



FoNS Improvement Insights

Chest Clinic Experience Based Design Project

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Project background

This project was carried out in a chest clinic in East London, serving an ethnically diverse population. The respiratory outpatient service is responsible for over 10,000 appointments per annum. A significant number of outpatients failed to attend chest clinic appointments in 2009/10 (23%). This number was higher than other outpatient departments in the hospital and at variance with meeting national NHS targets for this patient group. Previous lack of staff continuity/leadership and the need for increased patient involvement in developing service improvements were key drivers in the project's development.

Aim and objectives of the project

The aim of the project was to improve the quality of the chest clinic outpatient experience using a systematic experience based design (EBD) approach. The approach used was intended to identify and understand the needs and experiences of the patients using this service; and to act on patient as well as multi-disciplinary staff feedback, to help to reshape the service.

The objectives were:

- To engage with patients and the whole multidisciplinary team to look at what worked well in the chest clinic and what could be improved upon
- To analyse this data and identify common themes and areas for improvement
- To collaboratively implement action plans to reflect the changes agreed
- To measure the success of the improvements
- To share the experience with staff, service users and others in the Trust

Key activities and outcomes from the project

The project was divided into 3 phases.

Phase 1: Capturing the experience through separate EBD workshops for chest clinic service users (n=7) and staff (n=14) run by experienced external facilitators. Staff narratives were also drawn upon for those unable to attend the workshop (n=10). From this data, an outpatient pathway was mapped out based on experience and used as the main discussion for the staff workshop.

Phase 2: Understanding the experience

Key themes from both the staff and chest clinic service users workshops identified service improvements with:

- Information contained in appointment letters
- Co-ordination of outpatient appointments
- Service user information about diagnostic tests
- Availability of test results at appointments
- Physical environment of the chest clinic

Phase 3: Improving the experience

It was possible to implement some improvements quickly e.g. information to service users about clinic running times, upgrading information signs, and making refreshments and wheelchairs more readily available. More complex themes such as rewriting service user information in departments in the chest clinic and reception area redesign were addressed at a co-design workshop (n=15). Individual departmental leads and a working party were identified to target these improvements to the chest clinic.

As a result of the project, new appointment letters and an information leaflet have been designed and improvements made in patient communication. Streamlining the outpatient appointments system has reduced the need for attendance for diagnostic tests and a follow up appointment to discuss results e.g. lung function tests. There is an increased clarity of staff roles and responsibilities although training is ongoing. Further evaluation will be undertaken to assess improvements in non-attendance at chest clinic appointments.

Implications for practice:

- Using an EBD approach enabled a shared understanding by staff and service users in identifying limitations of and ways of making significant improvements to the chest clinic service
- The feedback by two service users at the co-design workshop was invaluable for staff to consider the experience and solutions from a patient, not just staff perspective
- The project has enhanced ongoing patient feedback and improvements in the chest clinic, in line with the Trust wide *Patient Experience Revolution Initiative*
- Staff engagement in an EBD project has led to more clarity and increased communication in multi-disciplinary team working in the outpatient setting as a whole, not just the chest clinic
- Learning from this project will be applicable to other health professionals involved in outpatients work

A full project report including references can be accessed from: <http://www.fons.org/library/report-details.aspx?nstd=14876>

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