

Learning Disability, Safeguarding Adults – Progress to date

Overall Strategy

The Trust is committed to improving the patient experience for people who have a learning disability. The driver for the changes have come from the document 'Valuing People' (D of H 2001), which says that people with a learning disability get a 'worse deal' from health services than the rest of us. The World Health Organisation (2001) also says that people with learning disabilities have poorer health outcomes. Some of the recommendations from Valuing People say that health and social care providers need to improve both the access and the experience for people who have a learning disability. This short report will detail the work that has already taken place within the Trust and also will set out work that is ongoing and planned.

Making Valuing People Happen – a project

The Trust works closely with Generate, a charity that supports people who have a learning disability. A joint bid was submitted to the Foundation of Nursing in 2005 to undertake a project to look at the current access and experience of services at St George's Hospital. People with a learning disability were asked and supported to access a variety of hospital in and out patient services. Their experiences of way finding, in and out patient care was collated into an Action Plan and feedback was given by a Theatre Company to a large audience of Trust Staff. Formal feedback was given by the Project Leads to the Trust Executive Group and the Trust Board.

The recommendations from the project included the production of a 'top tips' card (appendix 1) that was distributed to all wards and departments. The Trust has continued to work with Generate who have provided training on the Nurse Induction Programme to over 300 staff. People who have a learning disability are involved in and supported to provide much of the training we currently do.

A further bid is to be made this year to provide funding to audit practice to see if the project made a difference and to identify funding to continue the training.

Safeguarding Adults

The Trust has a policy (Vulnerable Adults) and a small team to take this work forward. Vulnerable Adults include people who are elderly, have a disability of any kind or who are vulnerable because of their illness or condition. A training session is provided on the Trust Induction Programme and the Nurse Induction Programme. Targeted training has been provided in Accident and Emergency and Elderly Care. A new training package has been developed with the Training and Education Department to reflect the latest guidelines and includes case studies and role-play.

As new guidance has recently been published the policy is currently being rewritten. A structure of audit and recording will also be implemented by October 2007.

The Deputy Director of Nursing is the lead and sits on the Protecting Adults Partnership Boards for both Merton and Wandsworth Councils.

Ongoing and Future Work

The Trust is working closely with Wandsworth PCT to develop policies and guidelines for patients who have a learning disability and also for staff. The aim of this work is to ensure that the admission to hospital is well prepared and that the correct information is given to hospital staff. People with a learning disability will be supported by their key worker, carer or hospital staff to make choices, give consent to treatment, make decisions, receive appropriate information that they are able to understand and have their immediate environment adapted (where reasonable and possible) to meet their needs. The policy and guidelines will also include pre and post operative care, guidance for staff in recovery, on the wards and in out patients. It is anticipated that the policy will be completed by the end of November 2006. Training will be provided on the use of Health Action Plans and the implementation of the new policies and guidelines.

Joint working with the local councils will continue both for the Protection of Adults and Learning Disability. The Deputy Director of Nursing sits on the Multi Agency Partnership Boards for both local councils and reports to the Trust Executive Group and the Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Committee.

Although there are some really good examples of best practice, further work is required to embed the culture of this work within the organisation and to change the way that disabled people are treated when accessing acute care. Staff need to be empowered and comfortable about making decisions that might be different from the usual model of care but will accommodate the needs of a disabled patient and their carer. Often a carer might want to stay with the patient and if possible this should be encouraged and supported as it will help the patient and also help the staff to provide the appropriate care.

Committee Structure

The Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Committee oversee and monitor the work around equality, disability and diversity. The Access Group lead the work on improving the environment and services for disabled people and a Disability and Equality Scheme Working Group has been set up to produce a written action plan by December 2006. These groups directly report to the Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Committee that itself reports directly to the Trust Board.

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