

The Esther Model: Learning from Health and Social Care in Sweden

What is the Esther Model and who is Esther?

The Esther model originates in Sweden, specifically the county of Jonkoping and was developed about 10 years ago. Esther was a real person who became unwell with serious heart failure and was admitted to hospital. There were delays in diagnosis, treatment and care planning. Overall the experience that Esther had was not good and somehow typical of a lot of patients and service users. The health and social care staff involved in Esther's care recognised that there was a different way of doing things that would lead to better outcomes, higher quality care and efficiency.

In developing this alternative model the patient 'Esther' whose experience inspired this new thinking was remembered and the name 'Esther' was applied to any patient or service user who might find themselves in a similar situation. In this sense Esther can be female or male, old or young; Esther is simply a person who needs care and attention from more than one health and care provider.

Under the Esther model clinicians and care professionals ask "what is best for Esther?" to ensure person-centred care. User involvement is integral to the model, building a network around Esther including family, friends and key staff from health and social care. Under this model Esther has the right to:

- Be involved in his or her own health and social care
- Access to good care in or near their own home
- An individual care plan which is updated regularly
- Equal treatment regardless of where his or her home is situated
- Experience all relevant health and social care providers as one service

Working with the Esther Model

Under the Esther model it is recognised that to deliver good care there is a need for all health and social care providers to collaborate seamlessly across organisational borders. Staff work proactively towards this ensuring that 'Esther' always experiences safety and independence, living as independently as possible and supported by their network.

Key to developing the quality approach that underpins the Esther model are Esther Improvement Coaches, who are specially trained dedicated members of staff, in a range of job roles and grades. The coaches support the development of other staff across organisational and professional boundaries and create a culture of continuous improvement and sustainable development – always asking "what is best for Esther?"

Another feature is Esther cafes, which are open to everyone in health and care services who want to improve life and care for Esther. The cafes feature a story or case study told by Esther, relaying their experience of recent health and social care services, with a view to identifying what could be done even better and sharing best practice.



The Kent Integrated Care Pioneer Programme and Esther

The Esther model reflects the aims and ambitions of the Kent Integrated Care Pioneer programme and research has been taking place over the last six months to see if this could be a viable model for Kent. Members of the Integration Pioneer team have participated in a study tour to Sweden to see the Esther model in action. A number of events are taking place to test out whether the Esther model could be implemented in Kent and other parts of the country through the Pioneer network.

Some early work inspired by the Esther model has already taken place within West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group and the results are being looked at with a view to setting up further pilots in other parts of Kent. We are fortunate in that Anna Carlborn from the Esther programme in Sweden will be coming to work in Kent in July and will be able to spend some of her time working with us on our plans to develop our thinking and version of the Esther model.

Our Esther model plans will be taken forward through our new Design and Learning Centre for Clinical and Social Innovation, set up to redesign and test out new models of care and ways of working.

Further information on the Esther model and the Design and Learning Centre is available by contacting pioneers@kent.gov.uk