

More information

If you have any questions or want to know more about Safewards,
please ask one of the ward team
or ask to speak to Mark Earl Safewards Lead.

PALS

To make a comment, raise a concern or make a complaint, please contact
the Trust's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Tel: 01225 362 900

Freephone: 0800 073 1778

Email: awp.pals@nhs.net

Other languages and formats

If you need this information in another format (such as large print, Easy
Read), please call
the PALS number.

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About Safewards

An introductory booklet for service users

Safewards is a model for good nursing practice on the wards and
so should improve your experience of care.

It is made up of 10 'interventions'. Five of these are more
practical and are about service users, while the other five are
more to do with ward staff communicating well with each other
and with service users.

This booklet clearly explains the interventions so that you can
reflect on their use and how they may help you as a service
user.

1. Discharge / Hope messages

This intervention uses a colourful mural (often a tree) on which service users can post messages reflecting on the quality of their care and recovery. The messages are usually written on a leaf shaped template.

- Discharge messages give a record of the impact of the care provided on the ward and reassure people when they are admitted to the ward. They also bring colour and vibrancy to the ward.
- As a part of the discharge process, you should be given the opportunity to write your discharge message on the template, either by yourself or by asking a staff member to write the message for you
- We encourage service users to 'post' on the Discharge/Hope mural at any time whilst on the ward, if they have something positive to share.



10. Reassurance

This intervention aims to supporting service users when there has been an incident or flashpoint on the ward. There may have been raised voices and arguments, or even physical restraint. This is unsettling for everybody.

- Reassurance means checking in with service users that they are OK, explaining what may have happened and making sure the person is supported.
- Reassurance should be something staff do instinctively without being asked. It is also something we can practice in other situations, such as when giving bad news.
- Reassurance should always be honest and realistic.
- Depending on the severity of the bad news, a service user may need reassurance over a short or longer period. We want to avoid traumatising someone who is already struggling.

9. Bad news mitigation

Bad news for a service user can range from declined leave to a section decision, change in medication, a longer stay on the ward than expected, loss of home, relationship or a bereavement.

‘Mitigation’ means reducing the unpleasantness or harmfulness of something.

These are things staff can do to reduce the effects of bad news.

- Choose the best person to tell you the bad news, and where and when this should be done.
- Make sure we don’t play down the seriousness of bad news, or make assurances we cannot keep or are not realistic.
- Think about what happens after sharing bad news, including how to reassure you and give longer term support.
- Offer use of a grounding item (see page 5); or will talk about something you both have in common to help calm and distract.
- Think about and use Talk Down techniques, if needed. See page 6

2. Clear mutual expectations

These are a set of standards for how we behave on the ward to promote the therapeutic relationship between staff and service users.

- Any community needs to have some boundaries and guidance around roles and expectations, so this intervention is essential to creating a supportive and safe ward.
- These standards work best when they are created with input from staff and service users, and when displayed as a poster in a prominent place on the ward.
- They should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to make sure they represent the people on the ward at that time.
- Directing service users and staff to look at the Mutual expectations when there is disagreement is a good way to keep people safe and avoid flashpoints and conflict.



3. Mutual help meeting

This is a regular, constructive meeting aimed at helping service users settle on the ward and giving them the opportunity to help and support each other. This is called 'Peer support'.

- Most wards run a Mutual Help Meeting once a week.
- This meeting seeks to find common ground between service users ensuring they are able to get along and tolerate each other when living in a constrained environment.
- The Mutual Help Meeting starts with a round of thanks, a round of news, then a round of suggestions; and lastly a round of 'offering and asking' where you can offer and ask each other:
 - ⇒ to share activities and occupation;
 - ⇒ for support and help through the day.
- When the meeting is established it becomes a routine point of sociable interest and support.



8. Soft words

Soft words is about using caring words as well as communicating sensitively with each other and thinking about how others may feel.

- Soft words should be part of all our verbal communication on the ward.
- Soft words are really important when staff asking a service user to do or stop doing something. If this is handled badly, it can cause people to become more agitated or distressed.
- In these situations, soft words can encourage self- awareness and safe decisions.
- Becoming a better communicator is a skill service users and staff can all practice and develop.
- Noticing and reflecting about how we communicate and create good relationships is something we can all do both in meetings and when we mix on the ward.

7. Positive words

This intervention is about staff finding something positive to say about service users during handover, care plan meetings and ward rounds.

- Using positive words is enabling because it creates hope and a culture of expecting the good rather than being resigned to the worst.
- If staff find it difficult to find something positive to say, then they can talk about what might be causing difficult behaviours and how they can support someone struggling with their well-being.
- Positive words sets up the incoming team for a good shift.
- Positive words should also be shared with service users, giving encouragement and helping you see the positive steps you are making towards recovery.
- If staff feel that another staff member is being unreasonably negative about a service user during handover, they should be able to challenge this.



4. Know each other

Know Each Other is when individual staff write down a few non-confidential details about themselves on a template. This is placed accessibly on the ward for service users to browse through.

- By doing this, service users can see what they may have in common with different ward staff. Or you may just be curious to find out a little bit more about that person.
- This intervention helps to replicate what happens in life when we meet someone, find we have something in common and have a point of contact and conversation.
- When staff share a little about themselves with the people they are caring for, it can make them easier to relate to as people.
- Know each other creates more equality between staff and service users and encourages therapeutic relationships.

5. Grounding items

In our lives, we have possessions and items around us which we can turn to for distraction, soothing, occupation and consolation. Grounding items are a selection of objects with which you can engage when you need occupation, distraction and self-soothing.

- These should be stored safely in a box in an accessible place on the ward.
- Staff should make you aware of the grounding items box and that you can use it when you need it by asking staff.
- You don't need to be in a state of arousal or distress to use the grounding items.
- Staff can use a grounding item to be quietly present with a service user, and to take the heat and pressure out of a social need to talk.
- Your preferred grounding item(s) can be noted in your care plan.
- Some wards have created a menu of items. You can browse through this and select your favoured item, book it out and return it when finished.

6. Talk down

Talk down is a skill staff should use to sensitively de-escalate you from a state of arousal or distress. The skill involves staff remaining quiet, calm and reassuring when service users are being challenging towards them.

- This intervention also depends on staff showing patience and a desire to understand what is driving your arousal; as well as supporting you to be self-aware, to manage powerful thoughts and emotions and to take back self-control.
- Talk Down's intention is to keep communication open, keep you and others safe and prevent the need for physical restraint or seclusion.
- It should be developed and practiced skilfully by all ward staff.
- Other interventions will come into the mix for using Talk Down.
For example 'Know each other' means that we should have built a good therapeutic relationship with you.
Use of 'Positive words' will help build mutual respect and remind you of your achievements in your recovery.
- To find out more, please look at the Talk Down poster on the ward.

