Shaping mental health services across the Arden region

NHS Arden and Greater East Midlands Commissioning Support Unit

The challenge

Mental health is one of the most complex areas of health care. Demand for services is rising and pressure to provide faster, more patient-focused services is now commanding a much greater level of attention.

Alongside growing need, cases of serious neglect and abuse suffered by adults with learning disabilities and autism at the Winterbourne View Hospital prompted calls for services across the country to be radically transformed.

What was done

In a series of projects designed to tackle different aspects of mental health services, Arden and Greater East Midlands Commissioning Support Unit (Arden & GEM CSU) developed and implemented comprehensive service redesign programmes in partnership with clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and providers. These have delivered sustainable improvements in key areas, including perinatal mental health, autism, learning disabilities and local care.

Establishing comprehensive perinatal mental health services

Arden & GEM CSU worked in partnership with the three CCGs in Warwickshire to establish a regional perinatal mental health service. Perinatal mental illness affects around 135,000 women per year, with long-term costs to society of £8.1bn annually. Of postnatal women who die, one in four deaths are due to mental illness and one in seven from suicide. There is evidence that babies whose mothers suffer with perinatal mental illness can experience long-term emotional, social, behavioural and developmental deficits.

Against that backdrop, and thanks to proactive partnership working and a willingness to work across organisational and clinical boundaries, patients in Coventry and Warwickshire now have fast access to perinatal psychologists and psychiatrists throughout pregnancy and postnatal care. The multidisciplinary team is also providing perinatal mental health training to GPs, health visitors, midwives and obstetricians, ensuring early identification of risk and vulnerability, and delivering a more holistic service.
**Transforming care for patients with complex learning disabilities and autism**

Arden & GEM CSU has been working with CCGs, local authorities, providers and service users across Coventry, Warwickshire and Solihull to radically rethink how services for people with complex learning disabilities and autism were being commissioned and delivered.

The new approach involved taking brave steps to challenge traditional models of care, moving towards alternative community-based solutions. The programme has resulted in a wide range of benefits, including:

- a shared commitment across health and social care to deliver services designed around people’s needs
- a new multidisciplinary intensive support team which is successfully supporting people in the local community and preventing hospital admissions
- a focus on supporting people closer to home to ensure access to a wider support network, such as friends and family
- better equipped staff to spot early warning signs and trigger points which can lead to hospital admissions, and easier access to responsive support
- a reduction in inpatient beds and length of stays in hospital.

**Coming home**

A partnership project involving Arden & GEM CSU, Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust, CCGs, local authorities and care providers across the Arden region has successfully reduced reliance on out-of-area mental health services, improving patient care and delivering annual savings of £12m to date.

A dedicated mental health repatriation team was established, including specialist dementia and learning disability nurses as well as social care, occupational therapy and secondary care specialists. Forward-thinking CCGs funded the project, aware that savings may not be equal across the region and may vary from year to year.

In the first year of the project, which focused exclusively on adults with mental health needs:

- 400 out-of-area patients were identified and 134 had moved by March 2014
- approximately 100 have been repatriated, while others have had their care packages adjusted
- many people have been able to step down to a less intense service.

The project is now a substantive, self-funding service and has been widened to take in those with dementia and learning disabilities.

**The results**

The projects demonstrate that while mental health services may be complex, improvements can result not only in efficiency savings but in radical improvements for patients and their families. In all cases, working openly with stakeholders to co-commission services and taking the time to ‘walk in the shoes’ of individual patients has proved invaluable in redesigning successful services.

The projects have all received independent endorsement through industry award schemes.

**For more information**

Please contact NHS Arden and Greater East Midlands Commissioning Support Unit:
Telephone: **01926 353 700** Email: **contactus@ardengemcsu.nhs.uk**

June 2017