

Green Walking Case Study

South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust

Project Description

Background

In 2019, the occupational therapist on Clare Ward in South London began a weekly walk with patients, having signed up as a Green Beacon site through the Green Walking project. The project aimed to assess the various barriers and enablers of providing supported access to a green space on an adult inpatient psychiatric ward. A previous walking group had been running for over a year but the volunteer who ran it left the position, leaving it on pause.

Ward environment

The ward has an average of 17 patients, and has access to a garden on site, as well as the local park, Ladywell Fields, which includes a small river, skate park, running track, café/ play-space and a therapeutic garden. Other green spaces accessible in the area include a walkway through to Catford, and other parks, such as Greenwich.

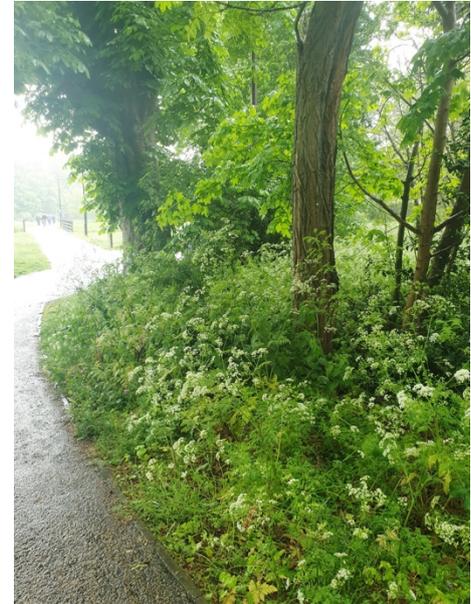
Approach

The occupational therapist on Clare Ward started a weekly walking group with patients from the ward. There was a consideration of which patients would be suitable to invite and some group rules that the patients had to adhere to (they would not be able to smoke whilst on the walk). The walk leader had a pedometer to keep track of the distance and number of steps walked. Some patients chose to take photographs on the walks. All walks took place in the local area, with no transport required. The group was promoted by advertising on the ward activity timetable and within the weekly community meeting. Walks were arranged weekly over the three-month pilot period and were attended by 1-3 patients; on a couple of weeks there were no patients interested/able to attend.

"I just enjoyed being able to walk and talk and not see myself as a patient, doing something that is very normal and peaceful." - Patient

Benefits

Patient experience and outcomes: Patients reported that they liked getting fresh air and being in the company of nice, friendly people. One said, "It feels like freedom." Others reported that the walk felt "close and peaceful" and others that "the birds were beautiful!" One patient stated that they thought the walk would help their anxiety and wanted to join a community walking group when they got discharged. Another patient stated that they felt refreshed and felt happier within themselves for the rest of the week.



In one instance, staff noted changes in a patient who was smiling and engaging differently from how they had been on the ward.

Environmental/Financial: Connecting with nature: staff noted that patients were very interested in the trees and wildlife. The program drew on the time of regular salaried staff but had no additional costs.

Social: Patients felt at ease and interacted with the walk leaders. The walk also promoted socialising between patients; sights and encounters prompted topics of conversation (such as previous participation in sports) and in one instance a patient bought an ice cream for themselves and another patient.

Dis-benefits

No clear drawbacks were noted during the period of involvement in the project.

Barriers

Adverse weather conditions sometimes led to the cancellation of walks.

There were problems with organising leave for patients to allow them to join the walk.

A number of the eligible patients were not interested in joining the walks.

Some patients didn't want to join because they wanted to smoke while on the walk.

Staff wanted to join the walk but were unable to due to staff shortages.



What the team had to say:

"It is very positive as it gets patients out and getting more active, rather than staying in their rooms" - Ward Manager

Key Aspects of the Project

There were a lot of positive comments from the patients who went on the walks and from staff.

For more information please contact:

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