



Short Case Study

Knitted Hearts

Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust

Gloucestershire Health and Care Community and Mental Health Trust developed a range of innovations during the Covid-19 pandemic to support people – patients, families, and colleagues.

One of the most significant changes in practice came from one of the hospitals setting up a Family Communication Team – an idea which spread across the six other Community Hospitals in the Trust. This ensured that the families could still make connections with their loved ones when visiting was not possible – both by communicating through the team, and through some inspired and creative ideas they implemented.

One such idea which supported patients and families who couldn't be together was providing a pair of identical knitted hearts. These were small, soft hearts which were comfortable to hold in one hand. One heart stayed with the patient, and one with the family, creating a feeling of connection.

As well as the knitted hearts, there was of course access to the team made up of colleagues who were shielding and those working from the hospital. Training was put in place involving the hospital chaplains to ensure that they had the right skills to support family members.

Daily meetings with the ward team ensured a joined up approach to communication and so that ward staff did not feel they were losing their connection to the families.

They facilitated the use of iPads and other forms of communication between patients and families, enabling emotional connection for example through the joint reading of poems.

Benefits for patients

- Providing knitted hearts was just one 'comforting touch' put in place by the Family Communications Teams to ameliorate the distress of families and friends being separated at a time of crisis

Benefits for staff

- Reduced distress for patients and families

Benefit for the Trust

- Maintaining communication between families and patients which was vital when face to face visits were not possible

Next steps

- Continue to use knitted hearts and virtual communication where appropriate

What we have learnt

- Small, easy to implement, ideas can make an enormous difference
- Families and patients feeling connected was important as was the "comforting touch" of the physical knitted heart

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