

Decor and furnishings in communal areas

Reporter

Sarah Senior at [St Matthews](#) on 9 October 2014.

What did you do*?

We knew that the whole hospital building needed a new lease of life, and this was reinforced by a report from our Independent Lay Visitor who said that some areas felt like a budget hotel and others lacked bookcases, occasional tables and other homely items. So we all worked together to choose paint colours, artwork and furniture. The work will be done in stages over 9-12 months.

What was excellent about it?

Everyone was asked about colour schemes, artwork and furniture. We paid particular notice to the views of current residents, although some great ideas also came from cleaners and care staff.

The ideas evolved over time and through working together, harnessing spontaneous thinking and conversation in a natural way rather than a formal committee. One staff member has a fine art degree and has loved turning the ideas from residents into paintings.

Contemporary fashion in DIY is to use large wall stickers, but these could be peeled off, so we have translated them directly on to the plaster. More than half of the patients have been hands-on with the painting project.

We are also buying some flat-pack furniture rather than the institutional safety products and will be learning together how to build it, as this is an essential life skill these days. Residents will treat some pieces with a clear varnish and large pieces of furniture will be fixed to the wall. Wear and tear is a fact of life and so some items will need replacing from time to time, but it is cheap enough to do this and patients who damage items may be charged.

This programme may or may not be cheaper in the long term compared to the traditional approach to decor and furniture, but it offers a huge therapeutic benefit.

Stories of Striving for Excellence in Locked Rehabilitation Services

We are hopeful that choosing, building and maintaining the furniture will help with the rehabilitation agenda and reduce challenging incidents.

Even better next time?

Each individual group of patients need to go through this process to share the thinking processes and make their own decisions as this is essential to generate the right level of commitment, so we are resisting the temptation to use items chosen by one group in another setting.

The fine artist is an essential part of creating a high quality and attractive space, rooted in the concept of [community art](#) as a form of community development with the resident community, rather than a commission from managers. Next time we would keep a check on whether everyone has been consulted on enough of the steps, while retaining the informality of the process.

** [NDTi](#) was commissioned to deliver a staff development programme promoting a more personalised and inclusive approach for those living and working in locked rehabilitation services in the English East Midlands. While the current inspection routine has a focus on risk prevention, our job is to focus on sharing positive practice and innovation. Peter Bates led the programme and wrote up these stories.*

The Excellence Programme is for independent and voluntary sector providers of locked residential rehabilitation services for people with mental health issues or learning disabilities living in the East Midlands. It has delivered:

- *A series of seminars for key staff and people using services to promote a more personalised and inclusive approach*
- *A shared sense of what excellent services look like, captured in an [Excellence Framework](#) document.*
- *Learning exchange visits between members which lead to individual action plans for each service*
- *Excellence stories that capture and share ideas for service improvement.*

These case studies have arisen from members of the Excellence programme and NDTi has not independently verified what we have been told. Some are radical and ambitious approaches that transform the whole service, while others consist of small steps that may not seem especially exciting to other readers, but make a difference to one person. Some readers might even question whether progress is being made at all! The overall purpose is to stimulate reflection and celebration for every step forward, whether large or small.