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Background

The aim of the An Garda Síochána and Dublin Southwest (DSW) ICPOP joint initiative is to provide an integrative service that supports older adults, and in particular those living with a dementia, to live well and safely in the local community. It acknowledges that not all those living and aging in Dublin Southwest are linked with local health services, and at certain times in their lives, may benefit from this support. The joint initiative aims to strengthen knowledge among Gardaí about dementia and how to access supports to assist someone, or their family, living with this condition. The initiative acknowledges that as population's age, police officers are increasingly being called to serve as first responders in incidents where aging-related health or social issues play a central role. Gardaí, as first responders, are often called upon to assist individuals living with dementia in challenging situations and cannot be excluded from the effort to build a dementia-friendly community that aims to provide an ideal combined physical and social environment for people living with dementia or other vulnerabilities.

DSW ICPOP CST & An Garda Síochána Community Policing partnership



Methodology

A bespoke half-day dementia awareness training course for members of An Garda Síochána was developed by ICPOP DSW Social Worker, Occupational Therapist and Advanced Nurse Practitioner in partnership with local Community Gardaí. It has been delivered to Community Gardaí and Probationary Gardaí in Garda Stations within the Dublin Southwest area by the DSW ICPOP Community Specialist Team.

Results

Anonymised questionnaires completed by Gardaí post dementia awareness training provided overwhelmingly positive feedback and highlighted the need for this training to become embedded into Garda training on a national level. HSE Spark Fusion provided funding to develop training videos highlighting scenarios based on real life situations.

'I think all members encounter vulnerable members of the public daily and often don't know where to guide them in terms of support and services'

'Many guards would encounter a situation regularly that requires the knowledge learned here today. This training is very helpful'

Conclusion

This joint partnership between ICPOP DSW and An Garda Síochána has demonstrated the need for agencies to work in a more integrative manner to support older adults to continue to live well at home in the community. Sharing expertise between statutory services and co-producing resources for the benefit of members of our local communities has provided a strong foundation which has scalability to support communities on a national scale.

