



Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust

24/7 telephone service reduces delays in access to the right service to meet service users' mental health needs and support...time to listen, time to care

LEVEL 3

Seven day service provision within an organisation

"The availability of a telephone referral line means that in some cases people can avoid the anxiety of attending the accident and emergency department We are all about giving the best help, or signposting them to where they will find it." Service Manager

Overview

An initial assessment response team, formed in April 2012, provides a single point of access for patients with mental health issues, via a 24 hour, seven days a week phone line. The service enables people to access the right service to help to resolve their current difficulties. This system was created in response to a high volume of requests for the mental health crisis team that were for advice or help for low mood conditions rather than at risk of admission to hospital in mental health crisis. The system includes:

- Triage through telephone consultation with band six nurse to gather information regarding presentation This results in a clinical decision, for the most appropriate intervention for the individual
- Rapid response for face to face triage, home visits undertaken within one hour
- Service includes risk/mental health monitoring, signposting, brief therapeutic interventions and managing distress
- Access to GP services to manage presenting symptoms or access to existing Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment Teams for crisis management.

Impact

This service ensures timely access to appropriate services and supports patients, families and general practitioners to feel better supported.

'Wonderful support and understanding during a very difficult time. Make sure there is enough funding to keep this very valuable service going. Carer feedback'

Patients

- Patients have more confidence in the system when they are able to have rapid contact with a healthcare professional
- Improved telephone access for patients (average nine second call pick-up)
- 100% of service users surveyed were satisfied with the response and would be happy to recommend the service to a friend
- Families see benefit and feel more supported - South of Tyne Carers Liaison Group have particularly praised the initial contact and the very fast and appropriate response

Overall system

- Response team staff report they are able to spend more time with the service users particularly those at higher risk
- Ambulance staff report reduction in the number of urgent mental health calls, improved response times from crisis team and there has been a reduction in 4 hour breaches within Accident and Emergency
- 100% of GPs surveyed said their calls were answered quickly and the team met their needs

- Reduced avoidable harm for patient - no “bounced referrals” (these are now routed to the most appropriate service)

Challenges and Solutions

- Staff meet daily at 12 noon to discuss patient referrals, which enables the larger proportion of referrals who are not urgent or in mental health crisis to either book patients into the most appropriate outpatient service or agree management
- The use of digital dictation and use of 3G tablets enable quick access to patient records reduces administration burden
- Variation in attitudes to service across areas from other professionals, some GP’s more sceptical than others, resulting in variation and support for service

Further quality improvement

- Sunderland CCG & South Tyneside CCG is further evaluating the model in relation to NHS 111, the impact on other community pathways and call centre technology
- Neighbouring CCGs are now also in discussion about commissioning the service
- We are now working on a single point of access for both urgent and non-urgent requests for help across the whole of the organisation, providing a single “front door” to NTW

Emerging themes and principles

Close working with all our partners are an important aspect. If we do not improve the pathways that service users follow, including their discharge arrangements, this will only create a bottleneck somewhere in the system.

TOP TIPS

- **Support services, such as use of digital technology plays a vital role**
- **Whole system engagement in process is key to success**
- **Working collaboratively with commissioners and use of CQINNs facilitated roll out**

Contacts

- **Denise Pickersgill**, Service Lead, Northumberland Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust -
Email: denise.pickersgill@ntw.nhs.uk
- **Dr Carole Kaplan**, Transformation Programme Director, Northumberland Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust -
Email: carole.kaplan@ntw.nhs.uk
- **Ian Holliday**, NHS Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group -
Email: Ian.Holliday@sotw.nhs.uk