

Identifying the factors affecting the implementation of strategies to promote a safer environment for patients with learning disabilities in NHS hospitals: a mixed-methods study

I Tuffrey-Wijne,^{1*} N Giatras,² L Goulding,²
E Abraham,^{2,3} L Fenwick,⁴ C Edwards⁵ and S Hollins^{2,6}

¹Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education, St George's, University of London and Kingston University, London, UK

²Division of Population Health Sciences and Education, St George's, University of London, London, UK

³Florence Nightingale School of Nursing and Midwifery, King's College London, London, UK

⁴Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Newcastle, UK

⁵Institute of Leadership and Management in Health, Kingston University, London, UK

⁶House of Lords, London, UK

*Corresponding author

Declared competing interests of authors: None.

Published December 2013

DOI: 10.3310/hsdr01130

Plain English summary

Factors affecting a safer environment for patients with learning disabilities

Health Services and Delivery Research 2013; Vol. 1: No. 13

DOI: 10.3310/hsdr01130

NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk

Plain English summary

This 21-month study (carried out between 2011 and 2013) aimed to describe the factors in NHS hospitals that promote or compromise a safe environment for patients with learning disabilities, in the light of national recommendations that hospitals should: identify patients with learning disabilities; provide reasonably adjusted services; involve carers as partners in care; and include patient and carer views in service development. Methods included questionnaire surveys, interviews and observation with senior hospital managers, clinical staff, patients and carers (a total of 1251 participants).

Examples of good practice were not consistently seen hospital-wide. The most common safety issues were delays and omissions of treatment and basic care. The main barriers to better and safer care were a lack of effective flagging systems, leading to a failure to identify patients with learning disabilities within hospitals; lack of staff understanding of learning disability issues; lack of effective carer involvement and staff misunderstanding of the carer role; and lack of clear lines of responsibility and accountability for the care of each patient with learning disabilities. The main facilitators of better care were learning disability liaison nurses (LDLNs) and ward managers.

The following further research is recommended: identifying the adjustments to hospital care that are most frequently needed by people with learning disabilities, and their cost implications; identifying the most effective structures for ensuring clear lines of responsibility and accountability for the care of patients with learning disabilities; investigating practical and effective ways of flagging patients with learning disabilities across NHS services and within NHS hospitals; investigating, implementing and evaluating procedures to ensure that family and other carers are involved in providing care; and evaluating LDLN posts nationwide.

Health Services and Delivery Research

ISSN 2050-4349 (Print)

ISSN 2050-4357 (Online)

This journal is a member of and subscribes to the principles of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) (www.publicationethics.org/).

Editorial contact: nihredit@southampton.ac.uk

The full HS&DR archive is freely available to view online at www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/hsdr. Print-on-demand copies can be purchased from the report pages of the NIHR Journals Library website: www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk

Criteria for inclusion in the *Health Services and Delivery Research* journal

Reports are published in *Health Services and Delivery Research* (HS&DR) if (1) they have resulted from work for the HS&DR programme or programmes which preceded the HS&DR programme, and (2) they are of a sufficiently high scientific quality as assessed by the reviewers and editors.

HS&DR programme

The Health Services and Delivery Research (HS&DR) programme, part of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), was established to fund a broad range of research. It combines the strengths and contributions of two previous NIHR research programmes: the Health Services Research (HSR) programme and the Service Delivery and Organisation (SDO) programme, which were merged in January 2012.

The HS&DR programme aims to produce rigorous and relevant evidence on the quality, access and organisation of health services including costs and outcomes, as well as research on implementation. The programme will enhance the strategic focus on research that matters to the NHS and is keen to support ambitious evaluative research to improve health services.

For more information about the HS&DR programme please visit the website: www.netscc.ac.uk/hsdr/

This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HS&DR programme or one of its preceding programmes as project number 10/1007/22. The contractual start date was in July 2011. The final report began editorial review in April 2013 and was accepted for publication in August 2013. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HS&DR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HS&DR programme or the Department of Health. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HS&DR programme or the Department of Health.

© Queen's Printer and Controller of HMSO 2013. This work was produced by Tuffrey-Wijne *et al.* under the terms of a commissioning contract issued by the Secretary of State for Health. This issue may be freely reproduced for the purposes of private research and study and extracts (or indeed, the full report) may be included in professional journals provided that suitable acknowledgement is made and the reproduction is not associated with any form of advertising. Applications for commercial reproduction should be addressed to: NIHR Journals Library, National Institute for Health Research, Evaluation, Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre, Alpha House, University of Southampton Science Park, Southampton SO16 7NS, UK.

Published by the NIHR Journals Library (www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk), produced by Prepress Projects Ltd, Perth, Scotland (www.prepress-projects.co.uk).

Health Services and Delivery Research Editor-in-Chief

Professor Ray Fitzpatrick Professor of Public Health and Primary Care, University of Oxford, UK

NIHR Journals Library Editor-in-Chief

Professor Tom Walley Director, NIHR Evaluation, Trials and Studies and Director of the HTA Programme, UK

NIHR Journals Library Editors

Professor Ken Stein Chair of HTA Editorial Board and Professor of Public Health, University of Exeter Medical School, UK

Professor Andree Le May Chair of NIHR Journals Library Editorial Group (EME, HS&DR, PGfAR, PHR journals)

Dr Martin Ashton-Key Consultant in Public Health Medicine/Consultant Advisor, NETSCC, UK

Professor Matthias Beck Chair in Public Sector Management and Subject Leader (Management Group), Queen's University Management School, Queen's University Belfast, UK

Professor Aileen Clarke Professor of Health Sciences, Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick, UK

Dr Tessa Crilly Director, Crystal Blue Consulting Ltd, UK

Dr Peter Davidson Director of NETSCC, HTA, UK

Ms Tara Lamont Scientific Advisor, NETSCC, UK

Professor Elaine McColl Director, Newcastle Clinical Trials Unit, Institute of Health and Society, Newcastle University, UK

Professor William McGuire Professor of Child Health, Hull York Medical School, University of York, UK

Professor Geoffrey Meads Honorary Professor, Business School, Winchester University and Medical School, University of Warwick, UK

Professor Jane Norman Professor of Maternal and Fetal Health, University of Edinburgh, UK

Professor John Powell Consultant Clinical Adviser, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), UK

Professor James Raftery Professor of Health Technology Assessment, Wessex Institute, Faculty of Medicine, University of Southampton, UK

Dr Rob Riemsma Reviews Manager, Kleijnen Systematic Reviews Ltd, UK

Professor Helen Roberts Professorial Research Associate, University College London, UK

Professor Helen Snooks Professor of Health Services Research, Institute of Life Science, College of Medicine, Swansea University, UK

Please visit the website for a list of members of the NIHR Journals Library Board:
www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/about/editors

Editorial contact: nihredit@southampton.ac.uk