

## Green Walking Case Study

Tees, Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust

### Project Description

#### **Background**

In 2019, staff from the Ebor and Minster Wards in Foss Park Hospital, York, began a weekly walk with patients, having signed up as a Green Beacon site through the Green Walking project. The environment surrounding the hospital was identified as an underused resource in patient care and they decided to take advantage of St. Nick's Environment Centre and nearby Rowntree and Homestead parks for the walks. The purpose of this project was to assess the various barriers and enablers of organising an activity that provides supported access to a green space on adult inpatient psychiatric wards.



The purpose of this project was to assess the various barriers and enablers of organising an activity that provides supported access to a green space on adult inpatient psychiatric wards.

#### **Ward environment**

Ebor and Minster wards are two working age Adult Acute Mental Health Wards. Between them, they have 24 inpatient beds, 12 male and 12 female; this can be altered if needed to 8 and 16 beds. Each ward has 1:1 rooms, a dining room, 2 lounges, laundry and clinic rooms as well as its own team office. The unit has a Gym, Therapy Suite, Activity of Daily Living Kitchen. Each ward has separate outside garden space.

The new hospital was currently being built, to be called Foss Park Hospital, intended to open in Spring 2020. There are huge green spaces outside the ward and therapy suite. The hospital had already made links to the university to use their campus for outdoor activities, and the nearby nature reserve.

#### **Approach**

The walks were organised by the Occupational Therapists (OTs). On the morning of the walk, staff would attend the morning report where each patient is assessed and discussed. Leave would be discussed in this meeting and given if OT staff believed the patient to be appropriate to attend the walking group (dependent on physical and mental health). Patients were then told by OT staff about the group personally and could decide if they wanted to join. There was a poster with the information of the walking group put up in both wards. There was a walk held every week, attended by 1-6 patients, and no cancellations over the three-month pilot period, May-July 2019. Staff became aware of the group as the weeks went on and encouraged patients to get off the ward and attend the group.

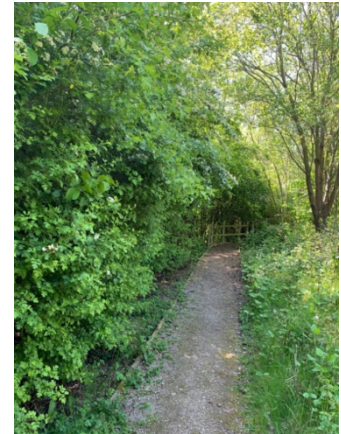
### Benefits

*Patient outcomes/experience:* Patients enjoyed walking in a group with others. They also expressed that they liked to have the "chance to get off the ward and [get] some fresh air". One patient said that they felt really invigorated after the walk and that their day had started off on a high.

Patients who had otherwise not been engaging came to the group and engaged well. Walking in a group and having a purpose to the walk was identified as less confrontational and anxiety provoking than other activities. There was a suggestion that some patients might continue walking on leaving hospital, for example, one commented, “I have never visited this park before and would like to come again as it is very close to my house.”.

*Environmental/Financial:* Connecting to nature: staff noticed that patients discussed nature and one patient stated that they liked seeing all the flowers and nature. The program drew on the time of regular salaried staff but had no additional costs aside from the occasional taxi to take participants back from the green space they had walked to.

*Social:* Patients were able to socialise and interact in a non-confrontational way. They were also able to see people in the community and interact with peers from other wards.



### Dis-benefits

One patient was unable to finish a walk as it was over stimulating. She was holding her hands over her head and responding to voices. She had to be collected by ward staff members.

When walking through urban areas, staff noted that the patients were less settled and required more support.

### Barriers

In bad weather fewer people wanted to join, but the walks were still able to go ahead even in the rain.

It would take a long time to get patients out of the ward to go on the walk.

Some of the green spaces nearer the hospital needed “a lot of work”.

There were not always any toilet stops on the walk.

Ward staff were not able to attend any walks due to low staffing levels and ward demands. However, one Health Care Assistant started their own walking group on a weekend.

### Learning points

Preparation is important and essential to getting off the ward on time and being able to visit the green spaces which are further away from the hospital. This meant that the team has to decide where the walk would be, updating the posters a few days ahead, get patients’ leave forms ready, make sure people are up and ready for the group.

At least two members of staff are needed for a walk and often more, if people are known to need more support.

Don't worry about activities along the way; being out of the hospital environment and being in nature created its own activity and kept people focused.

#### What the team had to say:

*"It's a good idea, I would support it"* - Consultant Psychiatrist

*"I don't often have the opportunity to go off the ward with patients"* – Health Care Assistant

*"It is good to communicate with patients on a different environment outside of the ward"* – Student

*"Having walking groups within an acute mental health hospital has many benefits and we hope to continue facilitating walking groups once the project has finished and work with the ward staff to encourage walks on a weekend and evenings."* – Occupational Therapist Lead

#### Key Aspects of the Project

The project was a major success. Both patients and staff were really involved in the green walking group and there was a high participation rate from patients with no cancellations. The walking group is still continuing even after the end of the pilot project. Staff commented that they got to work collaboratively with other professionals in a way that they hadn't previously.

#### For more information please contact:

Devon Wells – Occupational Therapist Assistant

Christina Bartram – AMH Specialist Occupational Therapist

Cecile Gimerangan – AMH Occupational Therapy Lead

Hannah Miller – Occupational Therapy Assistant

Foss Park Hospital, Haxby Road, York, YO31 8TA

01904 461 100