

Developing, implementing and evaluating a PICU specific training programme. A Practice based project.

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Background

Pavilion Ward is a ten bedded male only Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) which serves the population of Brighton and Hove and East Sussex. Our unit operates in the context of the national picture of nursing staff shortages contributing to reliance on agency staff compounding pressure on service delivery costs¹. This experience is not unusual currently in the UK and services have sought new ways of attracting and recruiting the workforce. In our service recruitment and selection was changed from a local team led process to a hospital wide recruitment and selection assessment centre. This had the advantage of streamlining recruitment and engaging larger numbers of applicants. We found that newly recruited staff were assigned to our unit often without any prior experience or specific interest in the PICU speciality. This impacted positively by recruiting more rapidly, but negatively on the quality and safety of service delivery. By developing a PICU specific training and development programme we were able to strengthen knowledge and skills required to support the quality and safety of service delivery.

Aim

The aim of the training programme was to maintain high quality service delivery and prevent the disintegration of an established positive team culture. The training programme was delivered to all newly appointed staff. The outcomes of the training program were to strengthen team cohesion and to provide all new staff members with the appropriate level of skills and knowledge to work safely in the PICU speciality.

Method

Using the National Minimum Standards for PICU, ²published by NAPICU in 2014, a ten week training program was devised and delivered through weekly 90 minute group sessions. Each participant was provided with a work book containing training material drawing upon relevant literature and reflective journal space.

Prior to commencing the course, participants were invited to complete a pre course questionnaire, capturing qualitative and quantitative data relating to PICU specific interventions, underpinning knowledge and personal confidence. This process was repeated at the completion of the programme.

The ten week course covered areas within the speciality of PICU, focusing on safe, high quality care. Training sessions included risk and risk management, clinical presentations, boundaries and psychological safety, documentation and report writing and legal and ethical frameworks. Professionals from the multi-disciplinary team were invited to co-facilitate and deliver the training sessions, allowing for a varied and dynamic training package.

Results

Nine participants took part in the training programme with eight individuals completing both the pre and post questionnaires. All participants reported a significant improvement in confidence in all areas of service delivery. The most improved confidence was seen in boundaries and psychological safety and documentation. Of the nine participants, who included band two support workers, newly qualified band 5 nurses and an Occupational Therapist, eight remain part of the team on the PICU ten months later.

Discussion

Our unit recognised both the positive and negative impact of the strategic change in staff recruitment. In response to this a training and development program was devised to protect and promote the established safety

¹ Francis, R. (2013) Report of the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust Public Inquiry. London: The Stationery office.

² NAPICU (2014). National Minimum Standards for Psychiatric Intensive Care in General Adult Services. Updated 2014. NAPICU. Glasgow.

culture on the unit and provide all participants with the relevant skills to undertake their roles. We acknowledged that whilst nine new staff members was a positive outcome for the unit it also placed pressure on the established team and culture of the ward. Through the development of an in house specialist PICU programme the high quality care delivered by our service continued and the retention of newly appointed staff members was achieved.

The national picture of nursing staff shortages is predicted to continue with individual trusts managing the complex relationship between high quality service delivery and continuing budgetary constraints³. Within the speciality of psychiatric intensive care a skilled experienced staff team is essential. A move towards PICU specialist training is suggested to maintain the skills, knowledge and importantly the attitudes required to work within this challenging and rewarding area of practice.

³ RCN (2013). Safe staffing levels- A national imperative. The UK nursing labour market review 2013. London. Royal college of Nursing.