

Spend time alone in the unit

Reporters

Alicia Doolan and Emma Atkinson at [The Huntercombe Group](#) on 17 November 2014.

What did you do^{*}?

We have reduced the number of patients who were on enhanced observation and increased the amount of time that people spend away from 'line of sight' staff supervision whilst on the unit.

What is excellent about it?

The number of patients on enhanced observations had gradually increased, and so we have taken action to reduce this. The Multidisciplinary Team actively assessed the level of risk for each patient and took decisions as promptly as possible to reduce the level of supervision.

We see the unobserved time as a positive preparation for living independently and promote its constructive use. The team considers each person who is on enhanced observation every day and reviews whether this level of intervention is still necessary and whether they are any less restrictive options that might work with the person. This means that enhanced observation is not an acceptable response to tolerable, low-level risk behaviours and we require a significant clinical justification for placing the person on enhanced observation.

We have increased the range of observation options available so that there are now many small steps between the most intensive observation and none at all. We also found that staff who were providing enhanced observation were preoccupied with completing the necessary paperwork, so we replaced this by asking staff to complete the record at the end of their observation period in the staff office.

As a result, staff are now focused upon their therapeutic relationship with the person they are observing. This change has been warmly welcomed by the patients concerned, who previously felt uncomfortable being monitored by staff wielding clipboards.

Even better next time?

Reducing the level of enhanced observation has been accompanied by a strong ethos of mutual support within the team and support from senior staff, and by the adoption of [Positive Behaviour Support](#) which increased engagement. All decisions to change the level of support have been negotiated by the Multidisciplinary Team that knows the person best and agreed with the commissioner.

Our focus on recording has changed, so that we are more concerned about reporting the meaning of activities to the person, and their mood and degree of engagement, rather than a superficial report of physical location or negative report of incidents.

We have added this topic to the list of standing items on the agenda for each morning's staff meeting, so that there is a continual prompt to reduce the amount of observation whenever possible.

* [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.