



Short Case Study

Virtual Home Assessments

Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust

Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust has 11 Community Hospital wards and because of the pandemic, discharge planning had to be adapted. Occupational Therapists (OTs) managed the need for social distancing by using video technology instead of the traditional face to face home visits to assess patients' homes.

Previously, OTs would go to people's homes to complete assessments, take measurements and make recommendations to enable patients to return home safely and enable independence. OTs now worked remotely with a family member or carer at home 'taking' them around the property virtually assessing via an iPad or mobile phone.

Technology was used to plan earlier in the patient journey, tailoring rehabilitation to the patient's actual living environment. A relative reported that what was sometimes lacking in discharge planning was the 'soft intelligence' and knowledge of the person and how they are at home. Photographs of the home environment and equipment, along with furniture height measurements, were shared by families with ward staff via email.

Virtual technology was used when access visits would normally be carried out enabling safe, swift and smooth discharge of patients. This helped improve

patient flow through Community Hospitals supporting the wider health and social care system.

Benefits for patients:

- Video technology can enable a three way conversation that promotes person centred discharge planning and family engagement

Benefits for staff:

- Efficient use of available staff and time while enabling safe, person centred discharge planning

Benefits for the Trust:

- Safe, timely patient discharges which supported good patient flow

Next steps:

- The practice of using technology for discharge assessment is continuing and family members send in pictures of the home environment, which may be challenging for the patient, to personalise rehabilitation and enablement

What we have learnt:

- Technology is a useful tool to enable patients, families and practitioners to make informed choices about discharge together
- This is a good example of innovation during the pandemic that has led to a sustained change in regular practice where therapists are able to choose between digital and face-to-face contact.

Contact



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