

**January 2014**

**Emergency management of Mental Health patients**

The Emergency Department at King's College Hospital treats what we believe to be the largest number of mental health patients in the UK. This paper outlines the key operational processes, challenges and innovations at KCH associated with the emergency pathway for patients presenting with mental health conditions.

There are multiple drivers for the exceptionally high volumes of patients attending the ED with mental health issues. These include

- Local demographics and deprivation
- Proximity to SLaM and reputational drivers
- Proximity to specialist Child and Adolescent services
- Major Trauma Centre activity

KCH and SLaM have a strong history of partnership working, underlined by the formation of both the Academic Health Science Centre (AHSC) and Kings Health Partners (KHP). Together KCH and SLaM are actively engaged in the provision of care to patients presenting to the Emergency Department at Denmark Hill, continually reviewing, assessing and improving pathways to meet the needs of this particularly complex and vulnerable group of patients.

It is important to note that many patients present with both a physical and a mental health problem and these require assessment concurrently.

We have an agreed service aim for all patients to be seen by the specialist psychiatric team within 30 mins from referral and this is monitored as a key performance indicator alongside other pathway measures such as time to first clinician.

We have clear clinical and operational pathways in place that support the rapid assessment and referral of patients at the point of initial assessment.

All ED staff undertake specialist training, delivered as a rolling programme of events throughout the year, from the Psychiatric Liaison team to ensure they are able to identify signs of mental illness and distress, how to risk assess and are aware of how best to manage patients presenting in crisis.

We have a dedicated assessment room for patients with mental health needs to meet with members of the psychiatric team that is separate from the main clinical area and provides a quiet space to minimise any additional stressors the busy ED environment can place on an individual.

### **Staffing**

In Q3 of 2013 KCH advertised and appointed 3 WTE Registered Mental Health Nurses (RMNs) in addition to the current ED nursing establishment.

This allows us to have 1 x RMN in the department 10:00 – 22:00 7 days a week. These specialist staff are able to provide 1:1 support, supervision and therapeutic intervention for patients presenting in mental health crisis. They are also able to support transfers, giving the patients a consistent member of staff and ensuring the Psychiatric Liaison Nurse (PLNs) pool is not depleted.

The PLN team are based in the ED 24/7, employed by SLaM and working in partnership with KCH. The team consists of 1 x band 7 and 10 x band 6 nurses. They are supported by a team of psychiatric doctors

In Q4 a successful pilot was completed demonstrating the effectiveness of having an additional PLN working in the evening (16:00 – 00:00) as well as a consultant psychiatrist (17:00 – 00:00). The increased staffing levels have subsequently been supported and the pilot extended by the CCG.

The benefits include timely assessment, rapid decision making and a reduction in the number of formal mental health act assessments and admissions undertaken.

### **Governance**

We have an established joint governance meeting that takes place monthly and has done so for several years, with multidisciplinary, multi agency and cross organisational representation. The meeting reviews activity from the preceding month, identifies trends, reviews any adverse incidents, extended length of stays, frequent attenders as well as staffing, training and pathway developments.

We maintain a live action tracker to review developments and ensure there is a cohesive improvement plan with delegated responsibilities across the teams.

### **Future developments**

- PLAN accreditation of the psychiatric liaison service at KCH
- Development and recruitment of a hospital wide team of specialist nurses and healthcare support workers to provide greater consistency of 1:1 supervision and support to patients with mental health and behavioural problems
- Organisational reconfiguration of KCH out patients to support the final phase of the mental health assessment suite and new main entrance opening

## **Challenges**

- Increasing volumes and acuity of attendances to KCH ED
- Capacity – staffing (inpatients and ED), assessment space
- Social services, response times specifically out of hours
- MH bed provision/access
- Child and adolescent pathways
- Drugs and alcohol and the impact on the assessment process
- 136 suite provision
- Physical health support to the Mental Health inpatient environment to support colocated management
- Metropolitan Police and LAS relationships, training and pathways specifically for metal capacity assessments, documentation and the section 136 process

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