

Mental Health News

Service user involvement was key to establishing new initiatives

The Mental Health News e-bulletin is a daily bulletin issued by the Mental Health Improvement Programme (MHIP) containing an item relating to a Mental Health issue, development or outcome in the North West.

The aim is to bring awareness to our stakeholders about service improvement and innovative projects underway in Mental Health across the North West, and to encourage you (the reader) to act as vehicle for ensuring that you or your organisation is engaged with the work where applicable.

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Ridge Lea Hospital, Lancaster has recently established two new initiatives with the help of mental health service users and volunteers.

Patient ward meetings are facilitated weekly on the Halton and Silverdale wards by service user volunteers. No ward staff are present in the meeting and the fact that the volunteers all have experience of the service themselves (including admissions to the Halton Unit) makes the in-patients more amenable to discussing issues with them. The volunteers run the meetings on an informal basis – one that engenders conversational engagement rather than a formal business meeting. Minutes are taken and passed to the ward manager and modern matron and placed on the agenda of the weekly in-patient manager's meeting for discussion and possible resolution. Any actions decided upon at the manager's meeting are then fed back to the next ward meeting.

An *In-patient Forum* has been established to provide a supportive environment where in-patients and former in-patients can discuss and share views about their experiences of mental health issues and their time in hospital. Ridge Lea Hospital has found that the dynamic of the meeting shifts significantly as they are not run by staff; the service users have said that they value this and feel they can speak more freely. People have also spoken about the positive role models the volunteers are, encouraging hope and recovery. The volunteers' experience is also particularly uplifting as they speak about how much it has helped them to build their confidence and skills. The forum takes place in the newly refurbished hospital café (below) which service users were invited to help design. The result is a more contemporary social space for the use of clients, staff and visitors alike.

Inspired by the positive outcomes from these initiatives Ridge Lea Hospital is moving towards creating more meaningful and rewarding roles for volunteers to enhance the care we provide to our client group.

For more information about the initiatives contact Darren.smith@lancashirecare.nhs.uk



Hospital café

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