



Improving discharge letters to reflect our Trust values

Discharge letters are sent to people upon them leaving the care of one of our services. They are sent either when people move between our services, when their treatment is complete or when people no longer need our services.

Background

The Trust received feedback from our Council Member, Carol Irving, about a discharge letter that was sent to her friend, Lee, who was a service user in one of our community mental health services.

Carol shared that the letter lacked empathy and didn't represent our Trust values in making sure that we:

- Put the person first and in the centre
- Know that families and carers matter
- Are respectful, honest, open and transparent
- Improve and aim to be outstanding
- Are relevant today and ready for tomorrow

Carol's feedback opened up a conversation at the Trust about the importance of wording and use of language in discharge letters. It led to the development of discharge letter templates which were rolled out through our clinical record system, so that all staff in mental health community services can use these moving forward.

What we have done differently

A project group was formed to review examples of discharge letters and to create the improved discharge letter templates, which embedded our Trust values.

The project group included staff from community mental health services, quality, improvement, nursing and professions, alongside Council Members Carol Irving and John Laville, who brought lived experiences to the group.

The group worked together virtually to develop draft letter templates. Drafts of the letter were sent out to various Trust teams and networks for feedback, including the carer's network and the equality and involvement team, to help make sure that final versions of the templates were reflective of staff and service user needs.

The templates were also created in other formats such as easy read to help make sure that information is accessible as possible for people that use our services.

Outcomes

The final templates are available to all community mental health services. The letter templates can be adapted by services to reflect individual needs too, however, key text in the body of the letter must stay the same to reflect our Trust values.

Staff who have used the discharge letter templates so far have shared that they like the tone of the letters, the personalised element of them and that they welcome the plain English and accessible language used within them.

Future

We hope Lee's story and the creation of the new discharge letter templates inspire all Trust staff and services to review other standard letter templates to make sure that they are compassionate and reflect our Trust values.



“ Words can empower. Words can alienate. ”
Carol Irving