

Improving the care of those struggling to access specialist respiratory care

A pilot initiative for People Experiencing Homelessness (PEH) in the London Borough of Haringey

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Aim: To provide an accessible service to a cohort who all too frequently "fall through the net" in accessing routine healthcare. This same cohort present with complex health needs (physical and mental) and social issues.

Context: tobacco smoking rates in the general population are falling. Smoking rates are estimated to be around 6 times higher for PEH. Initial scoping work suggested PEH are unlikely to have accessed quality assured spirometry and as a result are likely to be on suboptimal / unnecessary treatment.

National and Local Drivers: the NHS Long Term plan has made respiratory disease a national clinical priority. Respiratory disease is also one of the 5 clinical areas included in the NHSE CORE20PLUS5 approach, also aiming to reduce health inequity for the most deprived 20% of the population. North Central London population health strategy emphasises prevention, early identification and proactive care.

Who was involved? – we were keen to involve as many interested parties as possible

The pilot brought together healthcare clinicians from primary, homeless health outreach, specialist primary and secondary care staff.

The GP Federation provided QA diagnostic spirometry and smoking cessation advisors as well as hostel and day centre staff from Haringey Council (trusted partners).

Where:

The event was held at Mulberry junction, a local day centre for PEH that the targeted group were familiar with and already accessed frequently.

Who for:

All known smokers were encouraged to attend, especially those with symptoms of breathlessness and cough. Two clients were targeted by the Homeless health outreach nurse as needing diagnostic spirometry. Opportunistic drop ins were encouraged.

Outcomes:

19 PEH attended- a mix of targeted and opportunistic drop ins
9 undertook diagnostic spirometry
3 given positive diagnoses of airways disease - referred back to GP for prescription of appropriate treatment
1 patient reported haemoptysis and was subsequently taken for discussion at Consultant MDT
10 consulted with specialist nursing and physiotherapy staff - outcomes and recommendations were forwarded on to GP's for follow up
10 consulted tobacco dependency and received support to quit (swap to stop vapes provided).

As well as one to one consultations, easy read and co-designed Groundswell (homeless charity) information leaflets were provided on the day. Food and drink were provided to support attendance on the day

Client feedback:

"I haven't made it to 3 appointments now for breathing tests. I was told I needed to get another referral. Travelling to places I don't know can be difficult if I am having a bad day. This has been fantastic"

"I really appreciate the time you have all spent with me today" , "It feels like everyone is here to help support me "

Next steps: The learning will be used to organise another event to coincide with flu vaccine roll out. Hoping that the Respiratory Consultant from Whittington Health will be able to attend. An additional venue for women only due to low ratio of women in attendance and intelligence to suggest some may be uncomfortable to attend the existing venue. Homeless patients are now welcome to attend the monthly respiratory clinics at the Haringey Addiction service.