Package on concerns & wellbeing

MYCaW is a validated Patient Centred Outcome Measure (PCOM). The MYCaW questionnaire asked clients to write down their two main cancer related concerns and rate them on a scale of 1 to 6, with 6 being the worst. They were also asked to rate their current level of wellbeing on the same scale. Six weeks after the Living Well course, **MYCaW concern and wellbeing scores were significantly improved**. Before the course, people mostly reported psychological and emotional concerns. Concerns and wellbeing remained improved for those who responded at the 12 month follow-up.

Reflecting on specific changes made since the Living Well course: 84% said that the course had helped them improve their diet, 69% said it had helped them improve their level of exercise, 67% said it had helped improve their relationships, and 90% said it had helped improve their use of self-help techniques. Reflecting on lifestyle changes overall, 87% said they had made ‘a few’ or ‘lots’ of positive lifestyle changes since the course.

“More confident over food, cooking, menus. Have discovered smoothies of fruit and yoghurt which I make everyday”
The impact of the Wellness Package on self-management

Six weeks after the Living Well course, 86% of clients reported that the course had enabled them to self-manage their health more effectively.

When asked to describe how the course had helped them to self-manage, four key themes emerged:

- diet
- exercise
- self-help techniques
- being given the knowledge, skills and confidence

“The connectedness of attitudes, emotions, diet and sleep and exercise are much more obvious now. I am empowered in a way I wasn’t.”

The impact of the Wellness Package on patient activation

The Patient Activation Measure (PAM) is an internationally used and validated Patient Reported Outcome Measure (PROM) measuring level of ‘activation’; the knowledge, skills and confidence to manage one’s own health. Higher levels of activation are associated with better long term health outcomes and reduced healthcare costs. PAM scores range from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating higher activation. Scores can also be transposed into a level of activation ranging from 1 (overwhelmed and lacking confidence) to 4 (maintaining a healthy lifestyle). There was a small but significant improvement in PAM scores at the 6 week follow-up (56.5 pre-course vs. 59.5 at 6 weeks), with 42% having a clinically relevant improvement. After the course, there were less ‘low activators’ (levels 1 and 2) and more ‘high activators’ (levels 3 and 4).

When change scores were stratified by baseline activation levels, the biggest changes were in those with the lowest levels of activation (levels 1 and 2). Clients who were at level 1 pre-course had a mean score change of 10.5, those who were at level 2 had a mean change of 6.5. Clients who were already at level 3 pre-course were fairly stable with a mean change of -1.9, which was not significant. The number of clients at level 4 pre-course was too small for meaningful analysis.

A similar pattern in PAM scores emerged when looking at the proportion of clients who had a meaningful improvement relative to their baseline level; 71% at level 1 and 46% at level 2 had meaningful improvements, compared to 27% of those at level 3. This shows that those at the lowest PAM levels have the most to gain.

The impact of the Wellness Package on use of healthcare services

At the 12 month follow-up, 45% of clients said that the Wellness Package had changed the way they access medical services, through making them more knowledgeable and confident. For some clients, this meant asking more focused questions in consultations, for others it meant they visited their GP less as they were able to self-manage their health at home.

Clients were asked to recollect their recent use of healthcare services at the start of the course and 12 months later. Retrospective reported use of healthcare services in the previous 3 months, indicated reduced numbers of average GP visits (1.4 vs 2.5 before the course), cancer team visits (1.3 vs 5.3 before the course), and other NHS services (1.5 vs 2.3 before the course). This data may be biased due to it being self-reported, however it does map to clients improved health status by the 12 month time point. This data, alongside the PAM data and the qualitative experience data, shows a promising trend for reduced healthcare use as a result of the Wellness Package.

“It has definitely meant that I visited GP less, I found PB gave me more agency to get through than NHS. And info. And support”

“I feel more able to be self-aware and listen to my body and therefore I don’t rush to the GP with every ache and pain”