



Green Walking Project Case Study

Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust: Guild Lodge Walking Group

Project Description

In 2016, physical health nurses and the occupational therapists (OTs) at the Guild Lodge collaborated to start the walking group. The staff thought the group would be a good way to increase physical activity among the patients and address weight/physical health issues. The group started with 2 people attending and then increased in attendance over time. In order to proceed, the staff needed to provide a basic outline of the walking route, have a specific risk assessment for each patient, and ensure the patients have Section 17 Leave of Absence under the Mental Health Act 1983. There is no training required to start the activity. The encouragement of the ward staff and effort of the OTs help the group function well. Each session is facilitated by a different staff member; the physical activity coordinator and healthcare assistants help run the group. If patients have the correct paperwork and agree to abide by the rules, they are able to join the group. The rules are: no smoking, conduct themselves with appropriate behaviour, dress appropriately, respect boundaries of individuals, and respect the timetable. Patients can find information about the walking group on the activity schedule and through word of mouth.

The walking group convenes three times a week at different locations. Depending on patient leave status under Section 17, the group will go into the community or stay on the hospital grounds. Each session lasts about 45 minutes with 5 patients attending on average. Two staff members usually join the group. When leaving the hospital grounds, the walk may use, for example, the road leading to a local village, a country lane, or a duck pond. Activities during the walk are dependent on who joins the walk and how they feel.

Currently, the project has not been formally assessed. Staff have looked at attendance numbers and considered improvements to the group such as making the group more inviting, producing certificates, taking more walks in the summer, and organising walks further afield to a local nature reserve.

Benefits

Patient outcomes: The walking group can be a way for patients to work on their physical activity and improve their health. By having a routine, this can help patients build healthy behaviours.

Environmental/Financial: The environmental and financial impacts of the walking group are not immediate, but the walking group is a low cost activity to establish and maintain. Interest in the walking group creates value for green spaces and can protect them.

Social: Patients appreciate the social aspect of the walking group as it allows for patients to go on a leisurely walk and have a catch up.

Financial Appraisal

The project does not require any funding.

Barriers encountered

Challenges to operating the walking group were:

- Obtaining the right paperwork to allow for the group to proceed
- A negative change in risk or mental state of participants
- Weather unsuitable for walking outdoors
- Patients may have had other priorities such as other activities or family visits.

Risks

A risk assessment is done when patients first enlist into the activity. If the staff suspect the patients need a health and safety assessment, the OT and physical health coordinator will conduct one.

What the team had to say

“Time off the ward to enjoy fresh air and have a leisurely walk helps to clear my head when I am struggling” - Patient A

For more information please contact:

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