

Increasing patients' access to vocational services in a high secure hospital

West London NHS Trust

What was the problem?

Broadmoor Hospital's vocational service offers patients work activities to reduce institutionalisation and increase sociability, lessening the risk of relapse and/or reoffending. But the service had a high 'did not attend' rate of 20%, and only 22% of patients had access to it, mostly from rehabilitation wards. The project aimed to:

- include patients from admission and high dependency wards in vocational activities
- increase patients' access to vocational activities from 22% to 30% by the end of 2017.

What was the solution?

A working group of five staff and three patients used Quality Service Improvement Redesign (QSIR) methods to review the vocational service. They surveyed patients on high dependency wards to find out how they saw the service and its part in their recovery. Twenty patients completed the survey, giving constructive and thought-provoking feedback. Then the group used QSIR methods to introduce outreach ward-based sessions for patients on high dependency wards, initially horticultural activities. Next, the trust held one close-support session per week – off-ward but not in fully tooled environments – for patients who benefited from individual support before attending mainstream sessions.

What were the challenges?

- Releasing staff to attend QSIR training proved difficult, so some had to complete aspects of it at later dates.
- As the patients on the working group were from different wards, much pre-planning was involved, and all meetings were working lunches. Sharing and explaining the learning from the QSIR programme with patients in the group and the vocational service team was challenging.

- Some longstanding vocational service staff initially found it hard to understand the reasons for making the service more accessible. Non-clinical staff did not understand the qualitative and quantitative data.

What were the results?

Patients' access to the vocational service increased from 22% in July 2017 to 35% in March 2018. This included 16 to 20 high risk patients at any one time. These patients previously had very limited opportunities to leave their wards and take part in vocational activities as their movements were restricted. To date, five patients have successfully moved from the outreach and close support sessions into mainstream sessions. With the occupational therapy department's support, the working group updated the referral criteria for the vocational service to increase patients' access, reflecting a reduction in restrictive interventions. Some staff attended training to increase their confidence to work with higher risk patients who require close support. Others said their motivation had improved since being able to offer patients activities that better meet their needs and abilities. Their comments include:

- "To start off with I thought it was pointless but having gone to five or six sessions I have realised that the more I went the more I learnt. I now feel like we're helping patients get what they want, and it feels good to be a part of it. It's nice to have my opinions heard and valued. I feel part of the process."
- "The project taught me that sometimes we waste energy and time on things that are not even related to the service. The PDSA (plan-do-study-act) has been a simple technique but a real godsend."
- "Working towards improvement and bettering a patient's quality of life is a personal goal for me... I fully support our QSIR project... I feel honoured to be involved."
- "I find some parts of the project a bit long winded. I just want to be hands-on and do the job. But it has been useful in highlighting the importance of evidence and patients' involvement."

What were the learning points?

- Staff's understanding of patients' needs is not necessarily the same as that of the patients themselves.
- Quality improvement is a dynamic process and involves more stakeholders than often anticipated.

Next steps

The vocational service is using the PDSA cycle to review all activities offered to patients. The working group is co-producing an information booklet for patients. The trust plans other coproductions with patients, including a group to review job descriptions and contracts for patients attending the vocational service. The trust board has agreed to offer QSIR training to patients at Broadmoor Hospital, with a view to promoting more co-produced projects in future.

Want to know more?

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