



Green Walking Project Case Study

Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust: Walking Group

Project Description

In 2014, staff at the Malago Centre in the medium secure Fromeside Unit of the Blackberry Hill Hospital created a walking group to focus on patient fitness and mindfulness as well as offer a social opportunity. The creation of the walking group was within the basic procedures for occupational therapists (OTs) to support patients, so no managerial support was required. In order for the group to proceed, multidisciplinary team (MDT) paperwork and Section 17 Leave of Absence under the Mental Health Act 1983 are required. It was important that there was interest and attendance from clinicians and patients.

Two OT technicians run the group and work with MDTs to decide who can attend the group. There needs to be a ratio of at least one staff to one patient for the activity to occur. Patients suggest locations for the walks which are outside of the hospital grounds. The OT team, MDT, and psychology units help support the operation of the walking group. On average 2-3 patients attend the group and are joined by staff and the nutrition team as the group provides a good opportunity to discuss nutrition. Patients can be informed about how to join the group during ward rounds, the activity calendar, and ward posters.

The project has an ongoing evaluation on the physical health improvements for patients who participate in the group through discussion.

Benefits

Patient outcomes: The group aims to improve the patients' physical and mental well-being, which is being evaluated to estimate impact.

Environmental/Financial: Environmental and financial benefits are not directly an outcome of this project, but setting up and participating in a walking group is a low-cost activity. A well-attended walking group places value on green spaces and encourages protection of them.

Social: The project provides a chance for patients and staff to socialise outside of the environment of the hospital and ward. By leaving the hospital, patients have a chance to regain a sense of normality and prepares them for reintegration into society after being discharged.

Financial Appraisal

The project is funded by the Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust.

Barriers encountered

Challenges to operating the walking group were:

- Patients without leave under Section 17

- Lack of staff time to organise and lead the group
- Patients lacking sleep and not capable of joining the group
- Patients' moods were not suitable for the walking group

Risks

A risk assessment and health and safety assessment were both conducted.

What the team had to say

“The group is an excellent opportunity for service users to experience therapeutic rehabilitation by being in a natural, open environment and learning more about the city's surroundings. The group is also a chance for them to understand that walking can provide them with a sense of accomplishment and reward which can be replaced by their past maladaptive behaviours.”

For more information please contact:

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