FOR-Ward: increasing ward team patient contact time using a rapid improvement approach

Derby Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

What was the problem?
Ensuring the right teams with the right skills spent as much direct contact time with patients as they needed. The trust had already introduced new roles into multiprofessional ward teams, such as nutrition assistants, clinical apprentices and band 4 assistant practitioners. Faced with a changing care environment, recruitment and retention challenges and economic pressures, it was keen to do more. It expected an enhanced workforce would increase productivity and efficiency within the same budget.

What was the solution?
Senior leaders were confident that care staff were best placed to explore ideas for change, rather than having it prescribed. This led to the launch of FOR-Ward, an improvement initiative based on rapid improvement events. Three ward teams took part to:

- improve teamworking within the ward
- ensure better use of skills and staff competence
- increase overall patient contact time
- reduce hand-offs and duplicated tasks
- improve patient experience and staff morale
- improve productivity and efficiency.

What were the results?
Reallocation of roles, increased team contact time and greater focus on direct patient care:

- Ward A – an average of 4 minutes per patient per hour increased to 18
- Ward B – an average of 12 minutes per patient per hour increased to 26
- Ward C – an average of 11 minutes per patient per hour increased to 24.

Early indications show improvement in two wards:

- bank and agency expenditure reduced by 25% and 75% respectively
- all wards achieving 100% in the friends and family test compared to 82% to 92% before the changes.
What were the learning points?

- Invest time in planning, communicating and engaging teams before starting.
- Establish a safe learning environment where staff feel at ease and can participate fully.
- Ensure teams spend time in their own environment observing ways of working.
- Allow time to focus on problems and solutions and test change ideas.

Find out more

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