



Green Walking Project Case Study

Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust: Walking Group

Project Description

In 2012, the occupational therapy (OT) manager for the Orchard Inpatient Unit started the walking group because there are many benefits associated with it, ranging from social inclusion to enhanced well-being. To join the group, the staff need to have a background in mental health work. The clinicians were supportive of the group being formed. The Band 3 health and well-being workers run the group. The OT team meets every morning to work out the timetable and check in with the shift lead.

The walking group convenes every Monday afternoon with usually 5 patients and 5.5 miles of walking. The group tends to go to a local landmark and have coffee. There is a canal nearby with wildlife, which patients also enjoy walking along. Patients are informed of the group when admitted, and the information is accessible on the ward activities board. The location of the walk is chosen through a discussion with patients and qualified staff. The location should include access to green spaces and be appropriate for the participants going on the walk.



Currently, there is no formal review of the walking group. At a team meeting once a month, the staff looks at the time table and discusses what it is working well and what is not. The staff documents every interaction on the patient's electronic record and evaluates the patient's recovery day.

In addition to the main walking group, there is a re-refresh walk every morning Monday to Friday where 2-5 patients who have leave under Section 17 Leave of Absence of the Mental Health Act 1983 embark on a

20-minute walk with staff. There is also a walking group every Tuesday afternoon, which tend to go to the shops and take the bus as part of graded exposure therapy where patients overcome their anxiety through small, manageable steps. When needed, patients can go on 1:1 walks with staff.

Benefits

Patient outcomes: The walking group addresses fitness since participants experience increased heart rate and endorphins. This activity supports the discharge process and improves patient well-being.

Environmental/Financial: The walking group is a low resource intensive activity to create and participate in. Using green spaces places value in them and can protect them for future use.

Social: The walking group creates a feeling of social inclusion, increases self-esteem, and supports a positive mood through interaction with peers. Participants can practice mindfulness in green spaces, which has therapeutic effects. Staff have observed that the moods of participants are lifted following the walks.



Financial Appraisal

The activity does not require a formal budget. Associated costs such as coffee and other refreshments are supported through petty cash of the unit.

Barriers encountered

Challenges to operating the walking group were:

- Staffing availability – Insufficient staff numbers and/or insufficient staff time meant the walking group did not always have support for excursions.
- Timing – Clinical discussions ran over time, so staff and/or patients were not able to participate on occasion.
- Mental/Physical state – Both staff and patients were not always mentally and physically fit enough to join the walking group.



Risks

Each patient has a risk assessment on the system. The health and safety assessment is constantly updated.

For more information please contact:

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