Visit to the Alexandra Hospital in Redditch
Wednesday 18th February 2015

Health Checker Laura Gill made an unannounced visit to the Worcestershire Royal Hospital with Project Worker Sandra Hibbert.

They asked to see Rani Virk, the Lead Nurse for Quality and Patient Experience.

They also met Kay Dalloway who is one of the Liaison nurses.

They asked to visit wards that may have people with a learning disability being treated there.
Areas visited

They visited several areas around the hospital including:

- Eye Clinic
- Accident and Emergency Department
- Medical Assessment Unit
- Endoscopy Department
- Ward 12

Easy Read information

At the Eye Clinic they met a Learning Disability Champion.
She showed them some Easy Read leaflets produced by See Ability. They are sent out with appointment letters.

One of the leaflets was about having a cataract removed.
Another explained about what information would be needed to be taken to an appointment (for example a Health Action Plan).

Health Checkers were shown a “My Hospital Book”.
Laura explained that people with learning disabilities find it difficult to understand “stick men” symbols and prefer Photo symbols.

Rani would like Laura and Health Checkers to help Kay and herself to update the “My Hospital Book”.

Health Checkers were not able to see anyone at the clinic with learning disabilities. However there had been 3 there in the last month.

When Health Checkers visited the Accident and Emergency Department they saw that
there was a My Hospital Communication Book in Easy Read.

There were 2 Learning Disability Champions on duty but no one with learning disabilities whilst they were there.

There were blue boxes in all areas where there were Learning Disability Champions.

Each had Easy Read information that could be used if they had people with a learning disability on the ward.

The Liaison nurse felt it would be better to have all the information in one place on a notice board so that it would be easily seen.

Often patients with learning disability do not know any personal information.
Some support workers don’t know people well enough and are not able to give personal information.

Health Checkers think that there should be clearer information from the doctor who has referred the person to hospital.

Health Action Plans and My Hospital Books should be kept up to date and brought into hospital. Support staff should help to keep these up to date.

Hospital signs
Most signs around the hospital were in written form.

Health Checkers think there should be pictures to help people understand.

This would be helpful to everyone not just people with a learning disability.
Reasonable adjustments
Laura asked what “reasonable adjustments” are made for people with learning disabilities.

Some of the waiting areas are very small.

Staff would look at using a larger area to wait if someone in a wheelchair needed extra space or if someone needed a quieter area to wait.

There were hoists on wards to help move a person for example from a wheelchair to the bed. Staff had been trained to use the hoists.

Patients may also be able to stay in their wheelchairs if they are more comfortable for some treatment.

If someone needed to have a test for infection before they came in for an operation this could be done at home.
Health Checkers think this will help some people who may get anxious coming into hospital.

On the day of an operation a parent or carer would be able to walk with the patient to the operating theatre.

Health Checkers saw a nurse writing messages for a patient who had difficulty with his speech and hearing. He was able to write his reply.

He was waiting for an assessment with the Speech and Language Team before he went home.

Health Checkers spoke to a new member of staff. She trained to be a nurse in Birmingham but had not had any training around people with learning disabilities. She felt that this would have been useful to her.
Health Checkers think that all nursing staff should receive some training to understand the needs of someone with a learning disability.

Medical Assessment Unit

We met Jane who has autism. She had been admitted onto the ward on a Sunday over a week ago.

The Liaison nurse had seen the alert on the Monday morning (there are no Liaison nurses at the weekends). She visited Jane and her family on the ward.

We spoke to Jane`s sister who said that staff had been “brilliant”.
The doctor talked to Jane about things she enjoys like “Frozen” and “High School Musical”. This helped him get to know her and build up trust.

Family members had been allowed to stay with Jane all the time.

Jane had been admitted to the men’s ward on the Assessment unit as there were no beds available on the women’s ward.

As soon as one became available the nurses needed to move Jane as it wasn’t appropriate for her to stay on the men’s ward.

The move would have been difficult for Jane to understand and could have made her behaviour worse.

Staff moved Jane’s bed and all her belongings into the women’s ward whilst she was with her mum in the bathroom.
Jane's mum took her back to the women's ward where everything looked exactly as it was.

Jane's family were very pleased how staff had helped to make sure Jane was not upset as this may have affected her behaviour.

**What Health Checkers think is good?**

Health Checkers saw lots of Easy Read information on wards.

There are more Learning Disability Champions communicating and understanding people with learning disabilities.

Nursing staff are making reasonable adjustments for people with learning disabilities.
What Health Checkers think could be better?

GPs need to send through to the hospital more information about the person they are referring.

Support staff should make sure they know information about the person they are bringing into hospital.

Health Checkers think that the “My Hospital Book” should have photo symbols rather than stick men.

Rani has asked Laura if she and other Health Checkers could help with this.

For further information contact
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