Reablement in Derby: Supporting People Beyond Hospital Discharge

Active Derbyshire, Derby City Council and Derbyshire Community Health Services (DCHS) have been working together on a test-and-learn project with Community First, Derby City's reablement service.

The work is exploring how people can can return to their meaningful lives, following a period of time in hospital. The aim is to understand what ways of working could help us move us beyond people 'just' staying safe at home, but also support people to rebuild confidence, independence, purpose and community connections.

Supporting people to return to their meaningful activities will increase how active they are by the very nature of them 'doing more', which brings a multitude of health benefits, as well as feeling good!

What we found

People leave services clinically stable but are not yet ready to return to their daily life. Common barriers include:

- Loss of confidence
- Anxiety about leaving home
- Lack of support network
- Fragmented continuity between services
- Practical issues that sit outside traditional service boundaries



Small Interventions - Big Impact

We've seen that 'simple' support often makes a significant difference.

- Following a hip fracture, one person was unsure as to whether they could still get in and out of a car, a key skill which unlocks them seeing their friends and staying well and connected. Practising getting in and out of a car helped rebuild their confidence and enabled them to enjoy celebrating Christmas time with their friends and family. Without this, they 'just wouldn't be able to go'.
- Another individual lacked confidence to shower independently once they got home. New joint work with Adult Social Care Occupational Therapy and Local Area Coordination provided person centered support, preventing further decline and enabling wider community participation.

Learning beyond Community First

- Informal networks, including neighbours, family members, taxi drivers and community groups, play a vital role in helping people remain independent.
- Partnership working with mental health services and DWP home-visiting teams show how issues such as financial security can directly affect health, wellbeing and recovery.

Impact

- **Confidence matters:** People often need support to rebuild confidence, purpose and identity, not just physical function.
- **Relationships drive change:** Outcomes come through trusted relationships and joint working.
- **Community connection needs support:** Signposting is only one step needed to support people to actually return to or try new activities, yet services tend to discharge after signposting, without addressing other needs.
- **Boundary-spanning roles add value:** These roles help identify and resolve issues that may otherwise fall between services.
- **Communication matters:** Clear, strengths-based communication improves understanding and confidence and helps people take ownership of their recovery.
- **Learning by doing works:** Testing new approaches with real people creates practical solutions and demonstrates different ways of working are possible.

Reflection

The test and learn has shown that recovery is about more than discharge and physical ability. By focusing on confidence, continuity, meaningful activity and community connection, the work has demonstrated how people, groups and organisations can work together to help people live well, not simply live safely.