

## Peer Support Network meet-up with the Learning Disability Liaison Nurse

29<sup>th</sup> July 2020

At this month's online meet-up we caught up with members of the Peer Support Network. We were joined by Erica Pope, Acute Learning Disability Liaison Nurse for East Sussex covering Conquest Hospital Hastings and Eastbourne District General Hospital. We also heard from a member of the network who was unexpectedly taken ill and admitted into hospital very recently. Recovering at home, they were able to join the meeting to share their experience including how their Hospital Passport supported them. We send our warmest wishes for a restful recovery.

Read on for a round-up of the meeting...

### Erica's Role as LD nurse

Erica's role involves talking to wards when people are admitted as inpatients, making sure reasonable adjustments are made and all areas of their health are looked at. She supports families who are seeking further information about their loved-ones care by liaising with nurses and clinicians. Her role has become more complex and wide-reaching during Covid-19. The following notes include what to expect from hospital admission and appointments at this time and information about GP appointments and health checks. Erica works closely with the Community Learning Disability Teams in East Sussex.

Prior to Covid-19 Erica could accompany people attending outpatient appointments. However, the guidance since the start of Covid-19 outlines that a person with a learning disability can be accompanied by a family member or close friend to make sure their needs are advocated, and any anxiety is minimised.

Visitor guidance: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/C0524-visiting-healthcare-inpatient-settings-5-June-2020.pdf>

Erica makes sure departments are aware if somebody has a learning disability and whether they could have the first appointment of the day, so they don't find themselves waiting for long periods of time. Sometimes it's not appropriate to come into the hospital and some appointments could take place over the phone. In other circumstances, what might seem like a relatively simple procedure for some might take more consideration. Such as arranging a general anaesthetic for a CT scan for someone with a particular learning disability. A lot of Erica's role involves ensuring that clinical teams make adjustments to ensure that adequate time is given and procedures are clearly communicated to patients.

Learning Disability training is a key area Erica would like to develop within the NHS Trust for all hospital staff. A lot of the issues Erica deals with are due to a lack of awareness and understanding. Each ward has learning disability link nurses or champions, however due to Covid, these roles have been redeployed. Erica is working on re-establishing those links. Funding has been allocated to develop photo symbol accessible information for people with learning disabilities to support hospital visits. A steering group including professionals from

NHS Trust and outside organisations is due to resume. Erica is keen to involve representatives from the Peer Support Network in the group.

### **Hospital Passports**

Hospital Passports are important documents for communicating individual needs and stating what reasonable adjustments staff should make to ensure individuals receive the right care. Erica encourages people to complete the 'This is Me – My Care Passport' which is recognised by hospitals in the trust. A member of the Peer Support Network who was unexpectedly admitted to hospital over the weekend, received a round of applause when his hospital passport was handed to the ambulance crew. It was well received, informative and supportive to all staff and crucially offered peace of mind to him during his stay in hospital.

A Hospital Passport template can be downloaded here: <https://www.esht.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/This-is-me-My-Care-Passport.pdf>

### **GP appointments and health checks**

Erica previously worked as part of a team to increase the number of people with learning disabilities registered with GPs, ensuring they received annual health checks.

Since 2008 Learning Disability Health Checks have been carried out annually at GP practices for anyone over the age of 14. If a health check hasn't been carried out in the last year, call your GP surgery and ask to speak to the practice manager to check whether the person you support is on the Disability Register to qualify for an appointment.

Annual health checks are a holistic check. A pre-appointment checklist should be sent out by the GP to be completed in advance of the appointment to highlight any areas of concern. If you or the person you support have concerns about health, do not delay contacting your GP surgery and call 111 if in doubt.

Often people have a long-standing and trusted relationship with their particular GP. At this present time it is common for locum GPs to be on duty. Under the Equality Act 2010, there are grounds to ask to see your named GP as a reasonable adjustment for someone with a learning disability and to maintain continuity of care.

### **Advance Care Planning**

We touched up the sensitive area of planning in case of emergencies. We will be arranging a follow-up meeting with Erica to look at the local NHS trusts RESPECT plan. The Recommended Summary Plan for Emergency Care and Treatment (ReSPECT) is a process that allows people to record their wishes about how they would like to be treated in a medical emergency when they may not be able to communicate.

<https://www.resus.org.uk/respect>

### **How to get in touch with Erica**

Families, carers and support workers are welcome to contact Erica.

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Email: Erica.pope@nhs.net